AN EXPLORATION OF THE ROLE OF PROFESSIONAL SUPPORTIVE CONVERSATIONS AS A STRATEGY TO ENHANCE SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAM'S CAPACITY TO MANAGE THE CURRICULUM.

by

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ABSTRACT

The introduction of Outcomes-Based Education and the implementation of C2005 post-1994 put a strong emphasis on effective curriculum management. The implementation of C2005 resulted in a number of challenges in the education sector. One of the recommendations after the review of C2005 was that schools ought to adopt a transparent, open and participatory process of curriculum management. School instructional core is teaching and learning, as such school management teams are tasked to adapt to changes brought by reforms in education. School management teams have a duty to manage curriculum, monitor curriculum coverage and provide guidance and support to all subject teachers. KZN districts task team revealed that lack of curriculum management tools and uniformity on curriculum management practices has consistently been one of the challenges faced by the education sector. Hence, Jika iMfundo was introduced in KZN to assist teachers and school management teams with curriculum management routines, tools and training needed to have professional supportive conversations about curriculum coverage. Furthermore, Jika iMfundo seeks to promote professional learning communities at school level by creating key individual and key collaborative curriculum management routines. The belief is that if curriculum coverage challenges are identified and solved, learning outcomes will improve across the system.

The purpose of this study was to explore the role of professional supportive conversations in enhancing School Management Teams (SMTs) capacity to manage the curriculum. The study further examines whether school management teams create a space for professional supportive conversations. The study is located within the interpretive research paradigm and adopts a qualitative case study approach. The theoretical framework that underpinned this study was situated learning theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). Purposive sampling was used to select school management teams who participated in this study under the Lions River circuit in the uMgungundlovu District of KwaZulu-Natal. Semi-structured questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, observations and document analysis were methods used to collect data. The qualitative data collected is analysed using thematic analysis.

The finding of this study revealed that schools set time aside for school initiated professional development activities. SMTs further create an enabling environment for teachers to engage in professional supportive conversations. As Lave and Wenger (1991) contend, the professional

development activities, as a special kind of community of practice**,** accommodated by schools takes place in various forms and conditions of practice. Some are planned and unplanned, some are formal and informal, of which the majority of the activities are curriculum-related. Participants revealed that professional supportive conversations provide them with space to mentor and support teachers, in turn, participants are highly motivated since self-esteem is enhanced. Professional supportive conversations enable them to network and share curriculum coverage challenges with other colleagues. Conversations about learner assessment records and achievement have contributed to good performance

There are three recommended imperatives. The first is that curriculum management tools and training be provided to all subjects. Secondly, professional, supportive conversations about curriculum coverage are enforced and monitored in all subjects. Thirdly, the Department of Education should adopt and promote the campaign as its own, otherwise, it will always be viewed as the Jika IMfundo campaign and schools or teachers will dissociate themselves to key collaborative practices of curriculum management.

DECLARATION

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters in Education, in the Graduate Programme in the College of Humanities, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.

I, Bongani Hosea Simelane, student number: 9406395, declare that

1. The research reported in this thesis, except where otherwise indicated, is my original research.
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Dr Jaqueline Naidoo	[redacted]	2 February 2022
Name of Supervisor	Signature	Date

DEDICATIONS

This thesis is dedicated to my wife, Thobeka Simelane, for her support and understanding when I spent our family time on my studies. My children for the love, support and encouragement they gave me on this journey.

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I would like to give glory to God Almighty for giving me strength, courage, determination during difficult times of hard lockdown. His word gave me hope even during difficult times.

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PREFACE

The research study described in this dissertation was carried out with nine SMTs, three principals of schools and six departmental Heads from three different schools in the uMgungundlovu District of KwaZulu-Natal. The project commenced in May 2019 and concluded in December 2021, under the supervision of Dr Jaqueline Naidoo of the Pietermaritzburg campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. This study represents the original work completed by the author and has not been submitted in any form for any diploma or degree to any other tertiary institution. Where the author has made use of the work of other authors, this has been duly acknowledged in the text.

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Bongani Simelane

02 February 2022

Date

As the candidate's supervisor, I agree/~~do not agree~~ to the submission of this dissertation.

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2 February 2022

Date

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter serves to introduce the study on professional supportive conversations. This study aimed to explore the role of professional supportive conversations as a strategy to enhance the school management team's capacity to manage the curriculum. This chapter commences by highlighting the background of the study, followed by an outline of the purpose and the rationale of the study. Next, the research questions informing the study and a brief review of the key concepts, conceptual framework and the research methodology are discussed. This chapter concludes with an overview of the dissertation.

1.2 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This study aimed to explore the role of professional supportive conversations as a strategy to enhance the school management team's (SMT) capacity to manage the curriculum. It is underpinned by the notion that teaching and learning is the school's instructional core (Elmore, 2006). The primary purpose of education is teaching and learning which is about imparting and creating knowledge, skills, concepts, processes, values and attitudes necessary for learners to satisfactorily achieve the learning objectives. (KZNDoE, Curriculum Management and Delivery Strategy, 2013). As curriculum managers, school management teams work with teachers to improve curriculum coverage and to assist teachers with challenges in relation to teaching and curriculum coverage (Jika iMfundo School Management Team Training and Coaching Module 5, Term Two, 2019). Salleh (2016) contends that school management teams need to understand and accept that through sustained supportive conversations, schools can enhance routines whereby teachers learn from one another.

The KZNDoE curriculum management and delivery strategy outlined three characteristics central to the improvement of the school's functionality (KZNDoE, Curriculum Management and Delivery Strategy, 2013). The first characteristic was effective leadership focusing on learner achievement and learning. The second characteristic was accountability within schools, where clear goals that identify how learner achievement will be achieved and teachers and SMT take responsibility for improving student learning. Lastly, the strategy emphasised the

importance of providing regular monitoring and interventions for struggling teachers and schools. Salleh (2016) asserts that professional supportive conversations support professional development (PD) and the learning of colleagues. He further argues that professional conversations put pedagogy, student learning and curriculum management practice under review and permit SMTs and teachers to enhance their understanding of teaching.

Reports from the district intervention teams and the oversight visits by Mr S Mchunu, the KZN MEC for Education in 2013 (KZNDoE, Curriculum Management and Delivery Strategy, 2013) highlighted three main challenges with regard to curriculum management. The first challenge observed was that most principals do not fully play their roles of ensuring school functionality; which suggests that they don't manage curriculum. Dayson (2016) maintains that the effective monitoring of curriculum is greatly informed by the leadership style of principals. The second challenge observed was that deputy principals could not ensure the functionality of various departments. The third challenge observed was that departmental heads could not effectively ensure that subjects taught were fully functional, as much as roles among the SMT members were not clear. However, Elmore (2006, p. 6) maintains that "leadership is the practice of improvement". Improving curriculum management and the opportunity to learn through professional supportive conversations is a professional matter, for which school management teams can assert their agency no matter how challenging their circumstances.

1.3 BACKGROUND ON JIKA IMFUNDO

Christie (2018) defines Jika iMfundo as an education intervention campaign, supported by the National Education Collaboration Trust (NECT), handled by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education (KZNDoE) in partnership with Programme for Improving Learning Outcomes (PILO). The focus of Jika iMfundo, as outlined by Christie (2018) is on curriculum management and coverage.

The overarching strategic objective of the Jika iMfundo campaign is to improve learning outcomes. (Jika iMfundo School Management Team Training and Coaching Module 1, Term One, 2018). Metcalfe (2018, p. 18) asserts that "Jika iMfundo theory of change to achieve this objective is that, if the quality of curriculum coverage improves, then learning outcomes will improve". Jika iMfundo assists schools to focus on the instructional core by improving curriculum coverage. For curriculum coverage to improve, the behaviours associated with

curriculum coverage must improve. This involves, according to Metcalfe (2018) monitoring curriculum coverage, which is best done by reporting this at the level where action can be taken and providing supportive responses to solve problems associated with curriculum coverage. Principals have to meet deputy principals or departmental heads regularly to review the quality of curriculum coverage and tracking. They are expected to supervise the overall management of curriculum in their schools.

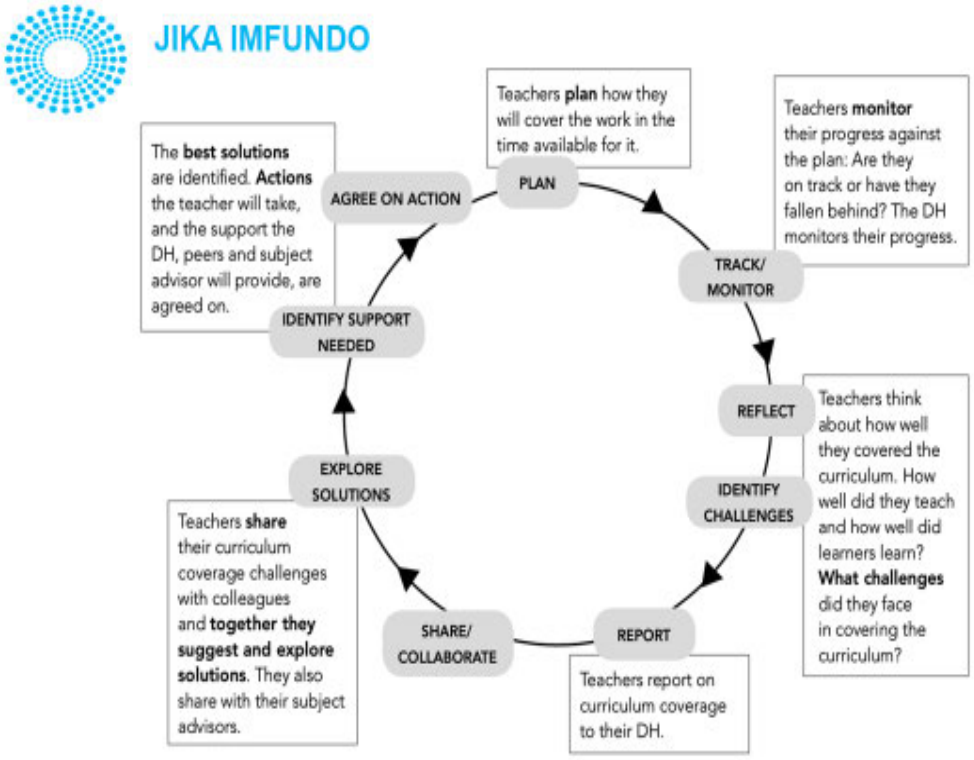
Jika iMfundo provides tools and training so that teachers' behaviours are routine, reinforced, and enabling professional reflection and the exercise of professional judgment. Teachers are supported by both the SMT and PILO coaches in making evidence-based professional judgements about improving curriculum coverage. Jika IMfundo supports departmental heads and Principals/Deputies to routinely manage curriculum in their schools by scheduling, planning and conducting evidence-based, supportive conversations which find solutions to curriculum coverage challenges. Jika iMfundo works with subject advisors and circuit managers to reinforce SMT curriculum leadership and management in schools. In addition, circuit managers and subject advisers routinely monitor and support effective SMT curriculum management, and collaborate to identify and solve management and pedagogical challenges. (Maphalala et al., 2018).

Managing and covering the curriculum is a complex task in which teachers face many challenges. If these practices become routine in the school, curriculum coverage, and thus learners' outcomes, should improve (Jika iMfundo Teacher toolkit: CAPS Planner, 2020).

"The aim of the Jika iMfundo programme is to develop strong curriculum management skills for the support and implementation of the curriculum by the teachers, Departmental Heads and the Principals." (Maphalala et.al, 2018, p. 144).

The diagram below as outlined by Jika iMfundo, is a cycle of key individual curriculum delivery practices and key collaborative curriculum management practices that enhances and supports curriculum management and coverage.

Figure 1: The cycle of practices for supporting improved curriculum coverage and management (Teacher toolkit: CAPS Planner, Jika iMfundo, 2020, p.3)



1.4 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study aimed to examine whether school management teams create a space for professional supportive conversations. The purpose of this study was to explore the role of professional supportive conversations in enhancing School Management Teams (SMTs) capacity to manage the curriculum. School Management Teams from schools in the Lions River circuit, uMgungundlovu district participated in this study.

Department of Basic Education developed and gazetted the policy framework on teacher education and development that aimed to encourage and recognise teacher participation in continuing professional teacher development and to ensure that teacher professional development activities and programs contributes to the improvement of teaching and management. (DBE, National Policy Framework on Teacher Education and Development in South Africa, 2007). This study explored whether space is provided for professional development, mentoring and professional supportive conversations in the schools that

participated in the study. The study further explored whether the professional supportive conversations were either formal or informal. It is hoped that the findings of this study would assist both the Teacher Development Sub- directorate, on various strategies and programs to be utilised on teacher development, and the Curriculum Sub- directorate, on various subject content and methodology support programmes.

1.5 RATIONALE

Kyahurwa (2013, cited in Mohapi & Netshitangani, 2017) suggests that the obstacles in the new curriculum, introduced after the review of C 2005, led to the investigations into the source and challenges encountered after implementing National Curriculum Statement (NCS). The task team appointed by the Minister of Basic Education, Angie Motshekga, recommended that an open, democratic and participatory process of curriculum management be adopted by schools. Witten and Makole (2018) confirm that more attention has been given to the role of the School Management Teams in contributing to enhancing the quality of education. Kyahurwa (2013, cited in Mohapi & Netshitangani, 2017) contends that curriculum management is an important aspect of safeguarding effective teaching and learning. Bush, Glover, Bischoff, Moloi, Heystek and Joubert (2006, cited in Witten & Makole, 2018) contend that more attention should be given to the SMTs roles and responsibilities in supporting and strengthening their core.

Metcalfe (2018) and the DBE (2015) maintain that curriculum management is still a challenge in most South African schools. Curriculum management tools used by School Management Teams leads to a tick box approach. De Clercq, Shalem and Nkambu (2018) argue that the approach indicates that an opportunity is being missed to make both teachers and SMTs look at their work and improve their practice. Metcalfe and Witten (2019) maintain that management and leadership create enabling conditions that increase opportunities to learn. Lessons learnt from curriculum management practice should lend themselves to and encourage professional supportive conversation sessions, with the sole purpose of improving learning outcomes. (Jika iMfundo School Management Team Training and Coaching Module 5, Term Two, 2019). Witten and Makole (2018) contend that the modalities, ways and strategies of addressing teaching and learning problems are complex, daunting and demanding, but necessary for the success of curriculum management. The outcomes of discussions during professional

supportive conversations can assist teachers, SMTs and district officials, subject advisors and circuit managers, to critically reflect on challenges and successes.

Monitoring curriculum should not be an activity or just an exercise, but it must improve and encourage accountability sessions, to improve learning outcomes and in the process assist teachers and School Management Teams (SMT), to critically reflect on challenges and successes. Metcalfe (2018) contends that the Jika iMfundo campaign seeks to establish a common instructional culture of curriculum management of tracking, reflecting, reporting, monitoring and solving problems collaboratively. Metcalfe and Witten (2019) argue that curriculum management provides a vehicle for the SMTs and the teachers it supports to establish routine practices of monitoring, identifying and solving problems of coverage as a key step in a journey of professional supportive conversations. However, De Clercq, Shalem and Nkambu (2018) maintain that for professional supportive conversations to emerge, the establishment of collegial working cultures of trust and respect is key. They further argue that discussions of what constitutes support for the improvement of SMTs practice are critical since, according to De Clercq, Shalem and Nkambu (2018, p. 165), "SMTs were not trained to identify weak teaching practices or provide the kind of development needed to improve teaching practice". However, Metcalfe (2018) maintains that monitoring and tracking must be integral to the change process, so that insights from the evidence are used to respond to challenges identified at the appropriate level.

Christie, Butler and Potterton (2007, cited in Taylor, 2008) pointed out that curriculum management and monitoring of curriculum coverage differed from one school to another. Their research further revealed that in some schools, it was the task of the principal, in others, it was the departmental heads, and in a few schools, the task was given to senior teachers. Similarly, the KwaZulu- Natal Department of Education (KZNDoE) District Intervention Teams Report revealed that most principals do not fully play their roles of ensuring school functionality; which suggests that they don't manage curriculum. (KZNDoE, Curriculum Management and Delivery Strategy, 2013).

In my thirteen years as a subject advisor and circuit manager, I have not been invited by Principals or SMTs of schools in my circuit to meetings to discuss challenges raised by teachers, departmental heads or SMTs. This suggests that either schools manage to help one another with their challenges, or a platform to raise and discuss their challenges is not created.

Also, I observed that SMTs did not utilise the resources and tools provided to promote professional supportive conversations. This motivated me to conduct this case study to examine the extent to which SMTs create a space for professional supportive conversations. I was also interested to examine whether professional supportive conversations could serve as a mentoring approach to improve the SMTs capacity in curriculum management. The problem or issue that the dissertation aims to address is the SMTs capacity to manage curriculum using professional supportive conversations.

1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Primary research question that guided this study was:

How do SMTs create space and a conducive environment for professional supportive conversations as the strategy to enhance curriculum management.

The following research questions guided this study:

1. To what extent do school management teams create spaces for teachers to engage in professional supportive conversations?

2. How do professional supportive conversations enhance the school management team's capacity in curriculum management?

1.7 REVIEW OF KEY CONCEPTS

The following key concepts are discussed below: curriculum, curriculum management, the role of school management teams and professional supportive conversations.

1.7.1 Curriculum

As much as curriculum, as a social concept, is not an easy concept to define. Coleman (2003) contends that curriculum reforms have contributed to the difficulties of defining curriculum. Ross (2003) argues that 'curriculum' is a complex field to define, and does not only ask what is taught and how it is taught but also has historical and political dimensions.

According to the KZN Department of Education, curriculum refers to a course of study, which may include study programs and lessons plans and outlines what a learner is required to encounter, study, practice and master. (KZNDoE, Curriculum Management and Delivery Strategy, 2013). Ross (2003, p 8) maintains that "curriculum is a definition of what is to be learned". Graham-Jolly (2003) asserts that curriculum is the formal academic programme, as reflected in the policy documents.

1.7.2 Curriculum management

Curriculum management does not have one uniform definition. The Department of Basic Education (2000) describes curriculum management as instructional leadership. Spillane, Camburn and Pareja (2007) argue that leadership or management has to do with administration and instructional aspects of SMTs work. This study made use of curriculum management and leadership interchangeably as it is argued that effective curriculum management demands leadership skills (Spanneut, 2010; Wills, 2019; Hallinger & Heck, 2011).

The KZN Department of Education defines curriculum management as a combination of activities that includes curriculum supervision and curriculum coverage monitoring. (Induction Programme for Circuit Managers, KwaZulu-Natal, 2019). According to Cardno and Collet (2003), instructional leadership, academic leadership, curriculum leadership or management, has to do with leading or managing teaching and learning processes, as the schools core function. Changiz, Yamani, Tofighi, Zoubin and Eghbali (2019) argue that management is the only way an institution can ensure proper curriculum implementation. Witten (2017) asserts that curriculum management involves a process whereby SMTs observe, direct, guide, and provide support. This study focused on how teachers and SMTs, through their interaction with curriculum policy documents, collaborate and provide leadership as they support one another through professional conversations.

1.7.3 Professional supportive conversations

The professional supportive conversation is a relatively new concept in education introduced by Jika iMfundo as one of the routine practices of curriculum management. The KZN Department of Education has been focusing on 'accountability sessions' as a regular item

during curriculum meetings, where progress in teaching and learning is discussed (KZNDOE, toolkit for school management teams on curriculum management, 2017, p. 14). Accountability sessions are more formal in nature since they mostly occur in a formal setting, however professional supportive conversations can either be formal or informal. It can be initiated by either the supervisor or supervisee. Professional supportive conversations, according to De Clercq, Shalem and Nkambu (2018), is the process that occurs mainly between departmental heads and teachers, with the aim of identifying areas that requires support in order to address and improve teachers' curriculum coverage challenges. They further assert that professional supportive conversations may occur between The Principal/Deputy principal and departmental heads focusing on teachers' curriculum coverage.

The Department of Basic Education promotes and advocates for professional learning communities (PLC). Metcalfe and Witten (2019, p. 6) contend that curriculum management routines "enable schools to build practices that enabled functioning as a professional learning community with internal accountability systems and practices characterised by a culture of professional, supportive, evidence-based conversations". Professional supportive conversations provide opportunities for collaboration among teachers and for one-on-one mentoring. The study will discuss Professional Supportive Conversations concepts in a school or cluster of school's settings, as Professional learning communities.

Salleh (2016) defines a professional supportive conversation as a process whereby teachers, collectively or individually, influence their colleagues, both post level ones and SMT, to improve teaching and learning practices. De Clercq, Shalem and Nkambu (2018) describe a professional supportive conversation as a process that enables teachers to be conscious of their professional developmental needs.

1.7.4 Role of the SMT in curriculum management

Lumadi (2012) contends that each South African government school is managed by a School Management Team (SMT). The School Management Team is made up of the senior personnel in a school, such as the principal, the deputy principal and the departmental heads (Benoliel, 2017; Lumadi, 2012; KZNDoE, 2017). However, the KwaZulu- Natal Department of Education affirms that the SMT may sometimes also co-opt subject heads. (KZNDOE, Toolkit for School Management Teams on Curriculum Management, 2017). The principal is required

to support and develop other managers within the school. (DBE, Policy on the South African Standard for Principalships, 2016). Khumalo (2014) argues that the departmental heads are actively involved in the curriculum management activities of planning, organising, leading and control. In addition, Lumadi (2012) maintains that the responsibility of the SMT includes planning, monitoring and directing teachers work, and taking corrective action where necessary.

1.8 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1.8.1 Situated Learning

This study was underpinned by situated learning theory as the theoretical framework. Chauraya and Brodie (2018) assert that learning is inseparable from the environment in which knowledge is used since learning is situated in human. Lave and Wenger (1991) argued that learning requires a meeting or conversation since it is a social process. Borko (2004) asserts that learning should be perceived as a process of both individual creation and a process whereby practices are nurtured. Chauraya and Brodie (2018, p. 3) argued that "having a shared learning focus and engaging in collective action supports mutual engagement activities which in turn lead to the development of new meanings and ways of addressing problems of practice". In this study, teachers' creation and curriculum management was nurtured and support provided to teachers

Wenger (1998, p. 7) defines communities of practice as the "interaction of a group of people or communities with different beliefs who share the same practice or passion to improve their practice". Communities of practice, according to Lave and Wenger (1991), is the style or type of learning based on mentorship. Wenger (1998) outlines three characteristics that are shared in a community of practice, namely, a shared domain of interest, community and practice. Jones and Bodie (2014, p. 378) assert that "Professional conversations and relationships are a source of strength to teachers and ultimately contribute to their practice".

Situated learning theory will be adopted since it will be a useful theoretical framework to analyse research questions one and two, which explored the extent to which SMTs promoted

and used professional supportive conversations, as the special kind of community of practice, to manage the curriculum.

1.9 RESEARCH METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

This research study was located within the interpretive research paradigm. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) contend that understanding participants' experiences assist the researcher to understand the participants, and this can be done by having an insight into their backgrounds and beliefs. This study used, as Taylor and Medina (2011) ascertain, the interpretive paradigm to have a wide focus on historical and social momentum streamlining both curriculum management policies and the schooling system in which the school management is immersed. Furthermore, the interpretive paradigm was most suitable for this study which according to Scotland (2012) aimed not only to understand participants' behaviour but also to explain their actions from their point of view.

This research study was an in-depth case study of the SMTs to get maximum knowledge and understanding of the role played by professional supportive conversations in curriculum management. An exploratory case study was adopted in this study, which explored whether professional supportive conversations enhanced the school management team's capacity to manage the curriculum. According to Bertram and Christiansen (2014), a case study is an in-depth study of a group of people or an organisation, to capture their real-life experiences. Likewise, Zainal (2007) asserts that a case study investigates and enquires about contemporary real-life experiences by making use of a few or a small group of people as the subject of study. This research used the case study research design since small groups of SMTs from three schools were selected as participants. The purpose was to explore deeply and analyse the role of professional supportive conversations in curriculum management with the view of establishing generalisations about the wider population of school management. Purposive sampling was used to select the participants. According to Mason (2002, cited in Robinson, 2013), purposive sampling is used when the researcher believes that certain individuals may have some crucial perspectives or views, which may be different from other participants. Based on my observations as a circuit manager, I purposively selected three schools in the Lions River circuit, uMgungundlovu District.

1.10 OVERVIEW OF THE DISSERTATION

This dissertation on the role of professional supportive conversations on curriculum management is presented in five chapters. Chapter 1 presents the background, purpose and rationale of the study. This chapter further outlines the research questions, key concepts, the conceptual framework and the research methodology. It concludes with a synopsis of chapters one to five of the dissertation.

Chapter 2 presents the literature review of the relevant concepts such as curriculum, curriculum management, professional supportive conversations and the role of school management teams. The literature draws from both national and international scholars. The chapter concludes by outlining the conceptual framework, namely, communities of practice which was used to analyse research questions one and two, which explored the extent to which SMTs promote professional supportive conversations and manage the curriculum.

Chapter 3 discusses the research methodological approach used in this study. It begins with a discussion of the interpretive research paradigm and its suitability. Next, the chapter describes the case study research design, semi- structured questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, observation and document analysis as data collection methods and purposive sampling. The chapter concludes with a discussion of thematic data analysis, ethical considerations, and trustworthiness.

Chapter 4 presents the results and discusses an analysis of the results. The chapter first presents the three schools' contexts and profiles of the nine participants used in the study. The chapter explains and discusses the interpretation of the findings using Wenger's (1998) conceptual framework of communities of practice and lave and Wenger's (1991) conceptual framework of situated perspective.

Chapter 5 presents the key findings and recommendations for further research. It also presents the limitations of the study.

1.11 CONCLUSION

This chapter introduced the study on professional supportive conversations. It started by highlighting the background of the study, it then outlined the purpose and the rationale of the study. Next, the research questions, review of the key concepts, the conceptual framework and research methodological approach was briefly presented. The chapter concludes with an overview of the dissertation chapters. The next chapter reviews the literature and the conceptual framework.

CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the literature review which draws on both international and national literature. The chapter begins with a discussion of the concepts of curriculum, curriculum management and the role of school management teams in curriculum management. This is followed by an outline of professional supportive conversations as a concept and as a mentoring approach in professional learning communities. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the theoretical framework underpinning this study, namely Situated Learning theory.

2.2 DEFINING CURRICULUM

Curriculum, as a social concept, has been defined in diverse ways. Casimiro Lopez and Fernandes De Macedo (2009) contend that there are incompatible tensions within curriculum policies, such as internal discrepancies, uncertainties and combinations of purposes. Woodhouse and Enukoha (1986) argue that curriculum is a social product. They further assert that curriculum reflects the culture of the society at a particular time of its development and its objectives, methods and content are informed by what the society aims to achieve. When a society or the intentions of men and women change, the curriculum would be aligned to the new changes, and as a result, the curriculum changes. Woodhouse and Enukoha (1986) maintain that the reforms in the curriculum are brought about by the advancement and change in knowledge. This is in line with Dayson's (2016) assertion that the school curriculum should always consider and serve the community's interest.

Ross (2003) maintains that schools and educational institutions provide competing models and patterns of curricula. He further argues that these models are constructed by people. He presents four major curriculum models as the Baroque curriculum, the naturally landscaped curriculum, the Dig-for-victory curriculum and the Cottage curriculum. The first model, the Baroque curriculum is the curriculum of specified subjects, and each subject is clearly defined by its content knowledge and skills. What happens outside of the specified subjects are referred to as extramural activities. The second model, the naturally landscaped curriculum, is not regulated by contrived subjects, but by the nature of the learner. Subjects are said to be contrived because

knowledge presented is made up of contrived processes and procedures. In the third model, the Dig-for-victory curriculum, Ross (2003) maintains that the subject content and structure required should be directly relevant to societal needs. As such the curriculum offered by schools should respond to the needs of the market of that society. The final model, the Cottage curriculum is socially constructed, as a result of a series of negotiations and the believed social truths and evolves as it is not immune to change.

The KZN Department of Education ascertains that curriculum is a course of study, which may include study programmes and lessons plans. The four core elements of the curriculum, according to the KZN Department of Education are teaching, learning, assessment and resources. (KZNDoE, Curriculum Management and Delivery Strategy, 2013). According to Graham-Jolly (2003), the curriculum is the formal academic programme, as reflected in the policy documents. Woodhouse and Enukoha (1986) contend that curriculum involves the planning and organisation of a number of manmade learning experiences which are catered for in schools. Changiz, Yamani, Tofighi, Zoubin and Eghbali (2019, p. 1) maintain that "curriculum is the foundation of any educational institution and the quality of its implementation can be a good indicator of the institution's educational efficacy". Ross (2003) maintains that the school's curriculum is made up of all activities intended to promote the physical, social, intellectual and personal development of learners. Moreover, Graham-Jolly **(**2003, p. 11**)** contends that "with the rise of OBE, the curriculum is now understood to be more than just a syllabus, but it refers to all of the teaching and learning activities that take place". Sambo (2011, p. 9) ascertains that curriculum is defined as "a prescribed course of study". In this study, I use the term 'curriculum' adopted by the KZNDoE as an outline of what should be taught, how it should be taught and when it should be taught (KZNDoE, Curriculum Management and Delivery Strategy, 2013).

Although this study does not focus on the hidden curriculum, it is important for researchers studying the curriculum to be aware of it. Casimiro Lopez and Fernandes De Macedo (2009) argue that the certainty of curriculum policy texts is restricted by different factors, which compromise the full implementation of the curriculum. As a result, curriculum proposals and practices are always questioned. They further argue that the contextual factors promote new meanings that were not intended from the start since these factors are capable of producing the crossbreed of different discourses. Casimiro Lopez and Fernandes De Macedo (2009, p. 69) maintain that the curriculum as a 'continuous cycle', is constantly re-created in which

discourses and texts circulate. Graham-Jolly (2003) argues that the hidden curriculum is the form of the curriculum which is communicated by unwritten codes. Likewise, Ross (2000) maintains that the hidden curriculum is not overtly stated but is accidentally taught through the process of education.

2.3 CURRICULUM MANAGEMENT

Curriculum management is defined in different ways in the literature. Witten (2017, p. 51) prefers the term 'educational supervision' as the 'professional service that builds teacher capacity and improves teaching and learning'. Witten (2017, p. 510) defines curriculum management as a "process that is put in place to help teachers to carry out the task of teaching to expected levels according to the stipulated policy guidelines set out in the education system". Witten (2017) argues that SMTs monitor teachers work related to lesson planning and presentation, together with teaching assessment strategies and techniques. Witten (2017) further contend that curriculum management involves the analysis of learner performance and identification of areas for teaching improvement. Cameron, Owen and Tee (2007, cited in Maphalala et al., 2018) maintain that the four stages of curriculum management are planning, teaching, assessing and rating the intention of the curriculum. Dayson (2016) contends that curriculum management incorporates tasks like planning, monitoring, developing and examining schools' educational programmes. Harvey and Aanyu-Angura (2007) affirm that curriculum management is whereby the SMT provides effective supervision and leadership, ensuring that quality teaching and learning is provided. Activities of curriculum management, according to Harvey and Aanyu-Angura (2007), include timetabling and teacher utilisation, supporting and supervision of lessons, managing learning resources, learning process supervision and coordinating professional development activities.

According to the KZN Department of Education, curriculum management refers to a combination of activities that involve, but are not limited to, curriculum coverage monitoring and support, learner textbook monitoring, annual teaching plans/tracker/pace setter monitoring, controlling of lesson plans, assessment data analysis, workbook utilisation monitoring and intervention plans (Induction Programme for Circuit Managers, KwaZulu-Natal, 2019). Kirk (2014, cited in Dayson, 2016, p. 22) contends that "curriculum management is the management of subject matter, its creation, packaging and implementation". This suggests that curriculum

managers are tasked with providing leadership in the subject content, how it is taught, the pacing of the topics and the delivery of the content.

Cardno and Collet (2003) contend that instead of using the term curriculum management, some scholars prefer instructional leadership while others prefer academic leadership. Dimmock and Wildy (1992, cited in Dayson, 2016) contend that instructional leadership and educational leadership are comparable to curriculum management. However, Van der Bank (1994) pointed out that leadership is considered to be a broader concept than management. Milondzo and Seema (2015, p.2) contend that "one of the important traits of school management is leadership". Van der Bank (1994) maintains that improvement in teaching and learning is enhanced by school leaders who understand that leadership and management complement one another. Similarly, Spillane, Camburn and Pareja (2007, p. 104) pointed out that "leading and managing or leadership and management can be used to refer to both administration-type activities, and instruction and curriculum-type activities". Similarly, Spillane, Camburn and Pareja (2007, p. 104) argue that leading and managing are linked and "it is difficult to lead without managing".

According to Morgan (2015), instructional leadership involves focusing on administrative matters and ensuring that teachers' capabilities are developed, as a result, instructional leader focus their time and energy on academic performance. Cardno and Collet (2003) affirm that instructional leadership highlights the importance of the guidance the principal can exert on teaching and learning improvement. Elmore (2006) contends that teaching and learning is the school's instructional core. Hoadley, Christie and Ward (2009) affirm that leadership can be executed throughout the school, by different teachers irrespective of their post level, unlike management, which is a structural position, where specific roles and responsibilities are specified. Spillane, Camburn and Pareja (2007) argue that leading involves adopting the new order while managing involves maintaining the current order. Wills (2019) affirms that for bettered learning outcomes, leadership and/or management is vital.

Dayson (2016) asserts that SMTs are instructional supervisors of the school curriculum. Similarly, Danielson (2015) argues that curriculum management in schools entails instructional leadership. Moreover, Spanneut (2010) pointed out that effective schools are characterised by instructional leadership. Likewise, Morgan (2015) argues that managing curriculum to enhance teacher's dedication and morale requires knowledge, application and the establishment of

methods in instructional leadership. Spillane, Camburn and Pareja (2007) argue that curriculum management focuses on administration and instructional aspects of SMTs work. Similarly, Van der Bank (1994) contends that the vital features of SMTs administration work are both management and administration. Sambo (2011) maintains that curriculum management entails planning to monitor.

Changiz et al. (2019) argue that management is the only way an institution can ensure proper curriculum implementation. Mohapi and Netshitangani (2017) assert that effective teaching and learning can be ensured by curriculum management. Principals and the SMT are at the core when it comes to curriculum management, as the following quote highlights:

Teaching is the heartbeat of a school, and leaders have to maintain an ongoing focus on it, engaging in conversations and developing strategies for how it can be strengthened. An important role that schools leaders will play in this regard relates to supervising the work of others in the school (Witten, 2017, p. 50)

Hallinger and Heck (2011) maintain that successful school curriculum management forges an environment that promotes effective teaching and learning and opens a space for professional learning. They further contend that curriculum management advances the improvement of the school. Milondzo and Seema (2015) maintain that curriculum leaders are entrusted with building school culture and creating a conducive school climate. Metcalfe and Witten (2019, p. 347) contend that "management practices require structured and supportive interaction with the teacher reflections to make visible the basis of professional judgments regarding curriculum pace relative to the range of learning needs". SMTs create an environment of trust where teachers are able and willing to collaborate. This corresponds with Morgan's (2015, p. 17) assertion that "leadership, in theory, is a relationship as well as a development process that foster collaboration, build trust, and promote inclusion".

Mohapi and Netshitangani (2017) assert that SMTs should have a clear understanding of curriculum management styles. Hoadley, Christie and Ward (2009) assert that curriculum management has to do with supervising teachers, curriculum coverage monitoring, professional support and looking after teaching and learning. The assumption is that the supervision of teachers, monitoring and support is embedded with administrative functionality. Wills (2019) affirms that administrative tasks such as drafting the school timetable, presenting the school

academic improvement plans, compiling the grade annual school assessment plan and evidence of good assessment records are found to be significantly connected with learning gains. Spillane, Camburn and Pareja (2007) argue that curriculum management focuses on administration and instructional aspects of SMTs work. Likewise, Wills (2019) affirms that SMTs competency in administration, as well as instructional management capability, is necessary for a learning environment.

2.4 CURRICULUM COVERAGE MONITORING

The core business of the Department of Basic Education is to deliver the curriculum to learners in all grades required by the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS). Maphalala et al. (2018) contend that the fundamental component of curriculum management is monitoring. They further highlight monitoring entails tracking teaching and learning processes as teachers and SMT sense of accountability is elevated. Curriculum coverage monitoring, as one form of curriculum management, according to Metcalfe and Witten (2019), has the great potential to escalate possibilities to learn. Metcalfe and Witten (2019, p. 344) contend that "the focus on curriculum coverage – with particular emphasis on evidence of learning and its supportive management by the SMT – gives the SMT a direct 'line of- sight' into the instructional core".

The Department of Basic Education defines curriculum coverage as the measure in percentage, of pupils who cover the curriculum, by making use of records kept by teachers and learners' evidence of written work. They further state that the degree of curriculum coverage will be tested against the Annual Teaching Plan (ATP) (DBE, Programme Performance Measures 2019 and Technical Indicator Descriptions, 2017). Metcalfe and Witten (2019) contend that monitoring practices of curriculum coverage by the Department of Education are based on the impoverished and superficial meaning of coverage whereby the pace of the teacher in line with annual teaching plans through tick-box practice is prioritised rather than more than the quality of learning. The Department of Basic Education definition puts more emphasis on the curriculum covered by teachers. Moreover, Metcalf and Witten (2019) further argue that poor learning outcomes are attributed to inadequate curriculum coverage. Metcalfe and Witten (2019) maintain that curriculum coverage is a complex phenomenon. They present a number of dimensions with the aim of unpacking and clarifying the purpose of monitoring curriculum coverage. Firstly, curriculum coverage monitoring assists SMTs to influence what teachers do

in the classroom. It enables SMTs to locate, recognise and work out challenges of covering through professional supportive conversations. Secondly, curriculum coverage monitoring, despite working in challenging circumstances, allows the SMT to exercise agency. Lastly, curriculum coverage is measurable and calculable. The data can be analysed and appropriate professional development needs can be identified, which assist SMTs to develop specific professional development programmes or activities to address the identified areas. Those professional development areas can be collaboratively discussed in PLCs or the SMT can mentor teachers or one another during professional supportive conversations.

In the study of teachers' and HoDs' accountability on curriculum coverage, De Clercq, Shalem and Nkambu (2018) presented three main components of curriculum coverage monitoring that target teachers and HoDs. The first component is curriculum planners and trackers, followed by teachers' weekly reflections on their lessons and the last component is professional conversations between HoDs and teachers.

Jika iMfundo provided schools with the weekly reporting tools, planners, trackers and weekly reflections that address issues of curriculum coverage. In the study on the role of HoDs in curriculum coverage, Mthiyane, Naidoo and Bertram (2018) contend that HoDs affirmed that the curriculum coverage tools provided were useful and enabled them to know whether teachers were on track or not. Similarly, in Maphalala et al.'s (2018) study of the lessons learnt in the interventions in curriculum management initiated by the Jika iMfundo, the principals pointed out that the tools provided helped the SMT to manage curriculum better since they can identify teachers' downfall and provide the support needed.

De Clercq, Shalem and Nkambu (2018) affirmed that the curriculum planners and trackers assist teachers to plan and teach at the set pace, while weekly reflection tools enabled teachers to report on whether learners covered the curriculum and, in the tool, a space for reflection is also provided. An opportunity to reflect and report is thus afforded to all teachers. In the study of teachers' and HoDs' accountability on curriculum coverage. De Clercq, Shalem and Nkambu (2018) pointed out that the planners and trackers, coupled with teacher reflections serve as evidence during curriculum coverage monitoring by the departmental Heads. They further assert that the evidence presented to assist the departmental heads to identify strategies of support during professional conversations and/or one-on-one meetings.

Jika iMfundo developed tools for SMTs to facilitate professional conversations and to ensure that SMTs monitor curriculum coverage. Teachers reflect on how well the curriculum was covered, reflect on how they taught and the challenges they have encountered. After reflection, they share with colleagues or SMT curriculum coverage challenges and solutions are suggested and explored by all parties engaging in supportive conversations. (KZN Department of Education, Jika iMfundo on-boarding workshop for Chief Education Specialist, 2020).

In the study of teachers' and HoDs' accountability on curriculum coverage, De Clercq, Shalem and Nkambu (2018, p. 162), the departmental head affirmed that "the professional conversations or one-on-one meetings enable the teacher to be conscious of his/her weaknesses with the view of improving on those identified areas". In the findings of the study of curriculum management interventions by Jika iMfundo, conducted by Maphalala et al. (2018), participants mentioned that they can reflect on what transpired during class visits or monitoring in their one-on-one meetings, where they can give advice and support needed. Hoadley and Galant (2016) argue that DBE workbooks, because of their curriculum compliance, could be an effective curriculum coverage monitoring tool. On the other hand, they note that the workbooks would not be able to indicate the quality of work covered and the level of the learner's progress. Principals of schools can however make use of the workbooks to establish what content has been taught**.**

Jika IMfundo curriculum coverage reporting is informed by both teacher and learner coverage. The emphasis is on learner coverage which is informed by learners' achievement in assessment. (KZN Department of Education, Jika iMfundo on-boarding workshop for Chief Education Specialist, 2020) Jika iMfundo proposed that for teachers to claim that learners have covered the curriculum, they should have achieved at least at a level 4. Teachers' professional judgment, on pace, inclusion, conceptual depth and topic progression relative to time (Metcalfe & Witten, 2019), will determine whether they proceed with the next content topic. However, they further argue that for professional judgment, teachers have to balance between the set coverage targets and the materials level of difficulty.

2.5 ROLE OF THE SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAM

Middlewood (2003) asserts that the SMT's roles differ and complement one another. Lumadi (2012) asserts that the responsibility of the SMT includes planning, monitoring, supporting and

directing teachers work. Moreover, Witten (2017) contends that SMTs take corrective action where necessary. In the same vein, Lumadi (2012) maintains that some members of the SMT have more than one responsibility and that some of them served as teachers as well. Similarly, the Department of Basic Education outlines that one of the roles of all SMTs is to teach a subject, however, time allocated differs depending on the post level and needs of the school. (DBE, Personal Administrative Measures, 2016. Education Labour Relations Council). In addition, Van der Bank (1994) affirms that departmental heads have to organise the teaching of subjects throughout the school, over and above them teaching a particular subject.

Coleman (2003) further suggests that departmental heads are foot soldiers, who take the vision set out by the principal to the classroom. Van der Bank (1994) pointed out that departmental heads are responsible for the management of his or her staff. Wills (2019) maintains that departmental heads play a pivotal monitoring and accountability role in curriculum coverage and time-on-task monitoring. Among other duties, departmental heads should ensure that every teacher has a planning file and that they go to the classroom to teach. They should ensure that teachers adhere to the school assessment policy, with clear timeframes as stipulated in the school assessment plan and that assessment and post-assessment moderation is timeously conducted to ensure that assessment tasks are valid and reliable. (KZNDOE, Toolkit for School Management Teams on Curriculum Management, 2017). Wills (2019) argues that the departmental heads position is linked to teachers' day-to-day proceedings. Van der Bank (1994) agrees that departmental heads are responsible for establishing a clear policy framework for the teaching of subjects.

Barnett and McCormick (2012, cited in Benoliel, 2017) contend that SMTs are important contributors to school functioning and have a powerful place in decision making. Witten (2017) maintains that SMTs should support teachers in their efforts to forge a working climate whereby learning outcomes can be realised. He further argues that the support provided should be focused on bettering the quality of teaching and learning. Shalem and De Clercq (2019) assert that the support given to teachers should put more emphasis on the depth of knowledge teachers need to have in their subject matter. Similarly, Danielson (2015) asserts that SMTs have the task of using their dominance and power to make certain that learners' performance is of the highest level.

The KZN Department of Education highlighted how SMTs in well-performing schools manage the curriculum (KZNDOE, Toolkit for School Management Teams on Curriculum Management, 2017). They highlighted four main points. Firstly, they emphasise that well-performing schools have functional subject committees' tasks with, among other things, engaging in planning and assessment, as a result, all teachers understand what and when to assess.

Secondly, they share information obtained at workshops, which can be done during their meetings. Witten (2017, p.58) maintains that meetings are not only platforms for information sharing, but "can also serve as spaces for learning and creating ideas". As Salleh (2016) claimed the ideal responsibility of the leadership of teachers is in the direct establishment of PLCs within and between schools. They make use of those platforms to share, discuss and have conversations on curriculum-related matters. Witten (2017) argues that when teachers work together, schools' benefit in a number of ways. Teachers and departmental heads should be willing to meet the agreed deadlines and should be willing to carry out all the agreed tasks. As the KZN department of education affirms, schools should hold regular management meetings in which progress in teaching and learning prominently feature in their agenda. (KZNDOE, Toolkit for School Management Teams on Curriculum Management, 2017).

Thirdly, they frequently meet and converse or unpack curriculum and policy documents. As they converse, the teacher in the next grade can share problematic concepts that learners in the lower grades should master. All teachers from the lower grade to the highest grade in the subject understand what and how the subject should be taught. Witten (2017) contends that meetings that revolve around instruction make a solid link to teaching practice.

The fourth aspect that well-performing schools do is to arrange support where necessary, either by facilitating team teaching or interacting with the lead teacher from the other schools. They can even invite subject advisors to offer support in the specific content topics. (KZNDOE, toolkit for school management teams on curriculum management, 2017). In the case study of heads of departments as curriculum managers, Mbhele (2008) pointed out that the SMTs responsibility is to support, manage and supervise the curriculum.

Witten (2017) contends that professional practices like teachers' acceptable behaviours, temperament and capabilities are modelled and encouraged by the SMT. Witten (2017, p.52)

argues that effective supervision requires a school culture "characterised by personal and professional relationships of trust, an atmosphere of collaboration and a school-wide focus on teaching as the most important work in the school". Department of Basic Education (DBE) outlines the roles and responsibilities of the Principal and the SMT. In its Personal Administrative Measures document, it is stated that principals and deputy principals are tasked with offering professional advice to the work and performance of all staff in the school. The document further elaborates that Principals and SMTs are tasked with assisting teachers in developing and achieving educational objectives in accordance with the needs of the school. (DBE: Personal Administrative Measures, 2016, Education Labour Relations Council, 1998).

Benoliel (2017) contends that if principals set directions, develop team capacity and manage team operations, the SMT may improve team development and can be effective. The principals, as members of SMTs and as leaders of SMTs, have an important role to play in setting the tone and giving direction to the SMT. According to the KZN Department of Education, principals should ensure that the relevant policies on curriculum and assessment are available to all the and deputy principals teachers. They should oversee curriculum planning and implementation as well as manage and monitor the work of both the deputy principal and the departmental heads. Lastly, they should be accountable for the functionality and the overall performance of the school (KZNDOE, toolkit for school management teams on curriculum management, 2017). According to Kyahurwa (2013, cited in Mohapi & Netshitangani, 2017, p. 135), "governments expect the principals to be accountable for leading and managing changes for school improvement, which is evident in students' results". However, Spillane, Camburn and Pareja (2007) contend that principals concentrated and reported on administration related activities at the expense of instruction and curriculum-related activities. Likewise, Leithwood, Louis and Anderson (2004, cited in Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008, p. 459) argue that "Principals have both direct and indirect effects on teaching and learning". However, Witten (2017) asserts that curriculum management is not entirely the principals' task, but it is dispersed across the SMT.

Mohapi and Netshitangani (2017) maintain that the leadership approach adopted by principals and deputy principals is crucial for effective curriculum management. Similarly, Dayson (2016) maintains that the effective monitoring of curriculum is greatly informed by the leadership style of principals and deputy principals. In addition, Wahlstrom and Louis (2008) assert that principals ought to be instructional leaders which enables them to create effective

schools. Chance and Singila (2009) pointed out that the principal and or the deputy principal, through his/her leadership, encouraged staff to be open to new ideas and to try new things. According to Elmore (2006, p.21), "The model of leadership that applies to continuous improvement is one in which the system is constantly investing in the capacity of people at all levels to master and lead the improvement of instructional practice". Similarly, Mohapi and Netshitangani (2017) maintain that the SMT should provide direction and support to the entire staff.

The KZNDOE strategic document outlines that curriculum management is the essential function of the entire department. The document further states that all managers, both districts and head office must play their role in monitoring whether schools manage curriculum (KZNDOE, Curriculum management and delivery strategy, 2013). Similarly, Wills (2019) affirms that instructional leadership and administrative capabilities at the school, district and provincial level boost each other to augment the development of a functional learning environment. It is paramount that district officials understand challenges faced by principals and SMTs in managing the curriculum (DBE, Job descriptions for office-based educators, 2017. Education Labour Relations Council).

2.6 PROFESSIONAL SUPPORTIVE CONVERSATIONS

Witten (2017) describes three types of conversations namely, the instructional conversations, the learning conversations and the community conversations. Witten (2017) contends that instructional conversations are commonly used by SMTs and has to do with teaching and learning processes, whereby the SMTs provides support and intensify teaching practices. Learning conversations revolve around school leaders and teachers, focusing on instructional core improvement. Learning conversation is more reflective on teaching practice, learner performance analysis and structural changes around teaching and learning. While community conversations occur at a higher level and involve a broader group of participants, hence its focus is inclusive and targets all key areas of the school like vision and mission statements.

Rust (2002, p. 176) refers to professional supportive conversations as "authentic conversations" and defines it as a face-to-face event, carried out between teachers who share the practice in an environment where trust, safety and much consideration is given. Danielson (2015) describes three categories of professional conversations namely, formal reflective

conversations, coaching conversations and informal professional conversations. Danielson (2015) contends that formal reflective conversations are organised with an aim of teacher evaluation while coaching conversations are initiated by the teacher, whereby the departmental head or his or her colleague is invited to provide feedback on either the approach to teaching or for the second opinion on the aspect of their practice. Lastly, informal professional conversations occur after an observation, either an observation of the learners' performance or the actual lesson observation, as it is evidence-based.

Rust (2002) contends that both SMTs and teachers need to continuously reflect on their skills and knowledge and question their beliefs and attitudes. Moreover, Frick, Carl and Beets (2010, p. 422) suggest that "reflection on professional practice is one of the qualities that characterise a good teacher". De Clercq, Shalem and Nkambu (2018) affirmed that the HoDs praised the benefit of reflections since for them, it's a chance and an opportunity to develop one another as they rebound some opinions on what could have worked well in case some of the things during the lesson didn't work. According to Metcalfe and Witten (2019, p. 344) "reflection and learning form part of these conversations". According to Danielson (2015), professional supportive conversations enable teachers to reflect on how they approach their lessons and their management styles. Salleh (2016) affirms that conversations are routines of the work and experience of teachers. Gillentine (2006, p. 347) argues that "a reflection is a potential tool in professional development". Fairbanks, Freedman and Kahn (2000) assert that participation and opportunities to engage in professional supportive conversations sustain teachers' practice of reflexive and systematic inquiry.

Rust (2002) asserts that teachers' professional development is supported by professional supportive conversations. Rust (2002) further argues that through professional conversations, SMTs can figure out the work of management and teaching that can be made possible if supported opportunities are made available to them. In the study of teachers' and HoDs' accountability on curriculum coverage, De Clercq, Shalem and Nkambu (2018) pointed out that the departmental head affirmed the need for differentiated and particular teacher support during professional supportive conversations. Danielson (2015) contends that professional supportive conversations are a vital intervention that promotes teacher learning, over and above common approaches of formal workshops.

According to Jones and Bodie (2014), a supportive conversation is a process whereby reappraisals are made easier and events and emotional experiences are evaluated in the context of personal needs and goals. Salleh (2016) defines professional supportive conversation as a process whereby teachers, collectively or individually, influence their colleagues, both post level ones and SMT, to improve teaching and learning practices. De Clercq, Shalem and Nkambu (2018) argue that areas requiring supportive actions between the departmental heads and teachers can be better identified during professional supportive conversations. Stoll, Bolam, Mcmahom, Wallace and Thomas (2006) maintain that teachers exchange about professional issues and any evidence that they engage with one another is the fundamental indicator of a professional supportive conversation. For De Clercq, Shalem and Nkambu (2018), a professional supportive conversation is a process that enables teachers to be conscious of their professional developmental needs.

In the study on the role of HoDs in curriculum coverage, Mthiyane, Naidoo and Bertram (2018) contend that HoDs affirmed that their participation in curriculum coverage monitoring resulted in more systematic, routine meetings, as such professional supportive conversation can be viewed as collaborative mentoring. According to Wilson and Hartung (2015, p. 607), "Participants may share stories of practice more than asking questions". Moreover, Wilson and Hartung (2015), define informal learning as conditions whereby the partakers clarify the goals and set up the process and evaluation of their learning. Professional supportive conversations, as Rust (2002) asserts, are classroom-focused and are related to aspects of the curriculum. Salleh (2016, cited in Mthiyane, Naidoo & Bertram, 2018, p. 173) maintains that "conversations enable teachers to discuss their comprehension of teaching".

According to the OECD report (2016, cited in Metcalfe, 2018), professional supportive conversations enhance teachers' belief in their ability to teach, engage students and manage classrooms. Salleh (2016) asserts that professional supportive conversation is perceived as being generative in teacher learning. Rust (2002) maintains that professional supportive conversations offer teachers opportunities for reflection, learning, discovery and they can make sense of their practice and profession. Likewise, Salleh (2016) argues that through professional supportive conversations, problems of practice can be made normal. Senge (cited in Mthiyane, Naidoo & Bertram, 2018) contends that learning conversations reveal teachers thinking and allow their thinking to be influenced by others. Moreover, Rust (2002) asserts that everyone in the conversation, whether they are most or least experienced, have something to learn and to

offer. Salleh (2016) contends that when the problem has been specified, then the nature and possible causes of the problem can be discussed through professional supportive conversations.

Professional supportive conversations, according to Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace and Thomas (2006, p. 224) "promotes the establishment of a school-wide culture that makes collaboration expected, inclusive and focused on critically examining practice". In addition, Kajee (2011) maintains that SMTs, as mentors, need to advance a supportive school culture. Lack of a supportive school culture means teachers and SMTs don't have a space whereby they can mentor one another. Similarly, professional supportive conversations provide a platform where teachers share their innovative ideas with more experienced teachers (DBE, Professional Learning Communities: A Guideline for South African Schools, 2015). DuFour (2004, p. 3) maintains that teachers who promote supportive conversations acknowledge that for them to achieve collective purposes of learning, they "create a structure to promote a collaborative culture". Similarly, Danielson (2015) argues that in a culture of professional inquiry, it is paramount that teachers are afforded opportunities to nourish their practice.

Gherardi (2008) argues that knowledge is located within social interactions, as such teachers within the same environment are better placed to help one another through professional supportive conversations. De Clercq, Shalem and Nkambu (2018) argue that the current approach of curriculum management, which is dominated by a tick box approach, indicates that an opportunity is being missed to make both teachers and SMTs look at their work and improve their practice. Similarly, Danielson (2015) maintains that if SMTs neglect to bring on board professional supportive conversations with teachers, as the most influential tools, they, in turn, refuse to promote learning and professional development. Salleh (2016) affirms that professional supportive conversations, as a democratic and participatory process, allows teachers to discuss their understanding of teaching. He further argues that professional supportive conversations put practice under review. Similarly, Danielson (2015) contends that teachers are inspired to think about their work through professional supportive conversations.

De Clercq, Shalem and Nkambu (2018) maintain that for professional supportive conversations to emerge, the establishment of collegial working cultures of trust and respect is key. According to Cunningham and Gresso (1993, cited in Chance & Segura, 2009), trust enables a strong culture to develop and enables teachers to attain their desired goals. Spanneut (2010) maintains that teachers feel less threatened and they are not afraid to take risks in creating opportunities

if they trust the SMT. Moreover, Chance and Segura (2009) contend that trust enables relationships to flourish, such that teachers are not afraid to take chances since they know that they will not be isolated. Spanneut (2010) pointed out that teachers are more supportive of one another if they trust each other, as a result, they share and help each other more.

Wahlstrom and Louis (2008) suggest that principals can indirectly strengthen trust among teachers through supportive behaviour and that roles and responsibilities have to be clarified as far as mentoring is concerned. Wahlstrom and Louis (2008) argue that as much as pedagogical knowledge and skills contribute to the fundamental building blocks for instruction, collegial trust and job satisfaction are major factors that have an impact on student learning. Likewise, Gullatt and Lofton (1996, cited in Benoliel, 2017) pointed out that principals enhance academic emphasis by strengthening collaborative relationships and building team trust. In the same way, Queen-Mary and Mtapuri (2014) maintain that mentoring or professional supportive conversations should be one of the school's priorities.

Long (2009) asserts that professional supportive conversations as a process, oblige teachers to meet. In addition, Koballa, Bradbury, Glynn and Deaton (2008) argue that the SMT and teachers should be provided space to share their conceptions of supportive conversation and that the SMT has to ensure that professional conversations meetings are scheduled. Likewise, Chance and Segura (2009) maintain that if the school environment allows space and time for teachers to plan together, this not only fosters teacher involvement in decision making but also provides an environment for school improvement. Moreover, Gullatt and Lofton (1996, cited in Benoliel, 2017) maintain that principals who organise professional work time among teachers reduce violence and academic emphasis is enhanced. Similarly, Chance and Segura (2009, p. 7) contend that "time for teacher learning is one of the most important investments a school system can make to maintain and improve quality educational programs". They further assert that setting aside time for collaboration gave them space to build consensus as relationships were repaired, in the process, they managed to build trust with the staff. Louis, Kruse and Raywid (1995, cited in Banoliel, 2009) affirmed that in schools that give more attention to student academic achievement, more time was given to teachers to collaborate. Wahlstrom and Loius (2008) argued that school policies which are supportive and allocated time for mentoring are crucial for the formation of professional learning communities.

City et al. (2010, cited in Metcalfe, 2018) argue that professional support must be deliberately connected to tangible and immediate problems of practice to be effective. Similarly, Buysse, Sparkman and Wesley (2003, cited in Vescio, Ross & Adams, 2008, p. 81) pointed out that "Knowledge is situated in the day-to-day lived experiences of teachers and best understood through critical reflection". According to the OECD report (2016, cited in Metcalfe, 2018), teacher collaboration enhances teachers' beliefs in their ability to teach, engage students and manage classrooms. Through professional supportive conversation, the SMTs can bridge any gap between theory and practice to improve curriculum management (Bantwini & Diko, 2011). Elmore (2006) contends that the organisation of the school and its practices of accountability must create processes of teacher improvement and professional conversations, allowing teachers to become collective learners. However, Jika iMfundo and the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education, in their 2019 module five training document for SMTs pointed out that teachers will be willing to share their challenges if they believed that the conversations were not about fault-finding, but were safe spaces where they could talk about what they were struggling with professionally (Jika iMfundo School Management Team Training Module 5, term two, 2019).

Elmore (2006, p. 20) maintains that as much as teachers and SMTs are accountable for the school performance, their accountability is subject to the support given to them to complete any task given to them, which he refers to as "reciprocal accountability". Since the professional supportive conversations are evidence-based, SMTs are expected to plan for the conversations, be well prepared and ensure that all reports are collected beforehand.

2.6.1 Professional supportive conversations, as a mentoring approach

Rhodes and Beneicke (2002, p. 301) contend that "A mentor is a more experienced individual willing to share their knowledge with someone less experienced in a relationship of mutual trust". Mentoring, according to Shank (2005), is viewed as a one-to-one relationship between a novice and an experienced teacher. Long (2009) asserts that mentoring occurs when interconnected groups of teachers come together to converse in professional learning. However, Long (2009) argues that the conception of mentoring has evolved and advanced, instead of a one-to-one approach, a mentor can work with many teachers and the relationship can be dynamic and reciprocal. Moreover, Shank (2005) contends that mentees can also bring vast expertise, where teachers in a group, including the mentor, can all benefit and learn.

Mentors function as co-learners who become reflective partners and provide feedback on teaching and learning as professional supportive assistant teachers (Koballa, Bradbury, Glynn & Deaton, 2008).

Rhodes and Beneicke (2002, p. 302) argue that "management teams need to devise strategies to facilitate closer working relationships between colleagues so that trust and mutual support can develop". Professional supportive conversations, as a mentoring approach, is one of the roles and responsibilities of the Principal and the SMT. They ought to offer professional advice to all staff in the school about work and performance. They have to be responsible for the development of school-based, school focused and externally directed staff training programmes to assist teachers, including those who are new and inexperienced, in developing and achieving educational objectives in accordance with the needs of the school (DBE, Personal Administrative Measures, 2016, Education Labour Relations Council, 1998). These duties and responsibilities call for continuing school-based professional supportive conversations, which is led by the principal with the support of the SMT.

According to Pather (2010) and Long (2009), mentoring is a strategy for Professional Development (PD). Morgan (2015) affirms that for a positive impact on student learning, continuing professional development is vital for both SMT and teachers. Moreover, Gillentine (2006) argues that professional development encourages teachers to reflect, participate, collaborate and abide in discussions about their practice. Spillane (2008, cited in Morgan, 2015) contends that collaborative mentoring among SMTs and teachers is required if learning in schools has to be improved. Milondzo and Seema (2015) assert that curriculum leadership embraces the importance of coaching, motivating, inspiring and mentoring teachers. Professional supportive conversations provide opportunities for collaboration among teachers and for one-on-one mentoring.

Pather (2010) argues that professional and personal development can be promoted through effective mentoring. Kajee (2011) claimed that mentoring and induction practices form the foundation to professionalise teaching, as such they help to develop novice teachers. However, Ncube, Mammen and Molepo (2012) contend that the focus of mentoring is not only for student teachers, as in the past but education has adopted a strategy whereby in-service mentoring is emphasised. Moreover, Waghid and Louw (2008, cited in Pather, 2010) maintain that mentoring, as the PD strategy, rewards educators, the school and the entire education system.

Wilson and Hartung (2015) claim that informal learning conversations with other colleagues are an influential derivation of self-directed, professional development.

Timperly, Wilson, Barrar and Fung (2007, cited in Metcalfe, 2018) contend that actively organised environments promote professional learning. Moreover, Mutemeri and Chetty (2011) point out the need for the establishment of structures, which will open a space for the SMT and teachers to meet. Likewise, Long (2009) maintains that the SMT has to develop collaborative leadership structures for mentoring to succeed. The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education affirmed that it is the responsibility of the SMT to provide teachers with mentoring and coaching relevant to them. They further stated that the SMT should respond to the professional development needs of teachers (KZNDOE, toolkit for school management teams on curriculum management, 2017). Chance and Segura (2009) pointed out that collaboration was successful because there was structured and focused teacher planning groups.

Bertram, Mthiyane, and Mukeredzi (2015) assert that to enhance the professional growth of teachers, SMTs as mentors should develop strong relationships of trust and goodwill. According to Cunningham and Gresso (1993, cited in Chance & Segura, 2009), trust enables a strong culture to develop and enables teachers to attain their desired goals. Chance and Segura (2009) further ascertain that trust enables relationships to flourish, such that teachers are not afraid to take chances since they know that chances of being isolated are not there.

Teachers have to utilise the mandated 80 hours on Professional Development (PD) yearly, which exceeds the daily seven hours (Education Labour Relations Council, 2000; DBE: National Policy Framework on Teacher Education and Development, 2007). Morgan (2015) maintains that a positive impact on student learning can be enhanced if teachers are afforded time and space for collaborative continuing professional development. However, DuFour and Eaker (1998, cited in Chance & Segura 2009) argued that collaboration and mentoring is unlikely to materialise outside of the workday if teachers don't have sufficient time within the teaching day for significant interactions. Over and above the 80 hours for PD, the SMT has to provide mentoring opportunities by affording teachers time and space (Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa, 2011). Metcalfe and Witten (2019) contend that the departmental heads have little time for supervision and mentoring because of their workload. They pointed out that departmental heads for the

foundation phase are expected to teach without a break. As a result, they argue, monitoring and reporting become a compliance exercise. However, Chance and Segura (2009, p. 7) pointed out that "time for teacher learning is one of the most important investments a school system can make to maintain and improve quality educational programs". They further stated that setting aside time for collaboration gave them space to build consensus as relationships were repaired, in the process, they managed to build trust within the staff.

Chance and Segura (2009), in their study of a rural high school that showed improved and sustained achievement over a period of five years, pointed out that the process of school improvement and change was driven through collaboration. The study revealed that collaboration was very specific. They highlighted two principles of collaboration. The first principle highlighted was that there was time set aside for collaboration. The last principle highlighted that the SMT created a culture of collaboration, by ensuring that teachers were held accountable for specific actions and that planning was student-focused. Shank (2005, p. 81) affirmed that "collaboration groups within schools can be powerful places for mentoring of teachers at all stages in their careers as they face challenges of teaching".

Msila (2012) pointed out that when mentors are less enthusiastic, mentoring fails. Mutemeri and Chetty (2011) as well as Mthiyane, Naidoo and Bertram (2018) contend that the lack of support and training given to mentors might contribute to non-implementation and they further emphasise the need for regular mentor training and meetings. They add that some mentors fail because they are not given support and are expected to carry out the task all by themselves.

2.6.2 Professional supportive conversations in a professional learning community

Stoll, Bolam, McMahom, Wallace and Thomas (2006) maintain that there is no universal definition of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), however, argue that a number of scholars assert that if a group of teachers converge to share and seriously question their practice in an ongoing, thoughtful, and in an inclusive way, to strengthen their capacity as professionals, that can be defined as a Professional Learning Community (PLC). The PLC model in the pilot phase in Singapore, according to Salleh (2016) focused on three aims. Firstly, they ensured that learners learn. Secondly, the focus was on establishing a collaborative culture and lastly, they concentrated on the attainment of learning outcomes.

Hord (2009) maintains that a PLC is when teachers interface to converse or interact in purposeful activities to learn with and or from colleagues about selected topics, to develop and identify a shared purpose associated with the topic. PLCs, according to Salleh (2016), strengthen teacher and organisational capacity to improve learning outcomes**.** Department of Basic Education defines PLCs as communities that provide the environment and the necessary backing for groups of teachers, school management teams and circuit managers to collectively engage one another. (DBE, Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa, 2011).

The Department of Basic Education is promoting and advocating for PLCs. Metcalfe and Witten (2019, p. 6) contend that curriculum management routines "enable schools to build practices that enabled functioning as a PLC with internal accountability systems and practices characterised by a culture of professional, supportive, evidence-based conversations". Salleh (2016) claims that PLCs support the routine of conversations and interactions, which by design are embedded in the PLCs. He further maintained that they have an impact on both teachers' and learners' learning. Harris (2009) contends that a remarkable difference in the school's performance can be achieved through the utilization of professional learning communities.

Hord (2009) argues that there are six research-based characteristics of the PLCs. Members of the PLC understand what a school should be, as a result, they all share the same beliefs, values and have a common vision about the school. Secondly, because of their common and supportive leadership, influence, control and functions are assigned to all members of the PLC or SMT. Thirdly, they support each other on structural conditions, as such resources are made readily available and they all afford each other time. Fourthly, they understand that building relationships and nurturing them is paramount, as such, they respect one another and also respect each other's point of view, and for them, trust is the building block of their relationship. The fifth characteristic is their understanding of the existence of the PLC, which is collective learning, with the main purpose of addressing the needs of both themselves and learners, to enhance their profession. Lastly, they can collaborate, they gain feedback on their practice as they share their experiences and their practice.

Spanneut (2010) pointed out that PLCs have been used and acknowledged as a platform that set out teaching, learning and curricula at the centre. Morgan (2015) maintains that by creating and fostering PLCs, SMTs will have to collaborate, use workshops and professional

conversations for discussions and exchange ideas on strategies that work. Long (2009) argued that to foster collaboration between SMTs and teachers, schools need to build PLCs. Likewise, Salleh (2016) contends that the collaborative process can be better understood by participating in PLCs. Similarly, Metcalfe and Witten (2019) contend that challenges of curriculum coverage linked to pedagogy need PLCs, whereby teachers may be able to share subject pedagogical preoccupations. Schools will in turn adopt the best strategies to improve curriculum management, curriculum delivery and learner performance. PLCs enhance elements of trust among SMTs and teachers (Chance & Segura, 2009; Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008) as it promotes open sharing rather than 'supervisory discourse' from the SMT to teachers (Spanneut, 2010, p. 101).

Open sharing, as Spanneut (2010) argues, should be afforded time during the school day and it should not be an event but be continuous throughout the year. Similarly, Harries (2004) pointed out that dedicated time given to teachers to collaborate is the recipe for success in schools that were improving teachers. Metcalfe and Witten (2019, p. 6) contend that curriculum management routines "enable schools to build practices that enabled functioning as a professional learning community with internal accountability systems and practices characterised by a culture of professional, supportive, evidence-based conversations".

A school can create a culture of professional supportive conversations by supporting active and meaningful teacher participation in professional learning communities (PLCs). (DBE, Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa, 2011). Professional learning communities allow teachers to develop one another through professional conversations, either in a formal or informal setting. The SMT needs to "encourage a culture of reflexive practice, peer support conversations and collaboration" (Ncube, Mammen & Molepo, 2012, p. 615). Morgan (2015) affirms that effective SMTs establish all spheres of the school as a professional learning community. However, for a school to build practices that allow itself to function as a professional learning community, internal accountability systems and practices must be characterized by a culture of professional, supportive, evidence-based conversations (Jika iMfundo school management team training module 5, term two, 2019). In the study of PLCs in Singapore, Salleh (2016) observed that PLCs provided schools with means for open communication, rapport, trust and continuous improvement and inquiry of their work. According to Vescio, Ross, and Adams (2008), PLCs

bring about comprehensive and continuing conversations among teachers on curriculum and their practice.

2.7 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was informed and underpinned by situated learning theoretical framework.

2.7.1 Situated Learning

Situated learning theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) was adopted since it was a useful theoretical framework to analyse both research questions of this study. Lave and Wenger (1991) assert that situated learning theories conceptualise learning as changes in participation in socially organised activities, and individuals' use of knowledge as an aspect of their participation in social practices. He further contends that learning takes place in various forms and conditions of practice like professional development and various curriculum management strategies. According to Brodie and Borko (2016, cited in Chauraya & Brodie, 2018), the theory of learning is situated in communities of practice, including professional supportive conversations, as a special kind of community of practice.

Putnam and Borko (2000) maintain that the environment in which teachers learn, is equally key and important as knowledge and management skills learnt, as such what is learnt is underlined by the setting and circumstances of what is learnt. Metcalfe and Witten (2019) contend that the school where teachers teach is the basic site for professional development. Elmore (2008) agrees that the perfect sites for professional development are schools as they learn better since practice challenges are similar, He further contends that teachers can relate better in their environment during professional supportive conversations.

The question of the nature of knowledge and the process of gained knowledge, as highlighted by Putnam and Borko (2000), through professional supportive conversations between the SMT and teachers will be explored through this research. Adler (2000, cited in Borko, 2004), maintains that SMTs' learning, from a situative perspective, is acknowledged as a process of enhancing participation in the practice of curriculum management practices, including participating in professional supportive conversations, the SMT becomes more informed in and about curriculum management.

Borko (2004) argues that professional development programmes, whether initiated within a learning environment, such as meetings or professional supportive conversations between the SMT and teachers or principals and departmental heads can enhance SMTs management skills and capacity. He further argues that the SMTs management capabilities can be broadened and transformed. Similarly, Cobb and Bowers (1999, cited in Putman & Borko, 2000) assert that interactive structure and approach, such as professional supportive conversations, which includes departmental heads as participant's, are the main focus on situative perspective.

Lave and Wenger (1991) contend that the learning curriculum is located within society, hence it cannot be isolated, manipulated or analysed outside of the social relations. Similarly, Witten (2017) maintains that schools' problems are multi-faceted, and schools do not operate in a vacuum, hence collaboration and conversations help schools to understand societal dilemmas. Curriculum management focusing on Jika iMfundo key collaboration practices, according to Metcalf (2018) make use of Jika iMfundo curriculum management tools and learner work as part of evidence-based interactions. Metcalf and Witten (2019, p 342) pointed out that the Jika iMfundo campaign "promoted schools as sites for professional learning by creating the organisational arrangements and routines that promote collaboration and de-privatisation of professional practice". Putman and Borko (2000) maintain that curriculum management tools enable and crate space for schools' systems for transformation and professional development (Borko, 2004).

Through this perspective, the research will be able to explore the potential of Metcalfe's (2018) curriculum management routines, tools and techniques required to make collaborative professionalism possible at the school level. I will further make use of this perspective of multi-units of analysis to ascertain whether professional development and support in the form of professional supportive conversation enhance SMTs capacity to manage curriculum management

Wenger (1998, p. 7) defines communities of practice as "groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly". Lave and Wenger (1991, p 98) define a community of practice as "the set of relations among persons, activities and the world". In this study, managers' identity, according to Lave and Wenger (1991) is shaped by their sense of belonging. Wenger (1998) outlines three characteristics that are shared in a community of practice, namely, a shared domain of interest,

community and practice. Wenger, McDermott and Synder (2002) maintain that for the community of practice to exist, there must be a shared domain of interest. Members of the community, according to Lave and Wanger (1991) are unique, distinctive and come from different schools of thought. Communities ought to meet often, and participate together in discussions and conversations, to support one another. Similarly, Lave and Wenger (1991) contend that members of community learn from each other as they frequently relate. According to Wenger (1998, p.47), "practice connotes doing, doing in a historical and social context that gives structure and meaning to what we do". He further maintains that practice incorporates what is said and what is assumed. Practice includes documents, roles, procedures and tools. Wenger (1998, p. 49) argues that practice "is a learning process". Preece (2014) maintains that the purpose of a community of practice is that it is a means of encouraging its members to take a collaborative effort for their development. As they converse, trying to find solutions to the challenges encountered, they would collaboratively find solutions, as that would enhance their professional development. In this study, SMTs are communities of practice because they meet all the characteristics of the community of practice. In this study, SMTs share the same domain, which is curriculum management and professional supportive conversations. Their concern of curriculum coverage challenges and on how best to assist teachers makes them to converge and assist one another. SMTs are sharing the same practice, they are school leaders who use common tools and have assigned roles and responsibilities to manage curriculum. SMTs learns about curriculum management, and they learn from each other.

Preece (2014) points out that promoting a sense of lifelong learning beyond the working hours and schools is a challenge. However, Wenger (1998) suggest that creating space for mentoring through dialogue can facilitate opportunities for lifelong learning. In this respect, professional supportive conversations, as a mentoring approach, is one of the ways SMTs can develop to improve their practice. Wenger (1998) maintains that learning occurs through the engagement of reciprocal action and the action and interaction engagement. Through professional supportive conversation, teachers and SMTs would be able to interact and SMTs would be able to guide and support teachers of what is expected of them. However, Nicholson (2009, p. 1) prefers "learning networks" elaborate to Communities of Practice. Wenger (1998) further argues that learning maintains and reproduces the community and their capacity is improved. He further states that as they share resources through supportive conversations, they in the process build relationships and can easily interpret their world. Wenger, McDermott and Snyder (2002) maintain that communities allow members to present their challenges and ideas

and they know they will be welcome since they belong. Wenger (1998, p. 48) points out that communities of practice are "places where we develop, negotiate and share ideas". Lave and Wenger (1991) maintain that power relations within the school and the reasonable state of the school enable possibilities for learning.

According to Dufour (2004, p. 3), "The powerful collaboration that characterizes situated learning theory is a systematic process in which teachers work together to analyse and improve their classroom practice". Wenger (1998) contends that the strength of the SMT, as the community, lies in their capability to propel the strategy, generate new ideas, solve problems, and develop their skills. He further maintains that in the process, the SMTs promote the spread of good practice. According to Jones and Bodie (2014, p. 378), "Professional conversations and relationships are a source of strength to teachers and ultimately contribute to their practice". This study will focus mainly on SMTs, who are curriculum managers in their schools. In this study the learning focus for the professional supportive conversations was understanding teacher's curriculum coverage challenges and support provided to teachers. As Lave and Wenger (1991) contend the situated learning theory in this study, explains how the SMTs, as the community, management skills and competencies are learnt and strengthened through professional supportive conversations.

2.8 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, an overview was discussed of both international and national literature relating to professional supportive conversations, curriculum management and the roles of school management teams in curriculum management. The concepts of curriculum and curriculum management were discussed. In addition, the key roles of the school management teams consisting of the principal, deputy principal and departmental heads were explained. Professional supportive conversations as a concept, as a mentoring approach and as a form of a professional learning community were elaborated. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the theoretical framework informing this study namely, situated learning theory. Chapter 3 discusses the research design and methodology.

CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter provided an overview of national and international literature on curriculum, curriculum management, the role of school management teams and professional supportive conversations. The theoretical framework employed in this chapter was also discussed.

This study aimed to explore the role of professional supportive conversations as a strategy to enhance the school management team's capacity to manage the curriculum. In this chapter, the research design and methodology adopted in this study are outlined. This chapter commences with a discussion of the interpretive paradigm and the qualitative methodological approach. This is followed by an outline of the case study research design and the strengths and weaknesses of the case study research design. Next, methods of data collection used in this study, namely, observation, semi-structured interviews, semi-structured questionnaires and document analysis as well as their suitability for this case study are explained. This is followed by a discussion of ethical considerations and issues of trustworthiness of the study, such as credibility, conformability, transferability and dependability. The chapter concludes with an outline of my positionality as the researcher.

3.2 INTERPRETIVE RESEARCH PARADIGM

The understanding of the term paradigm has differed from one scholar to another. Creswell and Creswell (2018) prefer to use the term world view instead of using the term paradigm, to refer to assumptions that influence the researchers' practice. Creswell (2014) defines a worldview as a universal, accepted philosophical position about the world which is informed by the nature of research. Flick (2015) defines paradigm as the foundation of the method used in the research. He further argued that paradigms are substantive concepts, challenges, and a flexible integrated cluster of comparable methodological tools and approaches. For Chalmers (1982, cited in Shah & Bargi, 2013, p. 253), a paradigm is "made up of the general theoretical assumptions and laws, and techniques for their application that the members of a particular scientific community adopt". Guba and Lincoln (1994, p. 105) define a paradigm as "the basic belief system or

worldview that guides the investigator". They further maintain that research paradigms not only guide the investigator on choices of a method but research paradigms expand to the nature of the world (ontology) and how the world is understood (epistemology). Likewise, Thanh and Thanh (2015, p. 24) refer to the paradigm as "epistemology or ontology, or even research methodology". In the same way, Merriam's (2009) emphasis is on the researchers' beliefs like knowledge (epistemology) and reality (ontology). Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) argue that the assumptions on ontology trigger assumptions on epistemology, these sequentially, trigger methodological considerations and the assumptions on the models of human beings. Jonker and Pennink (2010, as cited in Wahyuni, 2012) argued that a research paradigm represents a set of central hypotheses and principles as to how researchers perceive the world.

Merriam (2009) described the interpretive paradigm as the study that entails people's descriptions of things and how things are experienced through their senses. (Merriam 2009, p. 9) contends that "we can only know what we experience by attending to perceptions and meanings". Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) maintain that single situations and events have multiple interpretations and multiple perspectives. Likewise, Merriam (2009) argues that single and observable reality does not exist. Interpretive researchers, according to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) aim to understand individuals' interpretations of the world that surround them. Similarly, Maree (2003, as cited in Nkosi 2014, p. 33) affirmed that "interpretive research aims to present a perspective of a situation and to analyse the situation under study to provide insight into how particular group of people makes sense of their situation or the phenomena they encounter".

This research study is located within the interpretive research paradigm. Making use of the interpretive paradigm helped me as the researcher to conclude how SMTs understand professional supportive conversations as the curriculum management strategy and to what extent it enhanced their practice of managing curriculum. Wahyuni (2012) highlighted the importance of interacting and having a dialogue with the participants that are studied, therefore, I interacted with the SMT on matters relating to curriculum management and I also had dialogues on professional supportive conversations.

In this study, SMTs were selected from different schools with different contexts and backgrounds, given that the study aimed to understand how professional supportive conversations assist SMTs to manage curriculum in different schools. Baxter and Jack (2008,

p. 545) affirm that the interpretive paradigm "recognises the importance of the subjective human creation of meaning". Creswell and Creswell (2018) contend that subjective meanings are socially constructed since they are socially and historically negotiated. The understanding that different approaches employed by schools differ and that the knowledge and experiences of SMTs differ motivated me to make use of this paradigm since interpretations of SMTs would be influenced by the contexts of their schools.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011, p. 22) assert that "investigation for the interpretive researcher aims to understand how this glossing of reality goes on at one time and in one place and compare it with what goes on at different times and places". Interpretivist researchers maintain that truth is not absolute and that it depends on the interpretation of the individual (Baxter & Jack, 2008). In the interpretive paradigm, researchers pursue to understand the sphere of their lives and their work (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell, 2014). They further argue that in the process of attempting to understand their world, interpretive researchers develop different and multiple subjective meanings of their experiences. In the same way, Guba and Lincoln (1994) affirm that subjective meanings or realities depend on the SMT's form and content. As such, SMT's subjective meaning or interactions of the role of professional supportive conversations in curriculum management according to Guba and Lincoln (1994) are qualified by the truths that are in the minds of the SMTs.

The social construction of reality is the assumption that the interpretive paradigm is built upon (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Merriam, 2009). Also, interpretive researchers aim to make sense of how the world is perceived and then interpret the meaning (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Thanh & Thanh, 2015). The interaction of the researcher and the SMTs, according to Shah and Bargi (2013), leads to findings that are accepted by both parties since both the researcher and the SMTs become fused into a single entity during their interaction. The concept of curriculum management and professional supportive conversation, and whether the latter enhanced their management skills were not discovered, as Shah and Bargi (2013) affirm, but through interactions, we were able to construct the meaning of the concepts.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) contend that understanding participants experiences assist the researcher to understand the participants, and that can be done by having an insight into their backgrounds and beliefs. That also assisted me to understand and interpret participants lived experiences of their complex world, the challenges they encountered and whether

opportunities for professional development and mentoring were afforded to them by themselves and the system as a whole (McChesney & Aldridge, 2019; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) argue that behaviours of participants are meaningful to the researcher once their intentions can be understood. On the other hand, Bernstein (1974, cited in Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011) argues that the negotiated meanings at times can be a product of the circumstances in which one is placed. He further contends that the researchers should guard against imposing definitions of situations upon the participants. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) further argue that our interactions depend on shared experiences. As Creswell and Creswell (2018) affirmed, my background as a teacher and manager, both at school and the district office, shaped how I interpreted SMTs behaviours and was influenced by my personal, cultural, and historical experiences.

Taylor and Medina (2011) maintain that the interpretive research paradigm enables the researcher to have an in-depth understanding of both the teacher's experiences and the communities in which schools are situated. This study used the interpretive paradigm to have a wide focus on historical and social momentum streamlining both curriculum management policies and the schooling system in which the school management was immersed. In the same way, as Thanh and Thanh (2015) affirmed, this study enabled me as the researcher to understand the experiences of the SMTs. Furthermore, the interpretive paradigm was most suitable for this study because, according to Scotland (2012), it aimed not only to understand participants' behaviour but also to explain their actions from their point of view.

3.3 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH APPROACH

Van Maanen (1979, cited in Merriam, 2009, p. 13) defines qualitative research as "an umbrella term covering an array of interpretive techniques which seek to describe, decode, translate, and otherwise come to terms with the meaning, not the frequency, of certain more or less naturally occurring phenomena in the social world". Creswell and Creswell (2018) define qualitative research as an approach that examines and seeks to understand the group's and individuals' meaning to a human or social challenge. They further contend that the spotlight is more on individual meaning. Baxter and Jack (2008) describe a qualitative study as research where a phenomenon is explored using different sources of data. Denzin and Lincoln (2005, cited in Merriam, 2009, p. 13) defined qualitative research as the "study of things in their natural

settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them".

This research study adopted the qualitative research approach. Making use of a qualitative research approach helped me as the researcher to explore the role of professional supportive conversations as a strategy to enhance the school management team's capacity to manage the curriculum. As a qualitative researcher, according to Merriam (2009), my interest was to unpack how SMTs interpret their experiences of curriculum management and professional supportive conversations and how they constituted their world. The qualitative research approach, according to Dodge (2011), was justified since the research questions of this study called for the researcher to explore. Research questions in qualitative studies, according to Stake (1995) are aligned to cases that attempt to seek patterns of both expected and unpredicted relationships. Qualitative research questions aim to gain an in-depth understanding of the chosen topic, and Leavy (2017) and Stake (1995) assert that they mostly begin with 'what' and 'how'. For this study, I explored SMTs experiences about how professional supportive conversations enhanced the school management team's capacity in curriculum management. The second research question explored the extent to which SMTs created spaces for teachers to engage in professional supportive conversations.

This study, as McChesney and Aldridge (2019) suggested, accepted the voice of the SMTs, and their accounts were accepted as they reflected constructions of their reality. Stake (1995, p. 99) contends that "most contemporary qualitative researchers nourish the belief that knowledge is constructed rather than discovered. The world we know is a particularly human construction". Dodge (2011) further asserts that qualitative research makes use of open-ended questions since meaning is constructed by human beings.

Merriam (2009) suggests that many scholars presented four main characteristics of the qualitative research approach. The first characteristic focuses on understanding and meaning. She argued that making sense of participants' lives was the overall purpose of qualitative research. In line with this characteristic, this study aimed to understand how SMTs make sense of their role as curriculum managers, the main aspects of curriculum management and whether they understood why they had to manage the curriculum. I aimed to establish whether professional supportive conversations enhanced their role as curriculum managers. The second characteristic focused on the role of the researcher during data collection and analysis. During

the data collection process, Merriam (2009) contends that the researcher was able to immediately respond and seek clarity, through verbal and nonverbal means, when the need arose. During the data collection process, I probed for clarity and asked SMTs to elaborate on their responses or give examples. The third characteristic emphasises the process of qualitative research as inductive. Researchers, according to Merriam (2009, p. 16) "gather data to build concepts, hypothesis, or theories". As the researcher in this study, as affirmed by Dodge (2011, p.42), I was the "key instrument in data collection and the interpreter of the data". In a qualitative research approach, the researcher's theories are informed by understandings and observations obtained from schools. In this study, after perceptively understanding and observing participants during school visits, I was able to come up with theories or hypotheses of the researched topic. The theories or hypotheses of this study were enriched by combined and ordered information into themes obtained from observations, semi-structured questionnaires, document analysis, and semi-structured interviews. Thus, what I as the researcher inductively learned from the schools was the base of this qualitative research approach.

Lastly, Merriam (2009) asserts that qualitative research is rich in description. Cepeda and Martin (2005, p.852) contend that "the common element of qualitative research is the collection of data in the form of words and statements, which is analysed by methods that do not include statistics or quantification". Dodge (2011) asserts that phenomena that are not easily learned through conventional research methods, such as the feelings and thought processes of the SMTs, are explored through the qualitative research method. To delve into the SMTs exposure, reality, and impressions, this research study made use of small groups of SMT members in their schools. This research study focused on SMTs' lived experiences of their context. Dodge (2011, p.41) argues that "qualitative research methods are the best approach when studying phenomena in their natural settings". The natural settings were not only their schools but also departmental heads management strategies within the department they lead and their familiar everyday setting. Since I aimed to understand SMTs management practices in their context, data was obtained from documents kept by SMTs when managing the curriculum. Schedules and minutes or reports for professional supportive conversations were analysed and follow up questions were asked to obtain the required data. Data was also obtained from semi-structured interviews and semi-structured questionnaires. The extracts from data collection tools added to the descriptive nature of qualitative research.

Shah and Bargi (2013) highlighted the disadvantages of the interpretive paradigm. They argue that as much as it promoted individual meaning, broader generalisations were highly compromised because of the subjective and contextual nature of the report. They further argue that interpretive research was time-consuming and costly because it required the researcher to observe behaviour longer to conclude on interactions. The subjectivity of the researcher was also a disadvantage since the views of the researcher were reflected in the research process. Also, the participants' privacy could be compromised as a result of the open-ended nature of the methods utilised, the probability that participants' views and perceptions may be incorrect and they may be forced to share their secrets which might make them uncomfortable. Lastly, Shah and Bargi, (2013, p. 259) contend that interpretivism researchers often produce theorised accounts that represent the participant's sociological understanding.

Thanh and Thanh (2015) assert that qualitative reports characterise the world in words, and that enabled me as the researcher to fully understand the context of the SMTs and their schools. Similarly, like Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018) contend, I was able to seek further clarity from the data presented by the participants if their inputs were not clearly stated or not well understood. In the same vein, as Creswell and Creswell, (2018) affirmed, it enabled me to obtain rich and in-depth detailed accounts of SMTs experiences. The data was captured, as described by Thanh and Thanh (2015, p. 26) "through the process of deep attentiveness, of empathetic understanding".

3.4 CASE STUDY RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design adopted in this study was the case study. Baxter and Jack (2008) argue that qualitative case studies enable an investigation of a case that uses several data sources within a particular context. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018) assert that different scholars define the case study as a method, a process, a research design while some refer to it as a methodology.

3.4.1 Defining case study

According to Wahyuni (2012), a case study is an in-depth study of a group of people or an organisation. In the same vein, Bertram and Christiansen (2014) define a case study as a systematic contextual in-depth study of one case which aims to capture participants' real-life

experiences. Correspondingly, Merriam (2009, p. 43) defines a case study as "an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system". Likewise, Zainal (2007) asserts that a case study examines contemporary real-life experience by making use of a small group of people as a subject of study. Moreover, Yin (2009, p.46) defines a case study as an empirical inquiry that "investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not evident". However, he argues that the contextual conditions are embedded in the study of the phenomenon. His extended definition of the case study is informed by other technical characteristics involved other than just real-life context. Yin (2009) maintains that the case study inquiry depends on several sources of information. Yin's (2009) definition confirms that the case study embraces all-inclusive research methods. According to Stake (1995, p. xi), a case study "is the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances". He further argues that the investigation approach that enables the researcher to probe in-depth an event, individuals, activities or process is a case study. Creswell (1994, cited in Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2018, p. 375) defines the case study "as a single instance of a bounded system, for example, a child, a clique, a class, a school, a community, others would not hold to such a tight definition".

This in-depth, single case study explored the experiences of SMTs making use of professional supportive conversations in their practice of curriculum management. The study was conducted in an environment familiar to the SMTs, examining their real-life experiences in their real context. This research study was an in-depth case study of the SMTs to get maximum knowledge and understanding of the role played by professional supportive conversations in curriculum management. Wahyuni (2012) maintains that investigating in-depth small groups can be better done through the case study, whereby the investigation is done face-to-face.

Several scholars have attempted to define the case and the case study (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009**,** 2011; Merriam, 2009). Yin (2002, cited in Yazan, 2015, p. 138) defines a case as "a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between a phenomenon and context are not clear and the researcher has little control over the phenomenon and context". His definition of a case highlights that he views a case study as a research method. Stake (1995, p. 2) defines a case as "a bounded system". He further argues that a case is more of an object, like people but not a process or events, as such it is a more specific, composite thing that functions. Merriam (1998, cited in Yazan, 2015, p. 139) defines

a case as “a thing, a single entity, and a unit around which there are boundaries”. Merriam (2009) and Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2018) contend that an individual, a person, organisation, a group, a community, or a studied policy can be a case. Baxter and Jack (2008) define the case as the unit of analysis. They however argue that it is important to know what you intend to analyse in the research question or topic since the topic might include both persons and organisations. For this study, the phenomenon or the case to be researched is professional supportive conversations by SMTs.

3.4.2 Types of case studies

Merriam (2009) claims that particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic are the main features of the case study. Stake (1995) classifies case studies as intrinsic, instrumental, or collective. Yin (2009**)** classifies case studies as descriptive, exploratory, or explanatory. He further characterises them as single and multiple-case studies. According to Merriam (2009), particularistic case studies are those that concentrate on the peculiar, singular situation, case, or matter. Descriptive case studies end products are rich and broad, such that it fully describes all the phenomenon under study. Lastly, heuristic case studies confirm what is known by the reader or supplements the readers’ experience. The heuristic case studies give more clarity on the readers understanding of the phenomenon studied. According to Stake (1995), intrinsic case studies are those that focus on a single, distinctive situation. Intrinsic case studies are pre-selected for the researcher. They arose because of the need for the case to be studied and they are not chosen by the researcher. The collective case studies scrutinise more than one phenomenon. Instrumental case studies are conducted to acquire an understanding of the particular phenomenon studied. Yin’s (2009) exploratory case studies probe phenomena where the effects of complex real-life interventions or programs connect with the presumed casual situations and other piloted research studies. Exploratory case studies are used to probe real-life cases or interventions, where the interventions or cases have no direct, simple outcomes. Descriptive case studies are preferred to illustrate the occurrence of the real-life aspect of a case in its contexts. Yin (2009) further classifies single and multiple case studies, where holistic single case studies examine the unique or extreme single situation in its context. While multiple case studies probe considerable cases intending to understand the correlation and discrepancies between the cases. This research study is a single case, exploratory case study. It was an in-depth study whereby I explored whether professional supportive conversations enhanced the school management team’s capacity to manage the curriculum.

3.4.3 Elements of case studies

Yin (2009) presents five elements that strengthen the case study research design: questions of the research, the aims or hypothesis of the study, the unit of analysis, the rationale that associates data to the purpose of the study and on what basis were findings clarified. For the first element, the 'how' and 'why' (Stake, 1995) are forms of questions. According to Yin (2009), these questions are the most fitting questions for this study. Similarly, as Cepeda and Martin (2005) assert, the 'how' and 'why' questions are relevant for this kind of case study research as they institute cause and effect. This form of question enables the researcher to detect the effects in the real context. This form of question further allows the researcher to understand the nature and complicated processes taking place. In line with this element, this study explored SMTs experience on how professional supportive conversations enhanced the school management team's capacity in curriculum management. The second research question explored the extent SMTs created spaces for teachers to engage in professional supportive conversations.

The purpose of the study was presented as the second component of the research study design. In line with the second component, the purpose of this case study was to understand the role of professional supportive conversations in enhancing School Management Teams (SMTs) capacity to manage the curriculum and how SMTs create a space for professional supportive conversations as professional development or mentoring approach.

The third element is the unit of analysis. Baxter and Jack (2008) argued that the unit of analysis is the case studied. Similarly, Yin (2009) contends that the unit of analysis is what the case study intends to analyse. Baxter and Jack (2008) affirmed that the unit of analysis is linked to the research question. In line with Creswell (1994, cited in Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018) assertions that a case study, as the unit of analysis, is a single instance like a school, a class, a clique, in a bounded system. In this study, as Baxter and Jack (2008) affirm, the professional supportive conversations were the unit of analysis. The connection of data to the hypothesis of the case study is the fourth element. Patterns are matched during the analysis of data. The fifth element of the case study has to do with the interpretation of the research findings.

Yin (2009, p. 18) contends that "a case study provides a unique example of real people in real situations, enabling readers to understand ideas more clearly than simply by presenting them

with abstract theories or principles". This research made use of the case study since small groups of SMTs were the participants. I observed the characteristics of the SMT. The purpose was to explore deeply and analyse the role of professional supportive conversations in curriculum management with the view of establishing generalisations about the wider population of school management. Yin (2009) asserts that a key characteristic of case studies is that it provides rich and detailed explanations. In this study, I collected data through the semi-structured questionnaire, where the SMTs were expected to provide answers informed by their management practices. Furthermore, data was collected from the documents provided by the SMTs about both management practices and professional development practices within the schools and through in-depth semi-structured interviews. A journal will be kept throughout the research where they will be observed very closely, a noticeable behaviour will be recorded and all the events will be recorded throughout the study.

3.4.4 Advantages and disadvantages of case studies

As much as there are advantages in using case studies, there are some limitations that necessitate the researcher to be cognisance of and be considerate when conducting case studies. Zainal (2007) highlights a few points that favour the researcher when making use of the case study. The first advantage is that data is scrutinised within the setting in which the project takes place. The collected data of this study was examined within the school context. The second advantage is that different approaches to case studies afford the researcher to make use of both quantitative and qualitative data analysis. This study generated qualitative data, where accounts of the SMTs behaviour were observed and recorded in the reflective journal, rich descriptions of SMTs experiences in words assisted in capturing the qualitative data that was analysed. The third advantage is that detailed qualitative accounts of complex real-life experiences of SMTs were clearly explained and captured.

Yin (2009) highlighted three disadvantages of case studies. The first issue is its lack of rigour since it often allows views that might be biased to influence the research findings. The second disadvantage is that case studies do not allow for scientific generalisation, given that it is not practical to generalise from a single case. Thirdly, some data collection methods like ethnographic, which are often confused with the case study method, take longer and produce a monumental amount of documentation.

3.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Primary research question that guided this study was:

How do SMTs create space and a conducive environment for professional supportive conversations as the strategy to enhance curriculum management.

The research questions that guided this study were:

1. To what extent do school management teams create spaces for teachers to engage in professional supportive conversations?
2. How do professional supportive conversations enhance the school management team's capacity in curriculum management?

The participants' responses from the semi-structured interviews, semi-structured questionnaires, data analysis, and observation of SMTs generated data to address the above research questions of the study.

3.6 RESEARCH SETTING

This study was located in the Lions River circuit in uMgungundlovu District, Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal. School Management Teams from three schools were selected as participants in this study. Two high schools and one primary school were chosen. The first high school had a high enrolment and a full quota of SMT, where the principal worked with the deputy principal and four other departmental heads. The second high school had a low enrolment with three members of the SMT. The impact of the administration and teaching load necessitated that one school with high and one with low enrolment were chosen. SMTs had to cope with both administration work and their teaching load. Members of the SMT and departmental heads had to teach and manage the work of all subject teachers. In primary school, the departmental head for the foundation phase and intersen phase was selected. In high school, the sciences and the languages departmental heads were selected. Sciences and Languages departmental heads had been trained by Jika iMfundo on curriculum management routines which involved professional supportive conversations. Coaching and support had been provided to both chosen departmental heads and principals in primary and high schools so the concept was not new to

them. All selected schools were located in rural areas. Because of low socio-economic conditions, the schools ranged from quintile two to quintile three. These schools were not fee-paying, had electricity, and had either piped water or used water from tanks.

3.7 PURPOSIVE SAMPLING

Leavy (2017) affirms that the sampling process involves the selection of a population, which might make certain claims on individual cases. Neuman (2014) contends that a sample offers relevant and useful knowledge or allows us to understand and look at the issues discussed differently. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) assert that the suitability of the sample is as important as both the methodology and instruments selected in the study. Shah and Bargi (2013) contend that convenience sampling, purposive sampling, or theoretical sampling are three approaches preferred to select a sample in interpretive research. However, Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2011) argue that purposive sampling assists the researcher to acquire exhaustive and detailed information. Purposive sampling was preferred to select three schools and members of SMT to participate in this research study. Jason and Glenwick (2016, p. 15) affirmed that "In purposive sampling, researchers aim to reach a specific population in terms of a specific characteristic". The selection criteria were informed by the school's awareness and insight on the SMTs role in curriculum management strategies and their perception of professional supportive conversations. According to Mason (2002, cited in Robinson, 2013), purposive sampling may be opted by a researcher where the researcher believes that certain individuals may have some crucial perspectives or views, which may be different from other participants.

This research study adopted a qualitative approach and according to Leavy (2017), purposive sampling, also called judgment sampling strategies, are generally preferred in qualitative research. The relevance of the sampled schools' SMTs to the research topic, as suggested by Neuman (2014), was the determining factor in selecting them. According to Jason and Glenwick (2016, p.15), "sampling in qualitative research focuses on gaining rich, local information, as opposed to gleaning generalized, global summaries". I was able to gain an in-depth understanding of professional supportive conversation as the strategy for curriculum management. A smaller sample size, as affirmed by Leavy (2017), was favoured. As the circuit manager of Lions River, one of my job descriptions is to monitor curriculum delivery and manage the curriculum. I work with the school's SMTs daily and I fully understand their

competence. I purposively selected three schools in the Lions River circuit, uMgungundlovu District. In each school, the principal and two departmental heads were selected as participants. Therefore, the sample in this study comprised of nine participants, three principals, and six departmental heads. In one primary school, the departmental head for the foundation phase and intermediate/senior phase were selected, while in two high schools, the sciences and the languages departmental heads were selected.

The findings of this study informed by the identified sample may not be generalized to the wider population of all SMTs in the circuit, or even in the district. Schools with different contexts and challenges were preferred to minimize the limitations. As the circuit manager, I was constantly aware of my position. I made every attempt not to affect the trustworthiness of the data.

3.8 DATA GENERATION INSTRUMENTS

Jason and Glenwick (2016, p. 15) affirmed that "qualitative methods in community-based research typically involve observing, listening, and engaging with people in their natural settings to learn about particular phenomena in their lives". Flick (2018) maintains that data collection in a qualitative case study can be informed by single or multiple data sources. In the same vein, Baxter and Jack (2008) affirm that data trustworthiness is strengthened. Creswell (2014) ascertains that as the researcher, information is collected through observing behaviour, interviewing participants, or examining documents. This study used the following data generation instruments: semi-structured interviews, semi-structured questionnaires, observations, and document analysis. As Merriam (2009, p. 136) affirms "Observation is a major means of collecting data in qualitative research. It offers a first-hand account of the situation under study and, when combined with interviewing and document analysis, allows for a holistic interpretation of the phenomenon being investigated".

The data generation methods and instruments used focused on the previous and the current practice on curriculum management, mentoring, and professional supportive conversations. Therefore, I collected qualitative data to examine SMTs' professional supportive conversations strategy on curriculum management.

3.8.1 Semi-structured questionnaires

Phillips and Stawarski (2008, p.96) argue that "questionnaires have become a mainstream tool for collecting application and implementation data because of their flexibility, low cost, and ease of administration". They further contend that a questionnaire can be used to gather participants' subjective pieces of information and their perspectives on the subject studied. Marlow (1998, cited in Mbhele, 2008) argues that interviewer bias is limited when questionnaires are used because they are relatively subjective.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018) describe three types of questionnaires: structured, semi-structured, and unstructured. For structured questionnaires, the sample size must be large and the questionnaire may require numerical data. For less structured questionnaires, the sample size may be smaller and the questionnaire may require participants to respond in words. They however argue that it is rare to use an unstructured questionnaire since the nature of the questionnaire requires the participants to respond to a given structure. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018), further affirm that questionnaires consist of closed questions and open-ended questions. They contend that a highly structured questionnaire consists of or asks closed questions. This type of questionnaire allows the researcher to detect patterns and make comparisons. Such a questionnaire requires a lot of time in the initial stages but the mode of analysis may be quicker.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018) argue that the semi-structured questionnaire consists of a range of open-ended questions or items. This type of questionnaire consists of structured, sequential, and focused questions. The questionnaire that consists of open-ended questions requires honest and personal participants' comments. Because of the nature of the questions, the participants in this study responded about their understanding and perspective of events. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018), the responses obtained from open-ended questions might give the jewel of detailed data that might not be captured in the questionnaire. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011, p. 321) contend that "If a site-specific case study is required, then qualitative, less structured, word-based and open-ended questionnaires may be more appropriate as they can capture the specificity of a particular situation".

The different modes of the questionnaire are presented by open-ended questions and several types of closed questions as multi-choice questions, dichotomous questions, rank-ordering,

rating scales, constant sum questions, and ratio data. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) affirm that questionnaires ask the most relevant types of questions. However, Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018) maintain that questions should be specific and not misleading and participants should be able to: answer and can convey their perspective, give coherent responses and recollect reliable memory.

This study used semi-structured questionnaires with both open-ended questions and Likert rating scales questions. Through the semi-structured questionnaires, I encouraged the participants to respond to or comment on questions in the best way possible. The semi-structured questionnaire comprised a range of responses to each question and the participants had to choose one appropriate response to express their views on professional supportive conversations processes. This enabled me to construct the degree of the participants' awareness and differentiation on the role of professional supportive conversations in curriculum management and their perspective on whether space afforded to teachers for professional supportive conversation benefits them and teachers. Open-ended questions were preferred because I was able to "catch the authenticity, richness, depth of response, honesty, and candour which… are the hallmarks of qualitative data" (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2011, p. 330).

Using questionnaires have both advantages and disadvantages. Open-ended questions are more convenient if the questionnaire is exploratory. Closed questions enable the participants to respond to as many questions as they can, since they don't have to elaborate further in their responses. Open-ended question responses are not easily comparable between respondents, which might be difficult to analyse. It is also time-consuming to complete an open-ended questionnaire, therefore, only two open-ended questions were given to participants. Another disadvantage is that participants may read the same questions or words but interpret them differently. Therefore, the open-ended questions provided did not consist of many words and long sentences, which made it easier for participants to read and understand.

3.8.2 Semi-structured interviews

Stake (1995) contends that the researcher may opt for a case study to obtain descriptions and interpretations of others. This case study made use of interviews to obtain the descriptions of curriculum management, professional supportive conversations and mentoring. The study further aimed to obtain participants' interpretations of professional supportive conversations in curriculum management. Stake (1995, p. 64) asserts that the "interviews in the main… are

multi realities". DeMarrais (2004, cited in Merriam, 2009, p. 87) defines an interview as "a process in which a researcher and participant engage in a conversation focused on questions related to a research study". Merriam (2009, p. 114) contends that "In qualitative research, interviewing is often the major source of the qualitative data needed for understanding the phenomenon under study".

According to Merriam (2009), the researcher adopts interviews as a data collection method to obtain information under study, whereby the researcher strives to enter into the inner thoughts and feelings of the participants' perspective since behaviour, feelings cannot be observed.

LeCompte and Preissle (1993, cited in Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018) outline six types of interviews: standardized interviews; in-depth interviews; ethnographic interviews; elite interviews; life history interviews and focus groups. Similarly, Bogdan and Biklen (1992, cited in Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018) suggest two more types of interviews: semi-structured interviews and group interviews. In the same way, Lincoln and Guba (1994) describe one more type of structured interview. Likewise, Oppenheim (1992, cited in Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018) mention exploratory interviews as another type. Correspondingly Patton (1990, cited in Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018) outline four more types informal conversational interviews; interview guide approaches; standardized open-ended interviews and closed quantitative interviews.

Roulston and Choi (2018) describe three main formats of interviews as structured, semi-structured, and unstructured interviews. For structured interviews, the same format of questions is presented in a particular order. In qualitative studies, demographic data is obtained through structured interviews, where both the order of questions and the wording of questions is decided in advance. For unstructured interviews, the pre-formatted interview guide is non-existent, since topics are participant-driven and might resemble an everyday conversation. This type of interview is mostly used when the researcher's scope of the case research is limited. Questions of the unstructured or informal interviews are open-ended. For semi-structured interviews, the schedule of interview questions consists of a mixture of more and less structured questions. A list of questions or aspects forms the largest part of the interview, and the questions asked to enable the researcher to gather specific data from the participants. In this study, I made use of semi-structured interviews since I was interested in the SMTs curriculum management practices. Merriam (2009) affirms that interviews are qualitative studies' most preferred form of data collection.

Jason and Glenwick (2016) ascertain that semi-structured interview could be carried out with groups, organisations or individuals. They further argue that they could differ in range because they could employ different techniques such as the objective, subjective or projective methods, while the focus of the interview may be chronological, descriptive, and action-oriented or it can focus on the participants' essence. I visited the schools two weeks before the interviews to build rapport with the participants and explain the aim and purpose of the interview. As alluded to by Creswell (2014), the semi-structured interviews were conducted in SMTs natural settings that enabled the researcher to interact with participants face-to-face with one–on–one conversations and enabled the researcher to immediately respond to situations that arose. Similarly, Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) ascertain that through interviews, direct verbal interactions between the interviewer and the interviewee occur. They further maintain that individuals discuss their interpretations of the subjects they teach and curriculum-related aspects. Additional questions were as a result of probing deeply, probing, and additional questions were highly informed by individual participants' responses. They maintain that the content, wording, and sequence of the questions is determined by the interviewer. The interviews, according to Creswell (2014), allow the researcher to control the line of questioning. Bertram and Christiansen (2014) confirm that through the semi-structured interviews, the researcher can understand what the participants know, their attitudes towards professional conversations. I conducted semi-structured interviews with SMT members about curriculum management, professional supportive conversations, and mentoring. The semi-structured interviews were audiotaped to capture all the participants' responses. Over and above the audiotape, I took notes of verbal and non-verbal behavioural responses.

3.8.3 Observation

Merriam (2009) affirms that observation as a data collection strategy aims to collect data to address the research questions. She further maintains that observation does not only have to be systematic but has to be "subject to the checks and balances in producing trustworthy results" (Merriam, 2009, p. 118). This study collected data by observing participants in their natural settings. This enabled me as the observer to collect live, first-hand, authentic information through direct, face-to-face contact to construct a written narrative of continuing interactions (Merriam, 1998; Wasterfors, 2018; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011).

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018) contend that the researcher can get rich contextual information that enables him to observe and record verbal, non-verbal, and physical behaviour. Creswell (2014) asserts that observation involves the researcher recording field notes on the activities and behaviour of the participants. The researcher was able to note and highlight schools and SMTs curriculum management related activities and routines.

The researcher, according to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018), can opt to generate data by using highly structured observation, semi-structured observation, or unstructured observation. For unstructured observation, the researcher's hypothesis is generated as they observe the participants since they are uncertain about what they are looking for. The researcher records all events and later decides on the data significance. For semi-structured observation, the researcher collects data less regularly even though they know what they are looking for. For structured observation, the researcher aims to test their hypothesis and they know in advance what they are looking for. As Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) affirm, semi-structured and unstructured perceptions survey observational information before recommending a clarification for the case being watched.

In this study, I opted for structured observation since professional supportive conversations between the principal and the departmental heads and the conversations between the departmental heads and the teachers on curriculum management were observed. I prepared an observation schedule (refer to Appendix 7) and focused mostly on the identified behaviours of the participants. I was guided by Cohen, Manion and Morrison's (2018) views on structured observation and gathered data about the physical setting, interactional setting, programme setting, and human setting during the professional supportive conversations. I recorded behaviours, practices, and management routines by participants in the observation schedule. The researcher's role in this study was that of a complete observer or an overt observer. As suggested by Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2018), I adopted a passive, non-intrusive role, whereby the incident of the factors studied was noted and entered in the observation schedule. Over and above observing SMTs in their schools and their everyday behaviour and practices, my observation embraced visual observation, document analysis, interviewing, conversations, and direct observation (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018).

Initially, when the study was being planned, I had planned to do observations of professional supportive conversations in each school. However, Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, I was not able to observe professional supportive conversation and I had to revise data generation. As a

result, for all schools, I drew on the conversation monitoring tools (refer to Appendix 4 and 5) to give me data about professional supportive conversations. I clarified with the participants as an when I needed more information about their professional supportive conversation. The professional conversations were between the departmental heads and subject teachers, Principal and departmental heads. The conversations lasted for 45 minutes to an hour. In each school, I received three sets of conversations monitoring tools. Two sets of departmental heads and the educator and one set of principals' conversation monitoring tool with the departmental head. I further opted to use WhatsApp videos for one school, taken during their professional conversations, which enabled me to observe and generate data. The professional supportive conversation between the principal and the departmental head lasted for 45 minutes, while the professional conversation between the departmental head and the subject teacher lasted for an hour.

Using observation as a data generation instrument has both advantages and disadvantages. What the researcher observes may be subjective and the what, why, when, where, how, and whom the researcher observes could lead to biased observation. Given that observation demands the attention and focus of the observer, and the opportunity to observe, the observation could be selective. Observation enabled me to collect first-hand data as I was able to, according to Wasterfors (2018, p.314) "see, hear, feel and 'be there' personally". In addition, through the field notes, I was able to "capture slices of social practice" (Wasterfors, 2018, p.314).

3.8.4 Document analysis

This study also made use of document analysis as a data generation instrument. Merriam (1998) asserts that documents refer to the variety of written, visual, and physical materials that are easily accessible as the sources of data. Merriam (2009) describes two main types of documents commonly used in qualitative research, namely, public records and personal documents. In this study, the public records analysed included official school, departmental, and Jika iMfundo documents or activities. Personal records comprised documents that narrated SMT's experiences and beliefs.

Bowen (2009) contends that document analysis is a systematic procedure for reviewing and evaluating documents. He further asserts that document analysis assists the researcher to

examine and interpret the documents. I examined relevant documents that related to curriculum management and tracked whether curriculum management was consistently applied in the school.

Mogalakwe (2006) asserts that documents may include personal records and minutes of school meetings, management files, school, and departmental curriculum policies. As alluded to by Merriam (2009), this study made use of the principals' and the SMT records such as curriculum management files, SMT minute books among others. Document analysis was used to support the evidence of the responses given during the semi-structured interviews.

3.9 PROCESS OF DATA GENERATION

Merriam (2009, p. 86) contends that "Collecting data always involves selecting data, and the techniques of data collection… will affect what finally constitutes data for research". The methods of data generation of this study were informed by the interpretivist paradigm. The study focused on the SMTs' perceptions and experiences of curriculum management. The purpose of the study was to gain an in-depth understanding of professional supportive conversations and their influence on curriculum management. The data for this study was generated from SMTs of the participating schools.

Flick (1998, p.7) asserts that "qualitative data collection is the selection and production of linguistic material for analysing and understanding phenomena, social fields, subjective and collective experiences, and related meaning-making process". Qualitative data for this study, as affirmed by Creswell (2014), were generated at the participants' schools to understand their experiences of curriculum management and professional supportive conversations. This study used qualitative data generation to examine and outline schools' curriculum management routines and practices (Flick, 1998).

Participants were visited before the research study commenced in order to build rapport with the participants and explain the aim and purpose of the research. The process was outlined to all participants and clarity was provided. Participants were provided with a plan/schedule (refer to Appendix 3) for SMTs one-on-one meeting with teachers and a schedule for the principal's one-on-one curriculum meeting with departmental heads. Principals and departmental heads were asked to plan/schedule curriculum meetings and one-on-one conversations with

departmental heads and teachers respectively. Interviews and scheduled curriculum meetings and conversations were conducted on the agreed dates and times. I conducted semi-structured interviews, provided them with questionnaires, analysed documents, and observed professional supportive conversations. All participants were first requested to complete the semi-structured questionnaire (refer to Appendix 6). Principals used the Jika iMfundo monitoring tool provided (refer to Appendix 5) to facilitate a conversation with the departmental heads. Departmental heads used the Jika iMfundo monitoring tool provided (refer to Appendix 4) to facilitate professional supportive conversations with teachers. An observation schedule (refer to Appendix 7) was used to observe processes and procedures during professional supportive conversations and curriculum meetings. Documents used for curriculum management and professional development were analysed (refer to Appendix 4). When conducting interviews, the semi-structured interview schedule (refer to Appendix 8) was utilised. Probing was done where clarifications were needed. An audio recorder was used to capture the participants' responses. I also recorded notes to capture non-verbal responses and any behaviour of interest.

3.10 METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

Merriam (2009) defines data analysis as the process whereby the researcher consolidates, reduces, and interprets participants' views coupled with what the researcher has seen and observed. In the same vein, Cohen et al. (2018, p. 643) claim that "qualitative data analysis focuses on in-depth, context-specific, rich, subjective data and meanings by the participants in the situation, with the researcher herself/himself as a principal research instrument". They further assert that research findings emanate from data analysis and involve processes of reducing data, displaying data, interpretation of data, conclusions verified and interpreted before reporting the findings. Merriam (2009, p. 205) contends that "all qualitative data analysis is content analysis in that it is the content of interviews, field notes, and documents that is analysed". In this study, I opted to use inductive data analysis. Through inductive data analysis, the categories, themes and patterns emerged from data generated through document analysis, semi-structured interviews and semi-structured questionnaires (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014, p 117).

I familiarised myself with the content of the data by looking at key topics. Codes and categories were identified by perusing the content of the data. As McMillan and Schumacher (1993, cited in Bertram & Christiansen, 2014) affirm, I coded the data and then identified themes. Cohen,

Manion and Morrison (2018) advocate that segments of text data ought to be broken down into smaller units. I marked the repeated phrases and words as codes. I then opted to, as Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018) contend, write a narrative account rather than abstract data from several contexts. Coding participants' responses concerning curriculum management and professional supportive conservations enabled me to identify themes that emerged. After reviewing the themes, I described and explained the themes observed. The themes assisted me to organise and summarise data in response to the two research questions that guided this study.

Data analysis processes were further guided by Situated learning theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). The theoretical framework was tabulated to first understand whether SMTs create space for teachers to engage in professional supportive conversations and secondly to determine whether professional supportive conversations enhance SMTs capacity in curriculum management.

Table 3.1: Situated learning theoretical framework (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) applied in answering research question 1. To what extent do school management teams create spaces for teachers to *engage* in professional supportive conversations?

	School-initiated professional development activities	**Lave and Wenger's (1991) and Wenger's (1998) situated learning theory:** Groups of people sharing practice regularly interact to learn from one another. Professional development programmes, teachers and the professional development settings or context as key elements that make up professional development systems. Teachers develop through participating in a community of practice
	Professional support	**Lave and Wenger's (1991) and Wenger's (1998) situated learning theory:** Teachers use their community of practice to share ideas and support one another. Professional support enhances teacher and SMTs knowledge, which enable them to transform their management and teaching strategies.
	Planned curriculum-related activities	**Lave and Wenger's (1991) and Wenger's (1998) situated learning theory:** Wenger (1998) maintains that learning occurs through the engagement of reciprocal action and the action and interaction engagement.

		SMTs' learning, from a situative perspective, is enabled by their participation in their schools' planned curriculum activities.
	Formal and Informal meetings	**Lave and Wenger's (1991) and Wenger's (1998) situated learning theory:** Communities ought to meet often, and participate together in discussions and conversations, with the aim of supporting one another. Effective learning happens through practice and experiment. Meaningful learning takes place takes place where new ideas and challenges are derived from, in the classroom.
	Frequent meetings	

Table 3.2: Situated learning theoretical framework (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) applied in answering research question 2. How do professional supportive conversations enhance the school management team's capacity in curriculum management?

	Motivates and builds self-esteem	**Lave and Wenger's (1991) and Wenger's (1998) situated learning theory:** learning, which occurs through the action and interaction professional conversations, builds the elements of trust, confidence and high self-esteem.
	Sharing and networking	**Lave and Wenger's (1991) and Wenger's (1998) situated learning theory:** Collaboration, interaction and networking foster learning among curriculum managers. Teachers' identity is greatly shaped by knowing that they belong and that enables them to share and network.
	Curriculum management strategies	**Lave and Wenger's (1991) and Wenger's (1998) situated learning theory:** professional development activity broadens and transforms capability of curriculum managers.
	Monitor curriculum coverage	
	Enhances learner performance	

3.11 TRUSTWORTHINESS

Creswell (2009) contends that criteria for judging the quality and the strength of the study are trustworthiness and authenticity. He further maintains that four indicators determine the trustworthiness of a qualitative study. The four indicators are credibility, dependability,

conformability, and transferability. According to Kumar (2011), credibility refers to the researcher's declaration on whether the results were informed by the data collected from the participants. The results of the qualitative research can only be credible from the participants' perspective in the research. As Merriam (2009, p.215) asserts, the credibility of the findings "increases the correspondence between research and the real world". Conformability, according to Kumar (2011), refers to the extent to which other readers can confirm the results of the study. Transferability, according to Kumar (2011) refers to the extent to which the reader can transfer the study's findings to another setting. Transferability, as Guba and Lincoln (1994) assert, can be one of the means to reveal whether findings can be put to practical use in other settings. Dependability, according to Bertram and Christiansen (2014) seeks to confirm whether results obtained could be confirmed or replicated if the processes used to obtain them were repeated.

I made use of multiple strategies to check the accuracy of the findings to enhance the studies' trustworthiness. Multiple strategies enhanced my ability, according to Creswell (2014), to evaluate the exactness and precision of the findings and persuade readers regarding that precision. Firstly, I made use of various sources of data (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Data triangulation, as confirmed by Wahyuni (2012), assisted me to cross-check whether participants were consistent with their responses. Data obtained from semi-structured interviews, semi-structured questionnaires, observation, and document analysis were combined to check whether there were any inconsistencies. Data triangulation assisted me to build a rational argument for themes during data analysis.

Secondly, a debriefing meeting after data had been generated was convened with SMTs, to identify points that were omitted and to determine whether the qualitative findings were accurate. I was able to address possible misinterpretations of the participants' views. I further identified whether there was any element of bias on my part. Misinterpretations of my observations were discussed and clarified (Merriam, 2009).

Thirdly, audiotapes were used to record participants' responses with their informed consent. I also kept a reflective journal for note-taking of all interactions. As Baxter and Jack (2008) contend, I was able to justify findings by revisiting notes taken during the observation and interaction with the participants. The preparatory meeting with all SMTs to outline the data generation process before the research study commenced, was undertaken to ensure that the

research is dependable. The data generated was verified with the notes taken and the audiotaped data.

3.12 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2018, p. 112) define ethics as "a matter of principled sensitivity to the rights of others". They further assert that the participant's dignity ought to be preserved. According to Kumar (2011), ethics refers to standards of conduct that are viewed as right. Write. Unethical behaviour, according to Kumar (2011), may include but is not limited to causing harm to individuals and using any information improperly. Merriam (1998) asserts that researchers' ethics and values are very influential in their ethical practice. She contends that participants' right to privacy, the notion of informed consent, the protection of participants from harm have to be observed. Durrheim and Wassenaar (2002, cited in Bertram & Christiansen, 2014) contend that autonomy, non-maleficence, and beneficence, are ethical principles that have to be considered for research studies.

Permission to conduct this study was requested and obtained from the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education (refer to Appendix 10). I further requested and was granted permission by PILO to use the Jika IMfundo curriculum management tools (refer to Appendix 9). Ethical clearance from the University of KwaZulu-Natal Research Ethics Committee was also granted (refer to Appendix 11). Permission to conduct research was sought from school principals (refer to Appendix 1) as gatekeepers (Kumar, 2011). All SMTs were given consent forms (refer to Appendix 2), which they accepted and signed, as confirmation of their participation in the study (Merriam, 2009). It was stated in the informed consent letter that their participation was voluntary and they were allowed to withdraw from the study at any time if they wished to do so.

Personal meetings were held with the participating SMTs, where the purpose of the research study and data generation procedures were discussed. The anonymity of the participants was maintained by using pseudonyms. I requested a meeting with participants before the final report was presented to verify the report. Nolen and Putten (2007) pointed out that the principle of respect for members of SMT involves confidentiality. They maintained that breach of confidentiality may occur at various stages of the research. All data generated was stored in a

safe place to ensure that levels of risks for it to leak was minimised. All information and data generated will be kept in a safe place for five years and thereafter shredded.

3.13 ANTICIPATED PROBLEMS/LIMITATIONS

The schools selected are categorised under my circuit, and I supervise all principals and members of the SMT. Therefore, my positionality could have influenced this research study. It was possible that participants did not feel free to openly discuss some of the challenges they faced in managing the curriculum. They could have failed to differentiate between their circuit manager and the researcher. I did, however, explain my role as the researcher during my visits before the research commenced. The findings of this study cannot be generalised, but the lessons learned were used to capacitate other schools on professional supportive conversations.

3.13.1 Positionality

I serve as the supervisor and the mentor of the chosen schools, and it was possible that SMT members might not be comfortable opening up during the semi-structured interviews and would have preferred to respond to the set of interview questions given to them. As the circuit manager, I belong to the same profession as the participants, and curriculum management is one of our responsibilities. I, therefore, assumed that both the researcher and the participants valued curriculum management as we were managers at different levels. Our views might have differed about how the curriculum should be managed. As the circuit manager, I was aware that my positionality could possibly have compromised the trustworthiness of the data. I acknowledge that the participants might have given responses to please me as the researcher since I was their supervisor. However, I informed them that the findings will not be used against them and the purpose of the research was to contribute to knowledge about professional supportive conversations and curriculum management.

3.14 CONCLUSION

This chapter elaborated on the research design and methodology of this study. The chapter commenced with a discussion of the interpretive paradigm and the qualitative research approach. Case study as the research design was also outlined. The strengths and weaknesses of the case study research design were discussed. Next, the data generation methods used in

this study, namely, semi-structured questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, observation and document analysis were explained. The chapter further outlined the ethical considerations and trustworthiness of the study. The following chapter will present and analyse the data and highlight the research findings.

CHAPTER 4
DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The qualitative methodological approach and case study research design were discussed in Chapter 3. This chapter discusses the presentation and analysis of data generated through the semi-structured questionnaire, document analysis, curriculum management tools and semi-structured interviews.

The first part of this chapter discusses the biographical details of three principals and six departmental heads who participated in the study. The second part of this chapter discusses participants' understanding, experiences and perceptions of curriculum management and professional supportive conversations. Participants' understanding of curriculum management and professional supportive conversations were constructed using semi-structured questionnaires. The second part of the chapter further reveals codes and themes that emerged from the semi-structured questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, curriculum management tools and document analysis, and informed by the conceptual frameworks as they pertain to the research questions. Both research questions were analysed using Lave and Wenger's (1991) and Wenger's (1998) situated learning theory. For the voices of the participants to be heard, their direct quotations from the semi-structured interviews were used. As discussed earlier, *pseudonyms were used for both the names of schools and the names of participants, to protect their identity. Direct quotes from participants were written in italics.

4.2 RESEARCH CONTEXT

The context of the three schools that participated in this research study is discussed in this section. The data was generated from two high schools and one primary school.

HS1 School

The first high school, referred to as HS1, is situated in the rural area of Impendle. This school is a rural school with five SMT members, comprising the principal, one deputy principal, three departmental heads, seventeen teachers and one non-teaching staff. Most teachers travel a distance of 180 km return daily. The morale among teachers is very high. Teachers have similar

goals and work together for the benefit of learners. The SMT is cooperative and works together with teachers. In 2019, the school obtained a 100% pass rate in the Senior Certificate Examination. The challenge observed is the low learner performance in lower grades.

HS2 School

The second high school, namely HS2, is situated in a rural area of Elandskop and was established to try to develop the community of Elandskop. The school has approximately 600 learners, 24 teachers, three departmental heads, one deputy principal a principal and three non-teaching staff, catering for the community from a low socio-economic background. The school is partly owned by the church and it is run and governed through the Catholic Ethos. One of the founding principles is that of promoting the Christian values in learners. It is a well-performing school and the teachers are highly dedicated to their work.

PS3 School

The third school is a Section 14 rural primary school, namely PS3. The school is situated in a rural area of Elandskop and was established to try to develop the community of Elandskop. The school has SMT members, comprising the principal, deputy principal, three departmental heads, and thirty-four teaching and non-teaching staff. The school is partly owned by the Department of Education and the Roman Catholic Church. The learner enrolment is 998 and accommodates learners from different rural communities. It is one of the few schools that opted to offer English Home language as one of the subjects, even though all learners are IsiZulu language speakers.

4.3 BRIEF PROFILES OF THE PARTICIPANTS

Three principals and six departmental heads from three schools participated in this study. Sbani, Ssekelo and Nomvelo were principals from the three schools. The six Departmental Heads were Thobeka, Bongeka, Ayabonga, Nomfundo, Thandeka and Siphokazi. The total number of years in education for Principals ranged from 24 to 33 years. While the total number of years for Departmental Heads ranged from 12 to 30 years. Their experience as SMTs ranged from 2 to 27 years.

4.3.1 Participant 1: Sbani

Sbani is a male principal of a well-performing rural high school, namely, HS1. He is in the age category between 50-62 years. Sbani has a total of thirty-three years of experience as a teacher, with twenty-nine years' experience in management and twenty-seven years' experience as the principal. Sbani suggested that: *Curriculum management goes beyond teaching and learning in class because it has a bearing on the success of the school and of the department.*[1]

4.3.2 Participant 2: Thobeka

Thobeka is a female departmental head for Languages at HS1 High School. She is in the age category between 30-39 years. She has a total of thirteen years of teaching experience and three years' management experience. There are six teachers under her supervision as a curriculum manager. Thobeka shared: *During this period of teaching and leadership experience, I have acquired a number of workshops and training related to curriculum implementation, curriculum management, school governance and many more.*

4.3.3 Participant 3: Bongeka

Bongeka is a female departmental head of the Sciences department at HS1 High School. She is in the age category between 30-39 years. She has sixteen years of teaching experience and only two years of experience in management. She manages three teachers in her department. Bongeka elaborated: *I have received continuous coaching and training in curriculum management by Jika iMfundo, assisting me on routine practices of monitoring, identifying and solving problems of coverage as an important step in a journey of professional supportive conversations.*

4.3.4 Participant 4: Ssekelo

Ssekelo is a male principal of a well-performing HS2 high school. He is in the age category between 40-49 years. Ssekelo possesses a total of twenty-five years of experience as a teacher, with thirteen years of experience in management and eleven years of experience as the

[1] In the interest of authenticity, quotations are presented verbatim and no changes were made to language or grammar.

principal. Ssekelo shared: *I have attended many professional development programmes, like school management and curriculum management. I have ensured that the knowledge gained is imparted especially to members of SMT.*

4.3.5 Participant 5: Ayabonga

Ayabonga is a male departmental head at HS2 High School. He is in the age category between 40-49 years. Ayabonga has been working for the Department of Education since 2007. He has been working as a teacher for fourteen years. He has five years' experience as the departmental head for Languages and Humanities. He manages eleven teachers. Ayabonga mentioned: *I carry my duties of both teaching and management with diligence.*

4.3.6 Participant 6: Nomfundo

Nomfundo is a female departmental head stationed at HS2 High School. She is in the age category between 50-62 years. Nomfundo has been working for the Department of Education since 1995. She has twenty-five years of teaching experience. She has two years' experience as the departmental head for Maths and Sciences. She manages seven teachers. Nomfundo added: *I believe in leading by example as I execute my duties.*

4.3.7 Participant 7: Nomvelo

Nomvelo is a female principal from PS3 Primary School. She is in the age category between 40-49 years. Nomvelo has 26 years of experience in education, six years in management and four years as the principal. Nomvelo explained: *My work requires a lot of discipline and dedication since I provide guidance and support to all staff members. The rest of the SMT also offers a lot of support to ensure that quality teaching and learning remains our priority.*

4.3.8 Participant 8: Thandeka

Thandeka is a female departmental head for the intermediate phase stationed at PS3 Primary School. She is in the age category between 50-62 years. She has thirty-eight years of teaching experience and only two years of experience in management. She manages ten teachers in her

department. Thandeka mentioned: *With the support of the principal, deputy principal and other departmental heads, I am able to execute my duties successfully.*

4.3.9 Participant 9: Siphokazi

Siphokazi is a female departmental head for the foundation phase stationed at PS3 Primary School. She is in the age category between 50-62 years. She has thirty years of teaching experience and seven years of management experience. She manages twelve teachers in her department. According to Siphokazi: *the introduction of Jika iMfundo curriculum standardised management tools, have made it even better for us as the SMT to manage curriculum in a standardised uniform way.*

Table 4.1: Brief summary of the participants' biography

Name of the School	Name of the SMT member	Gender	Position Held	Age Category (years)	No of years in Education	No of years as the Principal/DH
*HS1	*Sbani	M	Principal	50-62	33	27
	*Thobeka	F	DH	30-39	13	3
	*Bongeka	F	DH	30-39	16	2
*HS2	*Ssekelo	M	Principal	40-49	25	11
	*Ayabonga	M	DH	40-49	14	5
	*Nomfundo	F	DH	50-62	25	2
*PS3	*Nomvelo	F	Principal	40-49	26	4
	*Thandeka	F	DH	50-62	38	2
	*Siphokazi	F	DH	50-62	30	7

**Pseudonyms*

4.4 DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Data was generated from semi-structured questionnaires, documents analysis, curriculum management tools and semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured interview could not be conducted face-to-face at all three schools due to COVID - 19 lockdown regulations. Therefore, I opted to e-mail the semi-structured questionnaires and semi-structured interview questions to all three principals. In two schools, PS3 and HS2, interviews were conducted by means of a telephone conference. All sets of questionnaires and documents were hand-

delivered by Principals of all three schools. Only the HS1 interview was conducted face-to-face. The primary research question that the study aimed to address was how the SMTs created space and a conducive environment for professional supportive conversations as the strategy to enhance curriculum management. Data were analysed in response to the following research questions:

1. To what extent do school management teams create spaces for teachers to engage in professional supportive conversations?

2. How do professional supportive conversations enhance the school management team's capacity in curriculum management?

Inductive analysis was utilised to interpret and analyse the documents, participants' responses and transcripts. The semi-structured questionnaire was issued to all nine participants. The semi-structured questionnaire aimed to establish participants' understanding and practice of curriculum management and professional supportive conversation. Participants were asked to reflect individually on their management practice and experiences. Curriculum management documents, including management tools, were analysed. The researcher was able to categorise participants' responses and transcripts from documents into codes and themes. The themes were analysed in relation to Lave and Wenger's (1991) and Wenger's (1998) situated learning theoretical framework to address research question one and research question two. Professional supportive conversations and teacher learning in curriculum management was enabled by school-initiated professional development activities, formal and informal curriculum-related activities, which enabled participants to provide and receive continuous support. Professional supportive conversations motivated both the participants and teachers to report curriculum coverage challenges, which built their self-esteem and encouraged them to network and share good practices. Participants revealed that professional supportive conversations enhanced learner performance and curriculum management practices. The themes that emerged from participants' responses and transcripts were analysed in line with the conceptual frameworks. The participants' responses were analysed and interpreted to respond to both research questions one and two. Data is presented and analysed according to the research questions.

4.7 RESEARCH QUESTION 1: EMERGING THEMES

Five themes emerged after analysis of documents, participants responses and transcripts in relation to research question one: To what extent do school management teams create spaces for teachers to engage in professional supportive conversations? The five themes were school initiated professional development activities, professional support, planned curriculum-related activities, formal and informal meetings and frequent meetings.

4.7.1 School-initiated professional development activities

All three schools acknowledged that school-initiated curriculum professional development activities, amongst other professional development activities, was one strategy that enabled them to plan properly and set time aside to focus on and discuss teaching and learning. The two high schools further outlined that they ensured that at the beginning of each year, teachers submitted their individual subject improvement plans, which then fed into the schools' broader curriculum improvement plan. In line with ELRC Resolution 8 of 2003, all participants agreed that they made use of the IQMS as the fundamental element of sourcing and developing their professional development activities. The relevant staff development structures coordinated and ensured that all identified school-initiated activities were implemented.

Sbani, the principal of HS1 High School alluded to the fact that they had resorted to tabulating and listing all activities. As such, he confirmed that: *School Improvement Plan (SIP) is available, stating clearly all school-initiated activities aimed at improving results. We also have filed all development activities including those not captured in our SIP.*

Similarly, Siphokazi, the principal of PS3 Primary School stated that they had created a wall chart in the staffroom for the schedule of all their school initiated professional development activities for everyone to see in order to prepare themselves in advance. She further stated that: *Most of the professional development activities are curriculum-related since the discussions revolve around curriculum coverage and assessment.*

Likewise, Ssekelo, principal of HS2 High School mentioned that he had all systems in place, with a well-functioning school development team and school improvement plan. However, he was quick to point out that their school-initiated curriculum activities were not only informed

by the processes of an integrated quality management system. He stated that: *We meet twice a month after teachers have submitted their files and after assessment tasks, reflections and analysis has been concluded for staff development activities*

Nomfundo further added: *As the immediate senior in all the Development Support groups (DSG), I monitor, check and give all the support needed by teachers in all the identified areas for development.*

Correspondingly, Thobeka mentioned that they had developed a culture where support groups interacted and met before scheduled staff development programs. She said: *We mostly rely on ourselves to develop one another. We understand our environment better and before we embark on any activity.*

In the same vein, Thandeka mentioned that most of their school-initiated activities were a base for PLCs since they helped one another as teachers. She further mentioned that they encouraged one another to facilitate during their developmental programs. She claimed that: *Before we embark on any activity, we first aim to understand challenges by conversing with colleagues who have identified the developmental area. We encourage teachers to choose areas they are comfortable to lead during our internal developmental sessions.*

One of the issues that all three schools mentioned as key in ensuring that they promote and afford teachers time to collaborate, was to utilise various platforms for their curriculum professional development activities. Bongeka explained that: *Subject committees are allowed and encouraged to meet to discuss among other things, lesson preparation, content, methodology and areas that might have been highlighted during our interaction with them.*

Similarly, Nomvelo added: *Since we have been given freedom to organize our meetings other than the scheduled ones, one-on-one meetings with teachers has assisted us to create a platform where teachers are able to share successes, frustrations and their developmental needs.*

Likewise, Ayabonga highlighted that all their formal professional development activities were documented in a schedule that is shared with all teachers. He explained: *We create space and time for teachers to meet by ensuring that all scheduled professional development activities are honoured.*

Wenger (1998) defines groups of teachers who share a common interest, who come together with the purpose of learning in order to improve their practice as a community of practice. He further asserts that the places where teachers converge to share ideas, their challenges and successes of their practice to develop each other are commonly known as the community of practice. Putman and Borko (2000) contend that learning is both individual construction of knowledge and social interaction in a community of practice. They further contend that learning is a matter of adapting into a community to learn about the way they do things, which enables teachers to learn about many other things including skills and procedures of the community. The findings of this study resonate with Schuck, Aubusson and Buchanan's (2008) assertion that sustained professional learning associated with Wengers' (1998) knowledge-building communities, requires prolonged engagements in professional supportive conversations, as teachers in the workplace continuously support one another through their school-initiated professional development activities.

Results in this study showed that participants scheduled their school professional development programmes, whereby they organised their professional development activities. They frequently met for different types of activities. The study revealed that most of the activities were curriculum-related which emanated from learner performance analysis, curriculum coverage and curriculum management-monitoring challenges.

Lave and Wenger's (1991) theoretical framework makes use of multiple tools of analysis to study the impact of teacher learning and professional development. Putman and Borko (2000) contend that communities of practice, such as organised and school driven activities, enable teachers to draw from their experiences to determine appropriate activities and methods to support one another. The key elements that make up professional development systems, according to Borko (2004), are professional development programmes, teachers and the professional development settings or context. Putman and Borko (2000) assert that when teachers come together in their environment with the purpose of learning, learning becomes more effective. Moreover, they emphasise that the planned professional development activities become more meaningful, such that teachers can determine how the activities should be conducted. The study showed that teachers met and developed one another outside of the scheduled times of the school-planned activities. In all three schools, SMTs prioritised various

forms of professional development. This resonates with Elmore's (2008) assertion, that schools are the best sites for professional development.

The study also revealed that SMTs allowed teachers to meet and there were a number of professional development activities that were organised by the SMTs, including professional supportive conversations. This resonates with Witten (2017), who argued that schools benefit greatly if teachers are able to work together. The existence of functional subject committees resonates with management styles of well-performing schools as per the KZN Department of Education report on curriculum management of well-performing schools. Hartung (2015) contends that informal learning through supportive conversations with other teachers is an influential derivation of self-directed, professional development. Similarly, Rust (2002) pointed out the need for teachers and SMTs to question their beliefs and attitudes as they continuously reflect on their knowledge and skills.

4.5.2 Professional support

Participants' responses, curriculum management tools utilised and discussions revealed that school-initiated PD activities were driven either by school or teacher needs. The identified PD needs enabled all three schools to organise and create space for professional support.

Sbani from HS1 School pointed out that as much as IQMS processes were time-consuming if they were implemented correctly, the whole school benefited. He further elaborated that the most important system of IQMS is Developmental Appraisal since its focus is on professional development and support. He said: *After receiving all teachers Professional Growth Plans (PGPs), which clearly state the assistance areas of development, and their preferred mentors. We group those that are similar and from there we develop our programme for curriculum professional development for the year.*

Correspondingly, Ssekelo from HS2 School stated that the workshop on Whole School Evaluation helped them to be able to conduct their school self-evaluation. As much as they ought to evaluate their school against the nine focus areas, three classroom-based focus areas helped them to be able to understand their curricular needs and the support needed by the teachers. He said: *Firstly, we embark on school self-evaluation, where we identify our strengths*

and weakness as a team. We ensure that we travel the journey of professional development together with the teacher in order to offer support.

Ayabonga from HS2 School stated that their PD needs were greatly informed by the current cohort of learners. All teachers had to compile and submit the item analysis after formal assessment tasks. Ayabonga added that: *Item analysis is the tool we use to analyse learners' common errors and possible misconceptions. From there we were able to revisit our subject improvement plans, focusing on the area for development identified in the subjects we teach, we check progress as we offer support.*

He added: *What informs most of the developmental activities is the current cohort of learner performance, as we analyse learner performance in each term.* He further said: *We always set time for ourselves after each term results analysis to both identify and engage in professional development with the aim of closing all identified gaps, which might contribute to learner poor performance.*

Correspondingly, Nomfundo from the same school supported Ayabonga by further stating that: *The exercise serves both as the feedback session to both the teacher and the school and as a platform to converse on learner performance and be able to offer any support a teacher might need.* She further elaborated: *Either we at times invite lead teachers to shed light on both the content and methodology or to teach our learners and our teacher is made to be part of the lesson. In that, way we support our teachers.*

Similarly, Thandeka from HS1 hinted at learner performance and analysis of results. She referred to the feedback given to schools by the district, which forced them to reconsider new strategies to improve results, and they had to ensure that support was provided for the affected subjects. She said: *Feedback sessions after DH workshops organised by the district and our analyses of results, especially grade 12 results, serve as feedback to us as the SMT on the performance of the subjects.*

Siphokazi mentioned that the curriculum implementation monitoring systematic approach assisted them to identify curriculum professional development needs for teachers. She further explained that curriculum monitoring routines helped to identify challenges early, even if the

teacher was not aware of the challenge. In this way, they were able to plan for professional support in order to improve teacher competency.

Nomvelo agreed with Siphokazi and added that over and above monitoring teachers' files, they also conducted class visits. This exercise revealed areas where teachers might need support, no matter how minor it seemed. She added: *We either discuss our observations individually with the teacher for feedback and offer the necessary support, or discuss our observations and recommendations during our SMT meetings, and if necessary, we include that item as an activity for our development program.*

Results from the analysis of the SMT meetings of PS3 showed that teachers' professional support took priority. In the minutes of the meeting held on 06/02/2020, Sbani discussed the importance of professional support and learner attainment. He said: *Teachers should be able to apply professional judgement when the need arises. That can only be possible if we all prioritise and plan for professional support in order to play our role. (06/02/2020)*

Bongeka also mentioned how important class visits were in their school. She said that even though it was not something they did very often, it helped them to know and identify content gaps of teachers. They were able to identify teachers who taught the same subject who was knowledgeable in the content as well as teachers who struggled with the content. She said: *Class visits assist us to identify our strengths and weaknesses. We are able to discuss our observations with the concerned teacher and offer help, professional support is greatly offered to those colleagues who have less than three years of teaching experience.*

Departmental meeting minutes of HS1 School held on 06 February 2020, revealed that teachers were encouraged to make use of the reflections column in the tracker provided by Jika iMfundo. Thobeka also revealed that teacher reflection after every lesson revealed teachers' professional development needs. *The departmental head emphasised to them that she can only know and can only offer support when they raise their hands by giving feedback to themselves and to her through a reflection column* [06/02/2020]

Ssekelo highlighted that as the principal he believed in developing all teachers and afforded them time and opportunities available. He mentioned that he liked to rotate teachers when there were important workshops organised by the department. He added that he always asked them

to submit a written report of the meeting or workshop attended and afforded them time to report back to staff. Minutes of HS2 held on 22 October 2020 showed that the workshop that was organised by the department focusing on teaching in uncertain times was not attended by all teachers. The ones that attended, Mr Basie was given a platform to report back to all teachers. *Nomfundo added that had Mr Basie not given platform to report on the workshop he attended, she would have not been aware of the huge challenge they have and the possible ways to deal with them* [22/10/2020].

Similarly, a discussion led by the Subject Advisor was highlighted in the staff minutes of PS3 held on 13 March 2020. The discussion revolved around CAPS abridged Section 4 focusing on the programme of assessment, mainly on the number of tasks per term and on reporting per term. This was one of the support programmes after the review of CAPS Section 4. *Nomvelo added that whenever there are new developments especially on curriculum, we ensure that we always invite subject advisors to offer guidance and support before we implement. That assist us to clear any misconceptions and uncertainties* [13/03/2020].

Sbani raised the importance of valuing his staff and never belittling or humiliating them during meetings or staff development programmes. He stated that when approached by teachers or members of the SMT, he ensured that they always felt supported and their engagements were a safe space for support. He said: *If I can't talk to my subordinates in a supportive way, I might not get their full support and commitment.*

Adopting Lave and Wenger's (1991) and Wenger's (1998) situated learning theoretical framework suggests that SMTs, as the community that shares the same practice, promotes good practice by the support given to teachers as they generate new ideas and solve problems. Wenger, McDermott and Synder (2002) maintain that communities often meet and support one another as they participate in discussions and conversations. Borko's (2004) conceptual framework asserts that professional support enhances teachers and SMTs knowledge, which enabled them to transform their management and teaching strategies. Similarly, Schuck, Aubusson and Buchanan (2008) contend that like-minded communities and enthusiastic colleagues hugely benefit from each other's support and professional learning.

The results in this study showed that SMTs provide teacher support. Witten (2017) argued that support provided enhanced the quality of teaching and learning. Participants' responses revealed that professional support emanated from a number of factors. The first factor is teacher

professional development needs. This resonates with De Clercq, Shalem and Nkambu (2018) who pointed out that professional development needs are at times identified during professional supportive conversations. The second factor is an analysis of learner performance discussions and conversations. This resonates with Witten (2017) who contends that curriculum management involves learner performance analysis and providing support. The third highlighted factor is class visits and curriculum supervision. This resonates with Rust (2002), who claimed that professional support is classroom focused and curriculum-related. This further resonates with Mbhele (2008) who affirmed that curriculum support and supervision was the responsibility of the SMT. This is in accord with the findings of the study by Maphalala et al. (2018), in which principals confirmed that one-on-one meetings or professional supportive conversations with teachers enabled them to reflect on what occurred during the class visits. The fourth factor is teacher reflection and monitoring teacher files. This is supported by Rust (2002) who contends that teachers and the SMT were able to question their beliefs, attitudes, skills and knowledge by continuously reflecting on their practice. Frick, Carl and Beets (2010) assert that a good teacher was characterised by their ability to reflect on their professional practice.

Results showed that professional support was valued and prioritised by the SMT. The SMT continuously identified challenges as they managed the curriculum and they made use of the Integrated Quality Management System to identify and support teachers. This resonates with Salleh's (2016) assertion that once curriculum problems have been identified, and the nature and cause of the problem understood, professional support could be offered.

4.5.3 Planned curriculum-related activities

The majority of the participants indicated that most of their school initiated professional development activities were curriculum-related and were planned. They indicated that it became difficult for them to honour and to carry out their school-initiated activities without a schedule of events or a plan. Curriculum management tools provided by Jika iMfundo caused them to develop a schedule for their curriculum-related activities.

Sbani from HS1 stated that the schedule for curriculum activities enabled him to monitor whether DHs monitor curriculum. Sbani stated that: *The Jika iMfundo curriculum management*

tools force us to schedule our curriculum capacity building activities like curriculum meetings, professional supportive conversations sessions and class visits.

Bongeka from HS1 agreed with her principal, she further added that as much as the school had its planned activities, they also had their own planned curriculum activities as the Sciences department. She said: *We have found that the curriculum planner makes our job easier since we can easily schedule and communicate our planned one-on-one curriculum activities. Teachers tend to be free to raise their challenges and concerns.*
Ssekelo at HS2 also alluded that they had other forms of curriculum professional activities. He said: *There are mostly one-on-one meetings we have with teachers. Curriculum management tools provided by Jika IMfundo serves as a catalyst for us to identify challenges because of reflection of their lessons.*

Nomvelo from PS3 also shared during the interview that they had a series of planned activities, which emanated from recommendations and findings of Whole School evaluation, which were scheduled for the whole year. She indicated that most of the planned activities were formal. She further stated that: *We normally have formal staff development programs where we invite people with expertise or one of us would lead those discussions.*

Nomvelo, the DH from the same school elaborated on the impact and how effective their formal activities were where the teachers within the department attend or the whole staff attends. She emphasized that it became easier to honour some of the planned activities. She said: *We do have activities that are planned for the staff, but we have found that, because of the curriculum planner, we can easily schedule this one-on-one curriculum activities and teachers are free to raise their challenges and concerns.*

Ayabonga believed that the exposure to and the introduction of Jika IMfundo curriculum management tools greatly assisted their communication with teachers, and enhanced their ability to manage and offer support when needed. He said: *Over and above the school formal activities, as SMT we develop our own school management plans and schedules. They do not only assist us to be organised, even teachers would know by when certain activities would take place.*

Nomvelo indicated that curriculum coverage took centre stage since departmental meetings were planned and honoured. She said: *These planned meetings assist us as the SMT to monitor curriculum coverage offer any support needed by teachers and even ensure that learning outcomes are attained at the appropriate times.*

Preece (2014) contends that communities of practice enabled and encouraged teachers to engage one another with the purpose of providing support to each other. As they collaboratively find solutions to their curriculum challenges, that enabled them to develop and their practice was enhanced. Both teachers and SMTs shared domain was curriculum management and delivery, as Wenger, McDermott and Synder (2002) maintain that there must be a shared domain of interest for the community of practice to exist. Findings showed that schools planned curriculum-related activities and honoured their planned activities. Wenger, McDermott and Synder (2002) contend that communities or teachers participate together in professional supportive conversations and planned curriculum activities enabled them to meet often.

Adler (2000, cited in Borko, 2004) maintains that SMTs' learning, from a situated perspective, is enabled by their participation in their schools' planned curriculum activities among other things, which forms part of curriculum management practices. Similarly, Cobb and Bowers (1999, cited in Putman & Borko, 2000) assert that planned curriculum activities that are interactive in nature, are the focus of a situative perspective. Participants revealed that they supported, planned and monitored curriculum-related activities. Results showed that they understood that their roles do not only centre around managing teaching and learning but they also provided curriculum support which entailed planning for curriculum-related activities.

This study further revealed that Jika iMfundo curriculum management tools assisted and enabled schools to schedule their departmental and one-on-one meetings and enhanced their ability to offer support and converse with teachers. Participants were in full praise of the well-structured and coordinated curriculum activities. This concurs with the findings of the study conducted by Mthiyane, Naidoo and Bertram (2018) on the role of HoDs in curriculum coverage, whereby HoDs conceded that the schedule or the planner brought structure to how they managed curriculum. This resonates with DuFour's (2004) assertion that teachers created a structure to further promote supportive conversations in a collaborative environment.

De Clercq, Shalem and Nkambu (2018) contend that the reflection tool assisted the departmental head to monitor teachers' curriculum challenges. The study showed that Jika iMfundo curriculum management tools enabled them to identify problem areas where teachers would need support and that was made possible by the reflection tools. This is in accord with the findings of the study conducted by Mthiyane, Naidoo and Bertram (2018) on the role of HoDs in curriculum coverage, whereby HoDs conceded that Jika iMfundo tools assisted them to identify problematic areas and where support was greatly needed.

4.5.4 Formal and informal curriculum meetings

Nomvelo, who is the school principal, indicated that she monitored whether the one-on-one conversations schedule submitted to her by departmental heads was adhered to. Ssekelo, Ayabonga and Nomfundo indicated that they had begun with SMT meetings at least twice per term. They all agreed that teachers had one-on-one conversations to discuss curriculum coverage problems experienced by teachers. Bongeka, Sbani and Thobeka indicated that one-on-one conversations with teachers have now been institutionalised in their school.

Nomvelo from PS3 and Bongeka from HS1 suggested that the toolkit for SMTs on curriculum management provided by the district officials was a document that guided them on a series of activities. They clearly stated that scheduling and convening curriculum meetings were one of their responsibilities. Bongeka stated that: *The tool kit assists by providing items for discussion for our curriculum meetings. We are able to communicate agenda items in advance when we convene our meetings and teachers always come prepared for any discussion.*

Ayabonga from HS2 highlighted that the meetings served different purposes. Normally the first meeting in a term sets the tone for that term. He said: *We have taken the stance that after discussion on learners' performance, we revisit action plans and subject strategies, which enable us to set the terms priorities and targets, and further agree on meetings schedule and time frames.*

It was evident from participants' responses that not all meetings were formal. Sbani from HS1 and Nomvelo from PS3 emphasised that one of the responsibilities of SMTs was to provide support which involved sitting down with teachers in order to attend to their challenges and needs. Nomvelo further stated that they planned for their meetings and they knew items to be

discussed at certain times. She mentioned that every teacher knew that after marking and submission of marks in the new term, analysis of results would be discussed. She also stated that some of their meetings were triggered by their daily tasks as Managers. She explained: *We have also noticed that when we monitor curriculum, teachers' reflections on their lessons compels us to provide feedback. In short, we are forced to meet teachers even though we had not planned to.*

Similarly, Ayabonga from HS2 indicated that some of their informal meetings over and above their formal meetings were as a result of monitoring teachers' files. He said: *Some of our meetings happen as we work and they are unplanned. They are mostly feedback sessions or discussions from monitoring either planning files or from moderating formal tasks.*

Nomvelo from PS3 agreed with other schools' responses that not all meetings were scheduled. She explained: *We do meet informally, and we have observed that informal settings are as effective as formal settings, as long as we all commit ourselves.*

The departmental head monitoring tool from HS1 revealed that positive feedback was given to teachers after monitoring their files and learners work. *Learners are being exposed to sufficient work as they are coming in a staggered way due to COVID-19 and all tasks scheduled have been written except for those withdrawn by the department.*

In the same vein, Bongeka emphasised the need and importance of meetings with teachers as a strategy that enabled them to support teachers in their practice and be assured, through conversations and evidence presented during discussions that teachers listened to their learners. She further stated that the department introduced a new curriculum management instrument called a Handing over tool. The tool is used by the teacher who was teaching learners in the previous grade to hand over both the content taught and content not taught to the receiving teacher. The tool forced us to discuss among ourselves content gaps. She said: *The Handover tool has also come at the right time. It helps us to manage lost time due to COVID- 19. The handover tool facilitates conversations among teachers and it promotes collaboration.*

Bongeka form HS1 highlighted that initially, teachers were not comfortable being called individually to the principal's office. They would always ask us whether they had done

something wrong. We observed that they were starting to be open and free to discuss curriculum issues since we started with one-on-one meetings.

Thobeka from HS1 agreed with all participants and mentioned that she noticed that in her department, teachers were free to talk and it seemed as if they trusted one another with their limitations. She said: *We always strive to ensure that our meetings are such that teachers always feel comfortable to voice their challenges. They are free to be vulnerable and to show their emotions.*

Nomfundo highlighted that teachers themselves initiated some of the informal meetings. They at times requested an appointment but at most, they would even discuss what bothered them during break times or their free periods. She said: *Subordinates mostly initiate informal meetings after they have observed learner performance in their informal assessment tasks or after a lesson. It is somehow their own reflection.*

Siphokazi further explained that not all curriculum meetings were formal, some were informal and both were effective. She explained: *Some activities need to be addressed as and when they are noted or as and when the teacher needs professional support. They cannot, therefore, wait for the formal sitting in order to be discussed.*

Siphokazi mentioned that she made it known to all teachers that they did not have to wait for her or DHs to get any assistance. She said: *For immediate challenges faced by teachers, we have set time aside as the SMT in order to listen to teachers' challenges.*

Nomfundo from HS2 shared the same sentiment. She stated that if they addressed immediate challenges with the affected teacher or teachers, the intervention seemed to be more effective. She explained: *The best way to address curriculum challenges is to address it as it happens and teachers are more open and free to share their challenges in an informal setting.*

Both Sbani from HS1 and Ssekelo from HS2 stated that some of their meetings were referred to as accountability sessions, whereby after they had analysed learners' results, they would check learners' performance against the subject targets. Ssekelo said: *Teachers know that when schools reopen after school holidays, they submit learners' marks. I call them one by one in my office in order to account for the performance of their subjects.*

It was evident from the semi-structured interviews conducted and from the minutes of the meetings that all schools set aside time for curriculum meetings. The schedule of their staff development programme included planned meetings as their professional development activity. The study showed that schools at times had their general meetings, which discussed items other than curriculum but time was also reserved for meetings on curriculum-related matters only. The results showed that schools were able to discuss, identify curriculum-related challenges, support and analyse results. This resonates with Witten (2017), who contends that curriculum meetings are linked to instruction, teaching, and learning improvement.

Chance and Segura (2009) maintain that school improvement and involvement of teachers in decision-making is advanced when the school environment allows space and time for teachers to plan together. Accordingly, results in this study showed that not all meetings were planned and formal; some of the meetings were unplanned and informal. Teachers initiated some meetings and schools made it possible for teachers to approach one another and not have to wait for planned meetings to address their challenges. This resonates with Wilson and Hartung (2015) who contend that informal conversations or meetings with other teachers are very influential since it is self-directed professional development. Chance and Segura (2009) contend that quality professional support programmes are realised when the time for teacher learning is created.

The study further revealed that feedback sessions, one-on-one meetings or supportive conversations were held when challenges were noted. The emphasis on one-on-one meetings resonates with Metcalfe and Witten (2019) who contend that professional supportive conversations create a platform for professional development. This resonates with City et al. (2010, cited in Metcalfe, 2018), who assert that effective professional support must be linked to instant problems of practice. Witten (2017) contends that meetings limit teacher isolation and schools' benefit since teachers do not struggle on their own.

4.5.5 Frequent meetings

All SMTs revealed that formal meetings were held at least twice per term at their schools. They could not confirm whether SMT meetings focused on the curriculum only. One meeting was held at the beginning of the term and another at the end of the term. SMTs at all schools indicated that the meetings were held in the afternoons. Informal meetings and special meetings

were held when the need arose, otherwise departments or phases would plan their special meetings in between the two formal meetings.

Ssekelo explained that the meetings were part of the school year plan and venues and dates were communicated to all teachers at the beginning of the year. He said: *We have however not limited ourselves to only formal meetings or staff developmental programs, we have been allowing teachers or even a teacher who will approach us to be assisted on any matter.*

Ayabonga from HS2 alluded that as much as they formally meet twice a month for their formal meetings, they mostly relied on informal unplanned curriculum interventions or meetings in order to address challenges related to contextual factors. Teachers were free to seek advice or offer professional support as and when the need arose. He stated that: *The majority of these activities are curriculum-related and they normally take the shape of a meeting simply because they mainly deal with curriculum implementation and they are mainly informed by challenges faced by teachers.*

Nomfundo agreed with her colleagues and further explained that each term had its own set of activities, as a result, some meetings were convened due to some work pressures. She said: *Towards the end of the year, during exams times, we will have departmental meetings so that we discuss due dates and invigilators schedules. After the exams, we also meet to identify some loopholes, learners' progress and results analysis.*

Thobeka stated that teachers were encouraged to meet without management. She revealed that they recently attended a workshop that was conducted by the District on Professional Learning Communities as a forum that focused on the interest of learners and as a learning platform. We encouraged them to establish Professional Learning Communities. She said: *We have allowed teaching teams or teachers teaching the same subjects to meet as often as they please to support one another.*

Siphokazi explained that they planned for their departmental formal meetings and had open communication with teachers in case they needed any assistance. She said that: *We do not wait for the principal to remind us or to inform us when and how to meet. We take it upon ourselves as DHs since we understand our phase challenges better and the amount of work to be done per term.*

Sbani from HS1 alluded that they met at least once in two weeks and as the principal, he ensured that departmental heads set time aside for departmental curriculum meetings. He stated: *We ensure that through our formal school-initiated activities; we set time aside for all our activities, be it one-on-one meetings or departmental meetings to discuss curriculum matters.*

Results from the curriculum management files and departmental meeting minutes from HS1 showed that special formal meetings were held weekly during the monitoring of teachers' files.

Both departmental heads reported back to teachers. In the meeting of the Languages department held on 23/06/2020, it was noted that a discussion about post-assessment moderation had been conducted. *The departmental head acknowledged and praised all teachers that marked and recorded as per their management plan. The departmental head further highlighted areas of concern such as adherence to the marking guideline.*

The SMTs at all three schools highlighted the assistance and guidance provided by the Jika iMfundo management tools, especially the planner since it assisted them to plan for one-on-one meetings with teachers and also to record their SMT meetings.

Bongeka shared how the planner assisted her and made life easier for her to schedule her weekly meetings. She said: *The curriculum schedule helps me a great deal to schedule one-on-one meetings with teachers. I ensure that I at least meet a teacher once in two weeks and will schedule my meetings such that each month has a cycle of two weeks.*

Similarly, Nomfundo stated that her schedule enabled her to meet a teacher at least once a month if not twice, depending on the plan of action agreed with the teacher. She said: *I don't think we would ever understand challenges and be able to build good relations if we don't meet teachers individually as often as we do. Curriculum coverage monthly meetings made my job easier.*

Thandeka shared a similar view about how often they convened for their meetings. She stated the importance of frequent meetings with subordinates in order to review subject improvement plans and provide feedback on curriculum monitoring and supervision. She said: *Without the*

curriculum schedule, it would have been difficult to manage time for meetings and ensure that I touch base with all teachers. I can schedule my meetings and can honour them while putting the same focus on my learners.

According to Wenger, McDermott and Snyder (2002), the community of practice presents communities as a platform where teachers are allowed to share their challenges since they understand that they are allowed to be vulnerable. Similarly, Metcalfe and Witten (2019) argue that the Jika iMfundo campaign management practice created routines that promoted collaboration, meetings as professional supportive conversations platforms, hence schools were sites for interactive professional learning. Wilson and Hartung (2015) contend that teachers asked fewer questions and shared more stories of practice.

The study showed that both the Sciences and Languages departmental meetings and individual one-on-one meetings, made use of Jika iMfundo planners to schedule meetings. Participants revealed that times for meetings was no longer a challenge since they infused their meeting schedules in their weekly or monthly personal timetable. This resonates with the findings of Mthiyane, Naidoo and Bertram (2018), where departmental heads affirmed that the Jika iMfundo curriculum management tools assisted them with the structure of how they worked. Formal staff and SMT meetings were normally held twice per term while departmental and one-on-one meetings were held monthly. The study further showed that most frequent meetings were informal and either initiated by the affected teacher or the departmental head. Informal one-on-one meetings were informed by departmental heads of curriculum monitoring and supervision. This resonates with the findings of Mthiyane, Naidoo and Bertram (2018), where departmental heads affirmed that their participation in curriculum coverage monitoring resulted in more systematic, routine departmental and one-on-one meetings. The participants revealed that informal meetings initiated by teachers were mostly not scheduled but accommodated teachers who needed to talk about their practice. Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace and Thomas (2006) maintain that teacher exchange about professional issues and any evidence that they engaged with one another was the fundamental indicator of a professional supportive conversation. Moreover, Gillentine (2006) maintains that the wealth of collective and individual expertise is better understood through collaborative practices.

Participants demonstrated an understanding that meetings, as a professional development activity, was a routine that promoted professional conversations. This resonates with Metcalfe

and Witten's (2019) assertion that curriculum management routines enabled schools to enhance professional, supportive conversations practices. Results showed that participants created a space that not only allowed their schools to provide support but also created a platform where teachers were allowed to share their challenges. Minutes of departmental meetings and SMTs demonstrated that meetings were held frequently and support was provided. Planners in the SMT files served as proof that departmental heads scheduled one-on-one monthly meetings. This is in accord with Koballa, Bradbury, Glynn and Deaton's (2008) assertion that professional conversation meetings were scheduled.

4.8 RESEARCH QUESTION 2: EMERGING THEMES

Five themes emerged after analysis of documents, participants' responses and transcripts in relation to Research Question 2: How do professional supportive conversations enhance the school management team's capacity in curriculum management? The five themes were: motivating and building self-esteem, sharing and networking, curriculum management strategies, monitoring curriculum coverage and enhancing learner performance.

4.8.1 Motivates and build self-esteem

Participants' responses showed that they commended the curriculum management practices introduced and reinforced by Jika iMfundo. They indicated that the curriculum management practices forced them to be actively involved in the school's curriculum delivery. Nomfundo and Thobeka indicated that their curriculum management styles lead to supportive conversations since they always interacted with teachers.

Nomvelo stated that it was important to create an enabling environment for a school to succeed. She said that she always strived to motivate teachers to work together and that professional conversations made it easier for them to manage the curriculum. She said: *Trust between teachers enhances good relations between us as the SMT and teachers. We are then able to discuss difficult topics with great confidence as you know that the other comes from the position of trust.*

Thandeka further mentioned that professional supportive conversations assisted them as the SMT to develop and support teachers better. She added that their SMT sessions were

developmental in nature since they focused on the instructional core and solved curriculum challenges and strategies together.

Similarly, Bongeka from HS1 mentioned that she valued the wisdom and knowledge of not only the principal and her colleagues in the SMT but also the knowledge possessed by other experienced colleagues. She said: *As the DH, I do consult either the principal or my other colleagues' right on the spot in front of the teacher if the conversation requires solutions which we, together with teacher, cannot offer the required solution.*

Sbani alluded that it was difficult to promote and encourage conversations in a school if teachers in a department or the SMT did not work as a team. Professional conversations helped to learn to appreciate weaknesses. He further stated that: *As teachers, we come from different backgrounds and we possess different teaching experiences, as such coming together of different personalities and talents helps those who doubt themselves to believe in themselves.*

Thobeka agreed with Sbani and pointed out that as the SMT, they worked as a team. She said: *We ensure that we collaborate not only as the SMT but the whole staff so as to come up with solutions. We are able to discuss difficult topics, we are even open and not afraid to raise either personal or professional matters that might impact teaching and learning.*

She added that they mostly relied on Jika iMfundo coaches to guide and mentor them. She further stated: *Ever since we started working on our relations through supportive conversations, teachers are now confident to come with suggestions and they are highly motivated to work hard in obtaining good results.*

Bongeka further stated that conversations were not always easy and at times it was difficult to be objective during discussions. She mentioned that: *Teachers now understand that the main purpose for our conversations is to empower and support them so that they can be able to deal with the similar challenge in future and be able to take decisions with confidence.*

Siphokazi from PS3 agreed with the sentiments shared by HS1 school participants. She mentioned that they were now free to share their fears, weaknesses and that enabled them to be more confident hence their self-esteem was boosted. She said: *Teachers feel free to confide to*

me and that also builds the teachers self-esteem simply because he or she knows that he or she can confide in me even things that are not work-related but can affect their performance.

Ssekelo revealed that their management practice enhanced peer support. They were able to motivate and develop one another as they discussed their challenges. He said: *We always capacitate each other during our conversations in a way that is going to be beneficial to the learners.*

Thandeka emphasised that conversations enhanced teachers' self-confidence, and they were highly motivated to face challenges. We were able to revisit challenges or concerns. She said: *We provide continuous support to all staff, by giving feedback during morning sessions, which enables them to feedforward with confidence.*

Sbani emphasised that during curriculum supervision, they ensured that they were honest in their reflections when interacting with curriculum management tools. The driving force was learners' performance since we were all responsible and accountable for the schools' overall performance. He said: *During our one-on-one conversations, we openly account for our failures as the management. We have built a culture of accountability among ourselves.*

Nomfundo suggested that at times learners' performance could destroy one's self-esteem. When we discussed learners' poor performance, for example, some teachers would not talk and you would see tears in their eyes. We have learnt that conversations are not always solution-driven. She said: *Motivating them if need be and making sure that they are confident enough to go to class and execute their duties will be enough.*

Correspondingly, Thandeka mentioned that as teachers, we used that platform during supportive conversations to support one another. She said: *The conversations aim at developing and motivating teachers. If the teacher is behind, we collectively discuss the matter and support the teacher at the end.*

Ssekelo praised teachers' commitment and said the good results they obtained as a school, were not only attributed to the SMT, but also to the teachers who at times-initiated meetings and conversations. He said: *Teachers are highly motivated to even lead and initiate some of the group discussions during our staff development programmes.*

Nomvelo stated that her colleagues had mastered the art of assisting, motivating and supporting teachers. They were not afraid to listen to challenges and solve them together with teachers. That was mainly attributed to how I handled challenges brought to me as the principal. She said: *I have learnt with Partners for Possibilities (PFPs) that you should not have all the answers, you should also invite other people too, I mean to share what they think when they present you with a challenge.*

Nomvelo shared more light on PFPs. She explained: *As PFP, we are partnered with business people, we get a chance to sit down with them, just be ourselves and they listen to your story, they empower us to think on our own and to be vulnerable.*

Siphokazi agreed with her colleagues, that they learnt a lot from how the principal interacted with staff during meetings. She added that the principal *taught us that it was normal to be vulnerable and not have all the answers, but that two heads were better than one.*

Lave and Wenger's (1991) and Wenger's (1998) situated learning theoretical framework highlights the importance of creating space for support programmes through dialogue. Support programmes are enablers for lifelong learning which results in a motivated workforce. Wenger (1998) further contends that learning, which occurs through the action and interaction during professional conversations, not only ensures that SMTs management practice is enhanced, but that the interactive professional conversations between teachers and SMTs, teachers and teachers, build the elements of trust, confidence and self-esteem among teachers and management teams. Preece (2014) contends that teachers collaborating during professional supportive conversations, as their professional development activity, is in line with the community of practice framework. Borko's (2004) situative perspective framework maintains that professional supportive conversations, as the interactive process and approach, motivate and build teachers and SMTs self-esteem, and enhance their teaching and management skills. Putman and Borko (2000) argue that SMTs management capabilities can be broadened and transformed by professional supportive conversations, as the professional development activity.

This study showed that schools adopted a strategy whereby they scheduled their formal meetings making use of the Jika iMfundo planners. The study further revealed that through their interactive curriculum management practices and processes, the SMT's active

involvement in curriculum delivery, built and reinforced elements of trust among teachers and the SMT, and enabled cooperation among each other.

Sbani and Nomvelo revealed that the management practices made it easier for the managers to openly discuss and motivate teachers and most importantly, learn from one another. Their observation is in line with Schuck, Aubusson and Buchanan's (2008) argument that teachers were able to discuss challenges they encountered in their practice due to the elements of trust, friendship, vulnerability and openness they shared in their professional relationship. This supports Morgan's (2015) assertion that management is a developmental process that promotes inclusion and builds trust. This further resonates with Rhodes and Beneicke's (2002) argument that once closer working relations have been established, mutual support and trust easily develops. Teachers, as the study revealed, were free to raise difficult and, at times, personal challenges that affected their professional growth and performance. This supports Chance and Segura's (2009) assertion that trust enables relationships to grow as teachers become highly motivated to ask questions since they know that chances of isolation are minimum. Mukeredzi, Mthiyane and Bertram (2015) assert that in order to enhance the professional growth of teachers, SMTs as mentors should develop strong relationships of trust and goodwill.

Hord (2009) maintains that a PLC is when teachers interface to converse or interact in purposeful activities to learn with and or from colleagues, to develop and support one another. PLCs, according to Salleh (2016), motivate and strengthen teacher capacity to improve learning outcomes. The participants encouraged teachers and themselves to be critical of their practice. There was a culture of accountability as they openly reflected on their practice, built each other's self-esteem and supported one another. Participants showed an understanding that in order to build confidence and high self-esteem among each other, teachers were given authority to lead some discussions and they were highly motivated to be part of the group and to help others.

4.8.2 Sharing and networking

Participants' responses showed that the curriculum management cycle based on professional practices and professional supportive conversations necessitated sharing of ideas and networking among teachers within and across schools. Nomvelo said: *Curriculum*

management, it goes beyond teaching and learning in class, as such we promote teamwork, work ethics and self-respect.

Ssekelo revealed that networking occurred mostly between teachers teaching the same subject. Team teaching and subject committees were encouraged and subject heads were tasked to coordinate and mentor one another in the subject they taught. He said: *In order to promote teamwork and cohesion within the subject, we ensure that teachers teaching Mathematics from grades 8 to 12 for example meet regularly in order to share their experiences and different methods of teaching.*
Similarly, Thobeka emphasised that they established a culture whereby they learnt from one another. She said: *We basically have to ensure that we share among each other, it might be during meetings or during our staff development Programmes, as mentioned before, those Programmes are at times organized per subjects or departments.*

Sbani shared that they were a school with a mixture of experienced and novice teachers. He mentioned that there was only one life sciences teacher who was new, and the assistance she received from them was limited. We encouraged teachers to network with other teachers from other schools who taught the same subjects. He said: *We are very open to teachers networking with other teachers on curriculum-related challenges, teachers organise themselves within the cluster to share topics for the term and they are able to motivate one another.*

Similarly, Ayabonga mentioned that they shared among themselves within the department and developed one another. He further mentioned that they afforded one another time and space to interact. He said: *We reach out to teachers in neighbouring schools about their resources, like their assessment tasks. We have observed that our school-based PLC is strengthened by sharing more and networking with other schools.*

All participants spoke about the use of technology as one of the most effective networking tools. Technology enabled them to share with teachers they often interacted with within their cluster meetings.

Bongeka mentioned that at first some teachers from her school were not comfortable using Instagram and WhatsApp, but they have seen the benefit since they could easily share their challenges and they found how helpful they were since they don’t only use them to help others

but they used those platforms to share teaching and learning materials like assessment tasks. She said: *WhatsApp groups are our safe space to seek advice and get help. Lately we have an Instagram collaboration group of people we have never met and teachers are generous in sharing their teaching and learning resources.*

Thandeka further stated that as the conversations were mostly curriculum focused, they were able to discuss issues of curriculum coverage. She said *conversation aims at developing and motivating teachers. If the teacher is behind, discuss the matter and support the teacher at the end.*

Sbani further explained that teachers have learnt to share curriculum challenges among themselves and between themselves and departmental heads. He said: *What I have seen as beneficiary in curriculum coverage discussions and conversations, is that not only affected teachers collaboratively address curriculum coverage challenges, but teachers in subsequent grades are also part of the discussions.*

According to Wenger (1998), community of practice promotes and encourages a set of relations among people who share the same interest or concern. SMT members, as the community of practice in this study were unique, from different schools but all managed the curriculum. Wenger (1998) further contends that they learn better and their practice is enhanced if they collaborate, interact and network with one another. Lave and Wenger (1991) maintain that their identity, which enables them to network, share their expertise and participate in curriculum management discussions and conversations, is greatly shaped by knowing that they belong to the community of curriculum managers. SMT's capability to network, share ideas, generate new ideas, according to Lave and Wenger's (1991) and Wenger's (1998) situated learning theoretical framework, is the strength of the SMT.

Learning, according to Lave and Wenger's (1991) and Wenger's (1998) situated learning theoretical framework, is attributed to participation in social activities which enables participants to network and share their practice, since it requires conversations and networking as a social process. They maintain that various forms of practice, like networking and conversations, facilitate and enhance learning. Similarly, Cobb and Bowers (1999, cited in Putman & Borko, 2000) assert that interactive structures which allow sharing and networking, are the main focus of the situative perspective. Lave and Wenger (1991) contend that learning

about curriculum management is located within society, hence it cannot be isolated, manipulated or analysed outside of the social relations.

Nomvelo from PS3, Sbani from HS1, Ssekelo and Thobeka from HS2 agreed that curriculum management based on professional key practices and evidence-based professional conversations promote teamwork, cohesion and regular meetings between teachers of the same subjects within and across the schools. This study showed that teachers teaching the same subjects within the school or a cluster of schools shared teaching methodologies. Principals also encouraged departmental heads to network with other departmental heads, especially if they manage subjects, they are not specialists for. Ayabonga from HS2 understood the power of school-based PLCs, as a special kind of community of practice, since they ensured that teachers and managers were afforded the opportunity to network (Chauraya & Brodie, 2018). Spillane (2008, cited in Morgan, 2015) contends that collaborative mentoring among SMTs and teachers is required if learning in schools has to be improved.

4.8.3 Curriculum management strategies

Based on all participants' responses, all three schools managed the curriculum and the monitoring tools provided by Jika iMfundo assisted them to manage the curriculum. The curriculum management tools assisted the participants to enforce and ensuring that key routines of individual teaching and learning practices and collaborative curriculum management practices were adhered to.

All participants indicated that they had the management file and that they used it, with all the records of the teachers they managed. Three participants from HS1 were confident that their curriculum management files were up to date and monitored by their supervisor. The file consisted of curriculum management instruments designed by Jika iMfundo and some were designed by the Department of Education. All participants agreed that their roles as SMTs entailed among other things managing the curriculum.

Nomvelo learnt that curriculum management was not only about setting rules and time frames but was also an opportunity for her to learn. She said: *Curriculum managers are no longer the only source of wisdom and knowledge... It further demands us as curriculum managers, to do*

more research and learn more especially on subjects we are not teaching yet expected to manage.

Ayabonga indicated that his role as the departmental head was to manage the curriculum. He also pointed out that they adopted the modern way of managing the curriculum, which not only focused on checking administrative documents and adherence to policies. He said: *My role will be to make sure that the curriculum implementation is adhered to, monitor as well coordinate some meetings. Curriculum supervision helps us to clarify any misunderstandings on curriculum.*

Sbani's comments echoed participants from the other two schools in that he also emphasised that the introduction of the Jika iMfundo curriculum management cycle of key practices enhanced their ability to not only monitor adherence to curriculum practices but also provide guidance and support. He said: *My role is to monitor, to check how far teachers are in terms of the curriculum, are they able to cover the work designated for the term.*

He further pointed out that: *The emphasis on all key curriculum management practices indicated that curriculum management is everybody's responsibility. We guide and ensure that all key practices are adhered to and provide support and offer guidance.*

Participants agreed that they made use of Jika iMfundo curriculum management tools which assisted them to manage the curriculum better. By their design, the Jika iMfundo curriculum management tools forced SMTs to engage with teachers in professional conversations based on evidence. However, the curriculum management tools provided by the department of education did not immediately lend themselves to supportive conversations.

Nomvelo pointed out that: *Curriculum management cycle we have been exposed to by Jika iMfundo, by their design, has an ultimate goal of ensuring that professional practises lead to evidence-based professional supportive conversations.*

Similarly, Bongeka believed that the curriculum management tools and guides provided by Jika iMfundo assisted her to manage the curriculum better. She said: *Jika iMfundo curriculum management tools enable us to have common focus since they force us to have evidence-based supportive conversations.*

When analysing documents, it was evident that curriculum management tools were utilised and key curriculum management practices were discussed by principals with departmental heads and departmental heads had conversations with teachers. The tools forced both the supervisor and supervisee to discuss what worked and what needed work in the key practices.

The principals monitoring tool of HS2, during the conversation with the departmental head on the feedback on teacher's curriculum coverage tracking, learners work and annual assessment monitoring revealed that what needed to work for their department was exposing teachers to differentiated approaches to teaching and assessment in order to cater for all learners at different cognitive levels.

The departmental head monitoring tool of HS1, during the discussion with the teacher after monitoring the teachers' work, the DH, under aspects that needed to improve, indicated that formal assessment tasks needed to be administered in line with the agreed formal programme of assessment. That would enable the teacher to timeously implement intervention and remedial work stated or reported in their diagnostic analysis of learners' responses in the formal assessment tasks.

The departmental head monitoring tool of PS3 stated that the use of the tracking and reflection together with learners' work formed part of the evidence in preparation for the one-on-one conversations in their school.

Nomfundo mentioned that as management in schools, they had a duty to create an enabling environment for professional conversations to occur without any challenges. She suggested that teachers should feel free to express themselves without fear of victimisation and above all, management needed to be consistent in their approach. She explained: *Since the focus is now on collaborative practices on matters relating to our instructional core, as SMT, we engage as a collective and we are honest and authentic in our conversations.*

Thandeka pointed out that professional supportive conversations were a very important aspect of managing the curriculum. She added: *If you talk curriculum management, we talk about checking teachers' files, learners work, discussing challenges, and collaboratively finding solutions, curriculum management is supportive conversations.*

Siphokazi agreed and praised the curriculum management tools provided by Jika iMfundo. She said: *The planner and trackers help because it minimizes planning time and teachers know what to do in class. The tools also help us to reflect on our practice, in the process.*

Almost all participants highlighted the importance of planning by both the supervisor and the supervisee. Teachers had to plan what needed to be taught and SMT had to develop their supervision or monitoring schedule. Sbani said: *What I do is to plan how I am going to manage curriculum, what strategies to be used in ensuring that teaching and learning do take place. I then monitor whether all the agreed plans are executed.*

Likewise, Thobeka highlighted the importance of meeting with teachers in the beginning of each year to explain your expectations. She said: *We also share with all teachers in the beginning of the year all the curriculum management monitoring tools, things we monitor regularly are their APTs, their resource files, informal assessment tasks are given.*

Departmental meeting minutes of HS1 held on 06 February 2020, revealed a discussion between the departmental head and teachers within the department on the evidence of learners work against the ATP, indicating that some aspects of work did not appear in the learners' book yet the teacher claimed to have taught the section. *The departmental head under learners' written work heading, emphasised the importance of sufficient learners' written work. The evidence in front of her was contradicting what the teacher claimed to have been taught. [06/02/2020]*

Nomvelo highlighted the importance of providing all necessary resources for teachers and providing them with all the support as part of managing the curriculum. She stressed the importance of not only clarifying policies but also complying with policy directives. She said: *As the principal, I ensure that all necessary LTSM is there and make sure that teaching and learning happen smoothly.*

Results in this study showed that participants viewed curriculum management as the process that required teachers to continuously learn and develop one another. This resonates with Metcalfe and Witten's (2017) assertion that the possibility to grow and develop was greater for those involved in curriculum management practices. This resonates with the claim by De

Clercq, Shalem and Nkambu (2018) who argue that the Jika iMfundo curriculum management approach presents opportunities for SMTs to improve their practice. The tools by their design, as revealed by PS3 Primary, encouraged teachers to critically monitor their teaching and learning, in the process they became critical of their challenges. This is supported by Witten (2017) who asserts that curriculum supervision builds teacher capacity.

Maphalala et al. (2018) argue that standardised curriculum management tools introduced by Jika iMfundo equipped Departmental heads to monitor the curriculum better. The results of this study suggested that curriculum management tools simplified and clarified their roles. Participants believed that the management tools, which emphasised key collaborative practices, lend themselves to evidence-based professional supportive conversations. Discussions and conversations with teachers enhanced their capacity to manage. The participants revealed that they were comfortable meeting teachers to reflect and discuss teaching and learning. The results of this study are in line with the claims of Bullough and Pinnegar (2001, cited in Schuck, Aubusson & Buchanan, 2008) who claimed that reflections and learning conversations enabled teachers to negotiate their understanding of the practice. Similarly, the results of the study are in line with Salleh (2016) who argues that opportunities for reflection, learning and discovery are greatly enhanced during professional supportive conversations since they are able to make sense of their practice and challenges associated with management are made normal.

4.8.4 Curriculum coverage monitoring

All nine participants indicated that they had made progress on curriculum coverage monitoring and reporting routines. They all indicated that teachers report curriculum coverage challenges. Teachers were able to reflect after the lesson, as such when they reported coverage during one-on-one conversations and were able to provide evidence.

Sbani, Nomvelo, Ssekelo, Ayabonga and Thobeka indicated that teachers were free and confident to seek advice from the SMT and other teachers since they knew that they would receive support from other teaching teams. Thandeka, Nomfundo and Bongeka mentioned that they were not yet at the level where they could fully help teachers, as much as they always avail themselves when asked for help, they indicated that teachers were confident to receive support from their colleagues when they struggled with curriculum coverage.

All nine participants indicated that they fully understood the tracker and that training was provided by Jika iMfundo on what the tracker was and how it was utilised. All departmental heads indicated that the Annual Teaching Plan (ATP) and mostly the tracker facilitates professional discussions since it enabled both the teacher and themselves to interpret and read teacher reflections and curriculum coverage. Participants concurred that curriculum coverage took a centre stage during professional conversations.

Thobeka pointed out that curriculum coverage monitoring should not be taken for granted because proper planning for monitoring is crucial. She added: *We make use of professional supportive conversations to monitor and discuss curriculum coverage, where we basically ascertain whether teachers are able to pace themselves well against the ATP or Tracker.*
Thandeka agreed with Thobeka, that Jika iMfundo tools assisted them to schedule their one-on-one and departmental meetings to identify aspects that needed their attention. She explained: *Tools enable us to schedule professional supportive conversations, either identifying or addressing areas needing support in order to improve curriculum coverage, hence our professional capability on curriculum coverage monitoring, discussing and improvement is enhanced.*

Siphokazi further highlighted the importance of planning for curriculum coverage. She indicated the importance of preparing for the professional conversations in order to provide the required evidence of curriculum coverage. She elaborated: *Since professional supportive conversations is evidence-based, one key indicator besides learners' books and teachers' records, is the performance of learners. All records need to be presented as to determine their level of achievement and possible causes of poor performance.*

Participants' understanding of what curriculum coverage means was very important because it shaped forms and levels of discussions and their school policies. Nomfundo highlighted that there was a relationship between curriculum coverage and learner performance. She opined: *I think curriculum coverage is linked with learner performance if you see that learners are not performing in a particular topic, which means curriculum has not been covered.*

Nomfundo explained that the Jika iMfundo curriculum management tools helped them to monitor curriculum coverage, she explained: *Teachers were given curriculum planners and*

trackers which help with pacing each class, unlike ATP that only have column that track pace of a grade.

Bongeka also mentioned that the tools assisted them to monitor curriculum coverage. She shared: *I have found that both the teacher and my management tool after conversations lends itself to reflection, with the two questions of what works and what did not work. We can at that moment, be honest and truthful on what we need to improve on.*

Ayabonga further stated that over and above monitoring teachers tracking records, and focusing on learner performance, curriculum coverage exposed learners to more written work. He said: *Teachers ought to complete work on time, and on top of that, you also ensure that learners are exposed to more work and more revision.*
SMT meeting minutes of HS1 held on 21 February 2020, point to a recommendation under the item of curriculum coverage. The recommendation was on what ought to be the indicator for curriculum coverage and that each DH would have to report on each teachers' coverage during their meetings.

Under the heading: curriculum coverage, it was recommended that during curriculum monitoring and supervision:

a) *Teachers need to bring learners exercise books, their lesson preparations and their ATPs or tracking tools during one-on-one curriculum coverage conversations.*
b) *DH to verify whether teachers tracking tools corresponds with learners' work.* [21/02/2020].

The SMT meeting minutes of HS2 held on 24 January 2020, revealed a discussion between the principal and members of the SMT under curriculum monitoring, indicating that planning schedules were due and their responsibilities during one-on-one curriculum coverage conversations. *The principal stressed that curriculum coverage conversations schedules are due. He further emphasised that during the one-on-one curriculum coverage conversations, they have the responsibility of discussing coverage progress, challenges if there are any and possible solutions together with agreed action plans* [24/01/2020].

Departmental meeting minutes of HS1 held on 06 February 2020, revealed a discussion between the departmental head and teachers within the department on the management and

administration of formal and informal assessment tasks, requesting all assessment records to be presented during their one-on-one curriculum coverage conversations. *The departmental head requested teachers to make available records of assessment over and above the tracking tools during their scheduled curriculum coverage conversations. The records will assist both of them to determine learners' level of achievement, and percentage of learners who mastered the curriculum taught* [06/10/2020].

Bongeka pointed out that curriculum coverage conversations have always been difficult. It has been a no-go area and they would only be aware of coverage challenges during the analysis of results at the beginning of the term. They would however believe what would have been indicated by teachers during monitoring of their files. She said: *Professional conversations are a platform whereby we are able to emphasise and discuss the importance of curriculum pacing, number of learners' written work as important aspects that enables learners to cover curriculum.*

Correspondingly, Thandeka mentioned that since professional supportive conversations were evidence-based, they were able to give learners sufficient written work. She said: *Teachers now understand that learners' written work is the source or it serves as evidence during curriculum coverage supportive conversations. We are able to determine whether learners have learnt and mastered the content.*

Similarly, Ssekelo mentioned the positive impact of using ATPs and trackers. He said: *Teachers now understand the importance of teaching and using tracker or ATP as their own source of evidence during curriculum coverage conversations.*

Results in this study showed that all participants prioritised and monitored curriculum coverage. Results showed that Departmental Heads planned for and monitored curriculum coverage. Thobeka from HS1, Ayabonga from HS2, Thandeka and Siphokazi from PS3 all agreed that planning for curriculum coverage monitoring was crucial. HS1 and HS2 meeting minutes showed that schools made use of Jika iMfundo curriculum coverage monitoring tools to facilitate and enable evidence-based professional supportive conversations which contributed to the improvement of curriculum coverage. Results showed that departmental heads viewed professional supportive conversations as a platform that helped them to identify teachers' areas for development and to improve curriculum coverage. This resonates with the

claims made by De Clercq, Shalem and Nkambu (2018) that professional supportive conversations between the teacher and the departmental head improve curriculum coverage.

Meeting minutes of HS1 presented the importance of ATPs/trackers/planners, teacher reflection, learners' workbooks as the source of evidence to be presented during professional supportive conversations. The study showed that professional supportive conversations enabled the SMTs to discuss curriculum pacing as reflected in the ATPs and Trackers. This resonates with Metcalfe and Witten's (2019) assertion that curriculum coverage monitoring enables the departmental heads to work out curriculum coverage challenges through professional supportive conversations.

Metcalfe and Witten (2019) contend that learning and reflection form part of conversations. The study further showed that the teacher reflection tools empowered the SMT to understand and identify problems of curriculum coverage, pacing and they helped the departmental heads to receive the much-needed feedback during professional supportive conversations. The tracker enabled departmental heads to address coverage challenges. This resonates with Mthiyane, Naidoo and Bertram's (2018) assertion that curriculum coverage tools enabled departmental heads to know teachers who were behind and those who were on track.

4.8.5 Enhances learner performance

Three participants from PS3 agreed that programmes of assessments and annual assessment plans were enforced and all teachers made use of them. However, they did not seem as confident as the participants from the two high schools. Participants from the two high schools indicated that over and above the annual assessment plans, they scheduled meetings to discuss learner performance after the tasks had been written and marked.

Participants from HS1 believed that learner performance in the assessment tasks, be it formal or informal, reflected the schools' image in the outside world. Sbani mentioned that they made use of professional supportive conversations as a platform to critically analyse the learner's formal assessment tasks performance. He explained: *As a principal of the school, I ensure that learner performance is an item for discussion during our SMT meetings, and further analyse the school's performance after every assessment cycle*.

He also mentioned that *every departmental head account for the results in their departments and they provide support to struggling teachers and learners after they have diagnosed the causes for poor performance.*

Correspondingly, Ssekelo stated that he provided instructional leadership together with his departmental heads, which enabled them to provide teacher and learner support. He said: *The performance of learners becomes the responsibility not only for the SMT but for all of us in the school, hence the focus is on ensuring that learners perform. Learner performance informs the shape and items for discussion during SMT and departmental meetings.*

Thobeka maintained that besides curriculum coverage conversations, poor learner performance was one area of discussion that could not be ignored. She explained: *Conversations are based on learner performance, whether it's good or bad. If learner performance is not pleasing, we collectively discuss and acknowledge that the problem exists after which we come up with ways of improving learner performance.*

Ayabonga mentioned that professional supportive conversations enabled them to be involved in what was happening in class. This enabled them as the SMT to understand teachers' challenges. He suggested: *Conversations enable us to critically analyse and discuss learner performance with teachers concerned. We are able to focus on our instructional core, which is teaching and learning.*

According to Nomfundo, meetings enabled them to focus on learner performance. She said: *Our meetings are driven by learner performance. How learners perform in assessments determine the need for us to come together. That motivates all of us to work harder and to find solutions since we are prepared to support one another.*

Sbani believed that conversations held during their meetings influenced their learner performance strategy. He said: *They are mostly initiated by subordinates after they have observed learner performance in their informal assessment tasks or after a lesson. It is somehow their own reflection.*

Correspondingly, Ayabonga also pointed out the role of the departmental heads during professional supportive conversations. He said: *We basically try to identify reasons, together*

with teachers, of poor performance, ask them to self-introspect and push them to share with us challenges they have, be it on content topics, on pedagogy or even on classroom management.

Siphokazi mentioned that even though they were a primary school, learner performance was very important. She further mentioned that they set subject targets at the beginning of the year and they always measured themselves, not only by the percentage pass but on whether subject targets were obtained. She said: *Our reflection during meetings is informed by subject targets we have agreed both as the management and the subject teacher, hence we always thrive for quality results and learner performance must always be better than the previous year's results.*

Bongeka said that she believed that the conversations monitoring and support tools provided by Jika iMfundo had been instrumental in their good matric results obtained by the school. She explained: *We have observed that ever since we prioritised on key collaborative practices in our management style where professional conversations are about the core work, learner performance has gradually improved and issues of curriculum coverage become important for all of us.*

Results in this study correspond with the claims of Schollar (2018) who argues that improvements in curriculum management practices are directly proportional to learner performance improvement. The findings of this study showed that all participants, as members of SMTs in their respective schools, managed curriculum and analysis of results together with enhanced learner performance. This study showed that professional supportive conversations enabled them to improve learner performance. This resonates with the view of Witten (2017) that curriculum management entails learner performance analysis.

This study showed that principals from two high schools, Sbani and Ssekelo, agreed that departmental heads account for poor learner performance during SMT meetings and one-on-one meetings. Results showed that professional supportive conversations initiated by departmental heads from both high schools were mostly driven by curriculum coverage and learner performance. However, Sbani mentioned that poor learner performance has driven some teachers to initiate conversations about their teaching and learning. Ayabonga from HS2 mentioned that supportive conversations enabled them to collectively discuss, analyse and identify reasons for poor performance. Participants from HS1 and HS2 revealed that learner performance was excellent ever since they initiated professional conversations. The results of

the study resonate with Danielson's (2015) view that SMTs ought to use their power to ensure that learners' performance is of the highest level.

4.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented, analysed and discussed data obtained from the documents, semi-structured interviews and semi-structured questionnaires. The data presented were obtained from nine participants managing curriculum at three different schools. Inductive analysis methods were used to analyse and present responses from the participants. Lave and Wenger's (1991) and Wenger's (1998) situated learning theory was adopted as an analytical framework to interpret participants' responses from the transcripts and semi-structured questionnaires.

It was evident that all participants understood collaborative curriculum management practices associated with professional supportive conversations. Collaborative management practices enabled participants to better manage curriculum and afforded opportunities for growth, support and close monitoring of curriculum coverage. Group, individual, formal and informal interactions were informed by whether teachers needed individual and social interactions in order to address their challenges. Time and space for professional supportive conversations were created by all participants through curriculum-related activities that were both formal and informal. Professional supportive conversations created a platform whereby teachers were able to voice their curriculum coverage challenges. The conversations provided solutions and the self-esteem of both teachers and the SMT was enhanced. Reflection tools enabled teachers and departmental heads to network with one another and learner performance was enhanced. Research findings and recommendations are discussed in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to explore the role of professional supportive conversations in enhancing School Management Teams capacity to manage the curriculum. The participants in this study were nine members of the School Management Teams from three schools located in the Lions River circuit, uMgungundlovu district. The data, presented in Chapter 4, was generated from document analysis, observations, semi-structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews from all participants who were assigned pseudonyms. This chapter discusses the key findings, limitations, recommendations for further research and the conclusion.

The primary research question of the study was:

How do SMTs create space and a conducive environment for professional supportive conversations as the strategy to enhance curriculum management.

The two research questions that guided this study are:

1. To what extent do school management teams create spaces for teachers to engage in professional supportive conversations?
2. How do professional supportive conversations enhance the school management team's capacity in curriculum management?

This research study employed Wenger's (1998) and Lave and Wenger's (1991) situated learning theoretical framework to analyse the data to address both Research Questions one and two. Following the discussion on the summary of the key findings, the limitations of the study and recommendations for further research are outlined, followed by the conclusion.

5.2 SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

This discussion focuses on the summary of the following four key findings:

1. SMTs set time aside for school initiated professional development activities.
2. SMTs create an enabling environment for teachers to engage in professional supportive conversations.

3. Professional supportive conversations enhance the motivation and self-esteem of SMTs.
4. Curriculum management strategies introduced by Jika IMfundo enhances SMTs capacity to monitor curriculum coverage

5.2.1 SMTs set time aside for school initiated professional development activities

The first key finding of the study revealed that the three schools set time aside and greatly honoured their school initiated professional development activities. It is through these professional development activities that teachers were able to share their curriculum-related challenges and successes. The curriculum-related professional development activities centred around teachers' subject matter knowledge (SMK), content knowledge (PK) and pedagogical content knowledge (PCK). The study revealed that aspects that hinder curriculum coverage and learner performance are learnt and shared through professional development activities. The need for school initiated professional development activities is supported by Borko (2004) who contends that in-depth professional development activities enhance teachers' knowledge and can influence their instructional core.

The results of this study further revealed that school-initiated professional teacher development activities enabled teachers to learn different strategies. It was evident that schools not only created space and time for different forms of professional development activities but also developed their own curriculum-related school initiated professional development activities. There also seemed to be an understanding at schools that not all-professional development programmes should be formal and not all professional development activities should be organised by the SMT. Teachers and subject committees were given space to plan and organise their activities. This finding resonates with Wilson and Berne's (1998, cited in Bertram, 2011) assertion that professional development activities provide opportunities for teachers to learn. They further claimed that teacher learning could be planned or unplanned, voluntary or compulsory, formal or informal.

The participants mentioned that all their formal school-initiated professional development activities were scheduled and they ensured that they were honoured. The formal professional development activities mainly emanated from the 1QMS processes and were driven by the professional development needs of teachers and schools. IQMS processes led to formal

scheduled professional development activities. Participants also mentioned that some of their professional development activities emanated from key individual curriculum planning and delivery practices together with key collaborative curriculum management practices introduced by Jika iMfundo. This finding resonates with Borko's (2004) assertion on situated learning that learning occurs in a variety of contexts, which may occur in both social practices' participation and active individual construction. The participants made use of some of the activities to converse and offer support to one another, by fully participating in their schools organised activities. (Lave & Wenger, 1991). This finding is further supported by Bertram (2011) who asserted that professional development was most effective when it was located in schools within communities of practice. This study revealed that teachers were given space to fully participate and share their challenges, experiences and expertise in the area of discussion. Teachers were further afforded time and space to lead and take charge in some of the activities. Shalem and De Clercq (2019) claimed that instructional knowledge is mainly addressed through school-based initiated activities. Metcalfe (2018) asserts that professional learning was enhanced by professional development routines, which enabled and provided space for teachers to partake in professional supportive conversations.

Bertram (2011) contends that school-based professional development provides follow-up support, mentoring and coaching in teachers' classroom practices, since opportunities for questioning, dialogue and collaboration are enhanced. Results of this study revealed that space and time were afforded to teachers to not only participate in their school-initiated activities but teachers were also given space to organise their own activities, whereby they worked together and focussed on curriculum coverage and attainment of learning outcomes. This study further showed that teachers mostly relied on their own internal resources. This finding supports Bertram's (2011) assertion, that teacher learning and reflection were more effective if teachers were members of a learning community. Once professional development needs had been identified, they made use of teachers within their schools to develop one another, pointing out that they preferred an internal colleague because they understood their context better. This resonates with Borko (2004) who contends that teachers who share the same environment, from the same school are better placed to support each other. Benoliel (2017) maintains that principals manage team operations and build capacity in the school. This resonates with the assertion of Stoll, Bolam, McMahom, Wallace and Thomas (2006) that teacher exchange about professional issues is an indicator for professional supportive conversations.

5.2.2 SMTs create an enabling environment for teachers to engage in professional supportive conversations

The second major finding of this study was that School Management Teams created an enabling environment for teachers to engage in professional supportive conversations. Participants described numerous ways in which professional supportive conversations were enabled. The first enabler of professional supportive conversations was their school-initiated professional development activities. The second enabler was their supportive planned curriculum-related activities. This is supported by Metcalfe (2018) who claims that Jika iMfundo practices aim to nourish schools' internal practices of support and professional supportive conversations.

Participants highlighted that one of their roles was that of providing continuous support. The processes of Integrated Quality Management Systems and Whole School evaluations assisted them to discuss and agreeing on areas for development and support. As immediate seniors, they ensured that they continuously conversed and offered support to teachers in areas identified by the SMT and teachers themselves. Shalem and De Clercq (2019) claimed that support provided through IQMS policy might be one-sided and might not have the desired impact on teacher knowledge and performance, however, this study revealed that the IQMS led to and enabled professional supportive conversations.

The participants highlighted that the school-initiated activities were mainly curriculum-orientated and curriculum-focused. The processes of IQMS led to a process whereby teachers themselves, with the support of their immediate seniors, identified areas for development. Participants' responses revealed that the areas for development identified were dealt with either through formal professional development activities or professional supportive conversations. This finding supports Bertram's (2011) assertion that the strengths and weaknesses of formal professional development activities and interactive professional supportive learning communities enabled school management teams to understand the connection between teacher knowledge and teacher learning. The key curriculum management cycle of practices for supporting improved curriculum coverage and management, introduced by Jika IMfundo,

(Metcalfe, 2018) made it possible to continuously identify challenges that were school and classroom-focused. The curriculum-related activities provided opportunities and space for both the SMT and teachers to collaborate and share their curriculum coverage challenges.

Curriculum related activities forced participants to engage in professional supportive conversations. In line with Bertram's (2011) point of view on supportive working relationships, the study revealed that curriculum-related activities ensured that teachers and SMTs were active through mentoring, coaching in teachers' classrooms, class visits, collaboration and that enabled SMTs to provide follow-up support. The study further revealed that teachers supported each other and were encouraged to participate in subject committees. Teachers and SMT were able to work together during curriculum supervision and were able to address the challenges identified. It was also evident, through the teacher-initiated support programmes that teachers were able and willing to assist one another and they did not only rely on the SMT. This links with Witten's (2017) assertion that the school benefits when teachers and the SMT were able to work together. The practices of the three schools link up with the practices of well-performing schools according to KZNDoE. Well performing schools had functional subject committees which met frequently meet to discuss assessment and planning practices. Lave and Wenger's (1991) and Wenger's (1998) theoretical framework supports this finding that learning is more effective when school management teams and teachers learn through practice and experience in their community of practice and their school context. In this way, participants' management capabilities are enhanced.

The participants claimed that they discussed and conversed with teachers and members of SMT, and when the Departmental head was presented with curriculum implementation challenges, they suggested and explored solutions together during the professional conversations. Support provided for all curriculum-initiated activities were both formal and informal. Some of the conversations were a result of immediate feedback and discussion during Curriculum supervision. Curriculum initiated activities were mostly subject-based interventions and support. Shalem and De Clercq (2019) claimed that subject-specific classroom-based support is long term and were more productive than generic workshops.

This study showed that the Jika iMfundo curriculum management tools assisted the SMT to schedule one-on-one supportive meetings. The departmental heads found it easier to manage their time between teaching and management by scheduling their departmental meetings. The

participants indicated that the supportive conversations were communicated well in advance to all teachers, which made it easier to present themselves with evidence of curriculum coverage and learner performance. The schedules for professional supportive conversations made it possible for all concerned to prepare themselves well in advance.

Some participants indicated that the availability of time for supportive conversations was a challenge. The study showed that over and above the formally scheduled conversations, schools afforded time and opportunities for teachers to organise their supportive sessions among themselves. Schools also promoted informal professional conversations and allowed teachers to present their challenges informally without waiting for the SMT to convene the supportive conversations sessions. Some participants believed that professional supportive conversations were important and required commitment and time on the side of the SMT.

Metcalfe (2018) describes key curriculum individual practices as a process whereby teachers reflect on teaching and learning after planning, tracking and reporting on curriculum coverage. She describes key collaborative curriculum management practices as a process whereby departmental heads regularly assist teachers with curriculum coverage related challenges and whereby the SMT meet regularly to review the quality of curriculum coverage and tracking. Participants indicated that conversations were sometimes initiated by teachers after reflecting on and monitoring their teaching progress and seeking immediate support and interventions. The finding showed that Jika IMfundo (Jika iMfundo Teacher toolkit: CAPS Planner, 2020) key individual curriculum practices led to key supportive and collaborative curriculum management practices. Teachers were willing and active participants in their one-on-one supportive conversations with departmental heads. This finding is supported by Tieken's (2010, cited in Maphalala et al., 2018) assertion that teachers can identify common gaps and support one another on teaching strategies responsive to learners' needs. The finding showed that the key curriculum management practices further enabled teachers to monitor their progress against their planned activities and learners' performance. It was also evident that the Jika IMfundo curriculum management tools assisted the SMTs to track teaching and learning progress in the classrooms, and enabled SMTs to open up more time and space for supportive conversations and continuous support. The challenges observed by both teachers and the departmental heads enabled teachers to open themselves up for supportive conversations with their departmental heads or their colleagues.

5.2.3 Professional supportive conversations enhance motivation and self-esteem of SMTs

The third key finding of this study was that professional supportive conversations enhanced the motivation and self-esteem of SMTs. The relationships of trust between SMT and teachers that developed over time was found to be the major factor that made teachers open up and freely avail themselves for professional supportive conversations.

This study highlighted those one-on-one meetings gave teachers an opportunity to be free and the supervisor to be open to teachers and other members of the school management team. Siphokazi's observation was that teachers were free to confide in her even on matters that were not work-related. This study showed that professional supportive conversations offered a safe space for teachers to express their fears and be vulnerable. This resonates with the findings of the study conducted by Mthiyane, Naidoo and Bertram (2018) that professional conversations enabled departmental heads to acknowledge teachers' emotions. The findings of this study further resonate with the study of Mthiyane et al. (2018) findings, which showed that the more they adopt Jika iMfundo key behavioural routines, the more they provided support to one another, which built trust among each other. They understood one another better and they learnt to rely on one another.

This study found that teachers, as affirmed by participants and SMTs were not afraid to express their fears. This study showed that participants knew that other colleagues were always willing to provide support and were not afraid to raise problem areas. This resonates with the findings of the study conducted by Mthiyane, Naidoo and Bertram (2018) that supportive conversations were non-judgemental and removed feelings of shame and discomfort. This study revealed that solutions were not only obtained from the SMT, but also from teachers themselves who were free to discuss curriculum coverage, methodology and content challenges without being victimised. Thandeka mentioned that they supported each other. It was also evident in this study, through SMTs affirmation, that supportive conversations not only supported and developed teachers, but also motivated teachers and built their confidence. This resonates with the findings of the study conducted by Mthiyane, Naidoo and Bertram (2018) that professional supportive conversations enabled participants to address personal dimensions in their management roles. The finding revealed that teachers were more confident than before to be

in class teaching. This resonates with Maphalala et al.'s (2018) finding that teaching and learning readiness was attributed to clear instructions and uniformity.

The findings of this study revealed that teachers networked with teachers within and outside their schools, which allowed them to receive support from their immediate seniors. Participants indicated that teachers were afforded time to be part of cluster meetings organised by the district and shared best practices from nearby schools with other colleagues. Professional relationships were encouraged within and outside of the school. This study, therefore, highlighted that both the management and teachers were more confident to assist and support each other and to draw on each other's strengths.

5.2.4 Curriculum management strategies introduced by Jika iMfundo enhances SMTs capacity to monitor curriculum coverage

The fourth key finding of this study is that curriculum management strategies introduced by Jika iMfundo enhanced SMT's capacity to monitor curriculum coverage. It was evident from the semi-structured questionnaire responses and interviews conducted that participant's managed the curriculum. Participants further showed an understanding of their roles in curriculum management. It was evident that participants' made use of curriculum management tools provided by Jika IMfundo and they adopted and practised key individual curriculum implementation practices and key collaborative curriculum management practices (Metcalfe, 2018). Results indicated that participants did not only supervise and monitor teachers work, but they also understood their role of providing curriculum support and constantly worked with teachers to improve curriculum coverage. Similarly, Maphalala et al. (2018) maintain that Jika iMfundo curriculum management tools improved communication. The finding further showed that curriculum coverage monitoring enhanced learner performance. This finding resonates with Scholar's (2018) assertion that curriculum coverage and learner performance had a logical relationship.

This study revealed that Jika iMfundo curriculum management practices were steadily institutionalised, especially in the Languages and Sciences department. Participants made use of curriculum management tools to schedule curriculum monitoring and one-on-one conversations. One–on–one meetings enabled schools to design their turnaround strategies and to provide effective support and developmental activities. The finding revealed that they further

made use of the curriculum management tools to track and report on curriculum coverage, together with curriculum delivery experiences. This view is similar to Maphalala et al. (2018) who argue that the function of curriculum monitoring, as one of the elements of curriculum management, is to track teaching and learning processes.

Participants praised the curriculum management tools and indicated that the tools not only served as a guide, but they also brought uniformity which allowed them to converge during their discussions. This view resonates with Maphalala et al. (2018) that trackers and planners serve as a planning guide and coverage monitoring instrument for teachers. The reports on curriculum coverage enabled and empowered school management teams to support teachers in areas they identified for development. This resonates with Metcalfe (2018) who maintains that correct support is provided by SMTs when teachers' curriculum coverage is tracked and monitored.

Metcalfe (2018) claims that departmental heads plan and structure professional supportive conversations by taking into consideration the teachers' reflection reports. This finding showed that the tools assisted teachers to reflect on teaching and learning, monitor learners' progress and engage in evidence-based supportive conversations. Participants believed that the reflective tool developed teachers' capacity to assist struggling learners. This finding further revealed that participants made use of the teachers' reflections to plan for their supportive conversations. This resonates with De Clercq, Shalem and Nkambu (2018) who argue that teachers' weekly reflections informed Departmental Heads about teachers' curriculum coverage.

Metcalfe (2018) contends that evidence-based professional supportive conversations aim to identify and solve problems of curriculum coverage. This finding revealed that SMTs believed that the Jika iMfundo curriculum management tools enabled schools to institutionalise and promote evidence-based curriculum management routines and practices that led to professional supportive conversations among SMTs and teachers, teachers themselves and among SMTs. According to De Clercq, Shalem and Nkambu (2018), professional supportive conversations identified supportive activities needed.

This study showed that schools measured curriculum coverage with learner performance and the amount of written work. Participants revealed that both teachers and SMT discussed and

adopted strategies to improve learner performance during their supportive meetings. This finding suggests that learner performance discussions and the analysis of results take centre stage during professional supportive conversations. Mkhwanazi, Ndlovu, Ngema and Bansilal (2018) claim that a positive correlation between learner performance and curriculum coverage exists. This finding showed that professional supportive conversations and monitoring curriculum coverage enhanced learner performance.

5.3 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Only nine participants were involved in this study, three school principals, two Languages and two Sciences departmental heads, one senior phase and one foundation phase departmental heads. The participants in this study were purposively selected from one circuit in the uMgungundlovu district. The participants did not represent all subjects and the population of all teachers in the district. Although teachers had a voice through the participants, data was not collected from teachers, so they did not express their views as beneficiaries and participants of professional supportive conversations. Thus, the findings of this study can only be transferable to other similar contexts and cannot be generalised.

I explained the purpose of the study and my role as the researcher to all participants and assured them that the findings of this study will not be held against them as individuals or their schools. As the circuit manager for the selected schools, my role involved managing curriculum coverage and serving as the supervisor of all selected principals. Therefore, it is possible that participants might have given responses that they perceived as favourable or acceptable and they might not have shared information that could possibly have negative implications for their schools. However, I was aware that my positionality could have compromised the trustworthiness of the data.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study has shown that when schools adopt both key individual curriculum delivery practices and key collaborative curriculum management practices, SMT's capacity to manage curriculum is enhanced. It was evident that curriculum management was a collective effort and the emphasis was on supportive supervision rather than monitoring. It enabled schools to value and prioritise professional supportive conversations. The Jika iMfundo curriculum

management tools served as enablers of the professional supportive conversations, which in turn enabled both teachers and members of the SMT to build professional relationships.

In all the three schools, except for the foundation phase in the primary school, Jika iMfundo curriculum management tools were mainly accessible to subjects that were piloted by Jika iMfundo. All participants in the study agreed that supportive conversations were good and assisted them to manage the curriculum better and be more focused. They further agreed that curriculum management tools brought stability and uniformity to their practice. Besides Languages and Sciences teachers, teachers of other subjects did not have an opportunity to be coached and mentored on how best to make use of Jika iMfundo curriculum management practices, which created an imbalance within schools. I, therefore, recommend that curriculum management tools and training be provided to teachers of all subjects. Secondly, professional supportive conversations about curriculum coverage should be enforced and monitored in all subjects. Thirdly, the Department of Education should adopt and promote the campaign as its own, otherwise, it will always be viewed as the Jika IMfundo campaign and schools or teachers will dissociate themselves to key collaborative practices of curriculum management.

The study revealed that schools had started institutionalising professional supportive conversations. Fourthly, as a culture that should be infused throughout the educational system, I recommend that district officials, especially circuit managers and subject advisors for all subjects, should schedule and honour curriculum meetings for a cluster of schools. These meetings could serve as PLCs or mentoring platforms where teachers freely discuss curriculum coverage challenges and are able to assist one another. These meetings could be scheduled twice per term and could assist schools to collaborate and discussing curriculum management challenges with other teachers.

5.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter discussed the findings of the study in relation to the two research questions. This study enabled participants to express their views about and the benefits of professional supportive conversations as one of the key collaborative curriculum management practices. Findings of this study revealed that professional supportive conversations, as a curriculum management strategy is well understood and had been adopted as one of their routine practices. The study further revealed that professional supportive conversations were a collective effort

and a shared practice among teachers and school management teams. Participants created space for professional supportive conversations by accommodating both scheduled formal meetings and informal spontaneous meetings between teachers and teachers and between teachers and departmental heads. The existence of subject committees and networking with teachers from other schools further enabled and provided space for professional supportive conversations.

Professional supportive conversations enabled curriculum managers to listen to and understand teachers' perspectives about their challenges. The study revealed that schools were monitoring curriculum coverage, teachers reported on curriculum coverage challenges in their sites and SMTs were providing supportive responses (Metcalfe, 2018). Participants highlighted that those professional supportive conversations further allowed curriculum managers to resolve challenges related to curriculum coverage, teachers' subject matter knowledge (SMK), content knowledge (PK) and pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) together with teachers, hence curriculum management strategies were enhanced.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENTS TO CONDUCT RESEARCH RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS: PRINCIPALS OF SCHOOLS

9 Paramount Park
6 Fir tree Avenue
Cleland
3201

Dear _____

REQUEST FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH PROJECT

My name is Bongani Simelane (Student No. 9406395) a Masters in Education (MEd) student in the School of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Pietermaritzburg campus). As part of the requirement for this degree, I am required to conducting a research project. I request your participation in this research study. The title of my study is: "The role of professional supportive conversations to enhance School Management Teams capacity in their practice of curriculum management".

The aim of this research study is to examine:

(a) To what extent do school management teams create spaces for teachers to engage in professional supportive conversations?
(b) How do professional supportive conversations enhance the school management team's capacity in curriculum management?

This study is expected to use the school management teams, including the principal and will involve the following procedures. As participants, you will be required to complete a questionnaire, and participate in a semi-structured interview that is expected to last between 45-60 minutes at a time suitable to you. Follow-up interviews may be conducted if necessary. Each interview will be voice-recorded. The duration of your participation, if you choose to participate and remain in the study, is expected to be 4-6 weeks.
This study will not involve any risks and/or discomfort to you. Also, the study will not provide direct benefits to you.

In the event of any problems or concerns/questions, you may contact me, my supervisor or the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, contact details are as follows:

My contact number/details

Email: bongani.simelane@kzndoe.gov.za [redacted]

[redacted]

Supervisor

My supervisor is Dr J. Naidoo who is located at the School of Education, Pietermaritzburg campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Telephone 033 260 5867, Email address: naidooj@ukzn.ac.za

UKZN Research Office

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001

Durban

4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Participation in this research study is voluntary and you may withdraw participation at any point. In the event of refusal/withdrawal of participation, you will not be penalised. There are no consequences if you decide to withdraw from the study.

No costs will be incurred by you as a result of participation in the study and there are no incentives or reimbursements for participation in the study.

All names of schools and participants will be changed and pseudonyms will be used so that schools and participants remain anonymous. Information provided by Principals will remain confidential and will not be shared with anyone else. Data generated through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews will be stored in my supervisor's office, at the School of Education, Pietermaritzburg campus for five years, and thereafter be destroyed.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Yours in Education

Simelane BH

DECLARATION OF CONSENT

I, _____ (Name of the SMT member) have been informed about the study entitled: The role of professional supportive conversations to enhance School Management Teams capacity in their practice of curriculum management by Simelane Bongani. I understand the purpose and procedures of the study. I have been given an opportunity to ask questions about the study and have had answers to my satisfaction.

I declare that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without affecting any of the benefits that I usually am entitled to.

If I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study I understand that I may contact the researcher at (bsimelane94@gmail.com or [redacted]).

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

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION
Research Office, Westville Campus
Govan Mbeki Building
Private Bag X 54001
Durban
4000
KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA
Tel: 27 31 2604557 - Fax: 27 31 2604609
Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za
Additional consent, where applicable
I hereby provide consent to: (Please circle response)
Audio-record my interview YES / NO
Complete questionnaires YES / NO

_____ _____

Signature of Participant **Date**

APPENDIX 2

REQUEST AND CONSENT FORM TO DISTRICT DIRECTOR

9 Paramount Park
6 Fir tree Avenue
Cleland
3201

Dear Sir

My name is Bongani Simelane (Student No. 9406395) a Masters in Education Degree (MEd) student in the School of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Pietermaritzburg campus). As part of the requirement for this degree, I am required to conduct a research project. The title of my research study is: The role of professional supportive conversations to enhance School Management Teams capacity in their practice of curriculum management.

(a) To what extent do school management teams create spaces for teachers to engage in professional supportive conversations?
(b) How do professional supportive conversations enhance the school management team's capacity in curriculum management?

I request your assistance in this research project by being granted permission to conduct my study in your CMC. This study is expected to use at least School Management Teams of three schools and will involve the following procedures. Participants will be required to complete a questionnaire and participate in semi-structured interviews that are expected to last between 45 to 60 minutes at a time suitable to them which will not disturb teaching and learning. Follow-up interviews may be conducted if necessary. Each interview will be voice-recorded. The duration of their participation, if they choose to participate and remain in the study, is expected to be 4-6 weeks.

This study will not involve any risks and/or discomfort for the school and participants. Also, the study will not provide direct benefits for the school or participants.

In the event of any problems or concerns/questions, you may contact me, my supervisor or the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, contact details are as follows:

My contact number

Email: bongani.simelane@kzndoe.gov.za/bsimelane94@gmail.com

[redacted]

Supervisor

Dr J. Naidoo Email address: naidooj@ukzn.ac.za Telephone 033 260 5867

UKZN Research Office

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001

Durban

4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Participation in this research study is voluntary and participants may withdraw participation at any point. In the event of refusal/withdrawal of participation, the participants will not be penalised. There are no consequences for participants who withdraw from the study.

No costs will be incurred by participants as a result of participation in the study and there are no incentives or reimbursements for participation in the study.

All names of schools and participants will be changed and pseudonyms will be used so that schools and participants remain anonymous. Information provided by participants will remain confidential and will not be shared with anyone else. Data generated through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews will be stored in my supervisor's office, at the School of Education, Pietermaritzburg campus for five years, and thereafter be destroyed.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Yours in Education

Simelane BH

DECLARATION OF CONSENT

I_____ (Full names of the District Manager) have been informed about the study entitled: The role of professional supportive conversations to enhance School Management Teams capacity in their practice of curriculum management by Simelane Bongani.

I understand the purpose and procedures of the study.

_____ _____

SIGNATURE OF THE DISTRICT MANAGER DATE
UMGUNGUNDLOVU DISTRICT

APPENDIX 3

SMT PLANNING CALENDAR FOR A 5-WEEK CYCLE

Jika iMfundo
what I do matters

education
Department:
Education
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

DEPARTMENTAL HEAD KEY PRACTICES CURRICULUM MANAGEMENT SCHEDULING & TRACKING TOOL		
CODE	Key Practice	Frequency

Weeks	Teachers' Names	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Re-scheduled
1		Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	
2							
3							
4							
5							

Diagnostic reflection on 5 weeks above – for the DH, and for sharing with Principal/Deputy /SMT			
In preparation for the meeting, consider....	**What's working?**	**What needs work?**	**Agreed Action**
Department meetings Teacher-HoD one-on-one Curriculum Coverage Conversations (including learner work review) Tracking and Reporting of Curriculum Coverage			

APPENDIX 4

DEPARTMENTAL HEAD MONITORING TOOL

Diagnostic reflection			
Consider....	**What's working?**	**What needs work?**	**Agreed Action to Improve**
ATP / Trackers Are teachers using trackers or ATP Is there reflection at the end of each and every week			
Lesson Plans Learner's work Assessment tasks Pre and Post Moderation Recording to SASAMS Phase /Departmental meetings Etc			
Learners Work /Workbook/Activity books			

Diagnostic reflection			
Consider....	What's working?	What needs work?	Agreed Action to Improve
Assessment Tasks			

APPENDIX 5

PRINCIPAL/DEPUTY PRINCIPAL MONITORING TOOL

DH/DP:

Phase:

Principal/Deputy Principal Monitoring Tool: Deputy Principal/Principal's Supervision Conversation with the DP/DH

KEY PRACTICE (BEHAVIOUR)	**WHAT IS WORKING?**	**WHAT NEEDS WORK?**
1. PLANNING AND TRACKING		
Does the DH/DP have her/his own CURRICULUM MANAGEMENT SUPERVISION PLAN in which there is evidence of: Reviewing of teachers' curriculum coverage tracking and files? Checking of learners' work? Monitoring of progress against the annual assessment programme?		
Is the DH/DP using a TOOL to TRACK her/his teachers' curriculum coverage? Is this up to date?		
Are all teachers up to date with curriculum coverage?		

Has homework completion been monitored?		
2. SUBJECT/PHASE MEETINGS		
Is there a written schedule for these weekly meetings?		
Does the attendance register show full attendance?		
Are there minutes?		
Do the minutes state agreed actions with responsibilities and timeframes?		
Is there evidence that teacher development activities happen?		
3. ASSESSMENT		
Is there an **ANNUAL ASSESSMENT PLAN** for all phases/grades and subjects the HOD is responsible for?		
Does the programme of assessment/ ANNUAL ASSESSMENT PLAN include INTERNAL STANDARD TESTS for each subject/phase?		
Are pre-and post-assessment MODERATION conducted in the subject/phase?		

After that conversation, and having reviewed your documents, how would you (the DP/DH) rate: **Your department's planning for, and tracking of, curriculum coverage?**		
STUCK & NEED HELP	**ON TRACK**	**GREAT & READY TO HELP OTHERS**
How learners in your department are succeeding in covering the curriculum?		

STUCK & NEED HELP	**ON TRACK**	**GREAT & READY TO HELP OTHERS**
Now reach consensus with the* DP/DH *on the following …		
What actions can you (the DP/DH) take to improve in both of the areas above?		
What role would you like me (the principal) to take in supporting you (the DP/DH) to improve?		
*Signed (***DP/DH***):* *Signed (Principal):* *Date:*		

APPENDIX 6

QUESTIONNAIRE AND DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

Name: _____

Position held: _____

Phase/Department: _____

Gender: _____ Age Category: _____

Total no of years in Education: _____

Total no of year in the post: _____

Highest Professional Qualification: _____ Current Study (Qualification)

Age category: 1 – under 31 2 – 30 to 39

3 – 40 to 49 4 – 50 and above

	WE ARE STUCK AND NEED HELP	WE HAVE BEGUN AND ARE MAKING PROGRESS	WE ARE DOING WELL-THIS IS AN ESTABLISHED ROUTINE AND WE CAN HELP OTHERS
1. Teachers report curriculum coverage challenges to the DH because they know they will receive support			
2. Teachers report coverage with reflections on the learning of what was taught.			
3. Teachers ask for help whenever they have curriculum coverage problems and are confident that they will receive support from			

	WE ARE STUCK AND NEED HELP	WE HAVE BEGUN AND ARE MAKING PROGRESS	WE ARE DOING WELL-THIS IS AN ESTABLISHED ROUTINE AND WE CAN HELP OTHERS
the teaching team whenever they struggle with curriculum coverage			
4. Teachers have opportunities for one-on-one conversations with an SMT member about the challenges they are facing in the classroom			
5. All teachers have one-on-one conversations discuss coverage problems experienced by teachers			
6. All DH meet with the principal (at least twice a term) in a one-on-one conversation to discuss curriculum coverage problems experienced by teachers			

	Strongly agree	Agree	Strongly disagree
I fully understand what and how the tracker is used.			
I have all developed my own curriculum management file.			
The monitoring tools/planner provided by Jika IMfundo assist me to manage curriculum			
All teachers have their own POAs.			
An annual assessment plan exists and it is used to monitor whether assessment is administered.			
At least two curriculum SMT meetings are held per term			
At least one curriculum SGB meeting is held per term			
Teacher absenteeism affects teaching and learning (Curriculum coverage is compromised)			

AVAILABLE	**Y**	**N**		**Y**	**N**

2. Schedule of staff development programmes			1. Analysis of results		
3. school improvement plan			school assessment plan		
Minute books (SMT, Departmental meetings, staff curriculum meetings, SDT, IQMS)			2. Management file		
Intervention plans to support underperforming learners			Evidence of monitoring teachers'/DHs' work		

In our school/Department/Phase, as far as curriculum management	What's working	What needs to work

APPENDIX 7

OBSERVATION TOOL

Focus Area		Record of observation	Comments
1.	How was the meeting communicated		
2.	Who called the meeting		
3.	How are the participants prepared for the meeting		
4.	How do power relations play out during the meeting		
5.	Is the meeting addressing teachers challenges or SMTs challenges		
6.	Are there any good practices shared		
7.	Are they all well prepared for the meeting, evidence collected prior		
8.	Are there any solutions taken		
9.	How do they deal with challenges beyond their pay grade		
10.	Is the principal providing any leadership and guidance		

Focus Area		Record of observation	Comments
11.	How was time managed during the meeting?		

APPENDIX 8

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview questions

SDT file: Is it relevant for the year? _____ Relevance means the file has:

a. Revised PGPs, Revised DSGs,

b. School self-evaluation done? _____

1. School initiates Activities: _____

2. How often do you meet as a school for type 2 CPTD activities?

3. How many of these activities are curriculum related?

4. How were they identified

   vii) Do you report PD points for the school? If yes, what activities have you reported this year?

   viii) How often do you meet per week/month for staff development programmes?

5. At what time do you meet for school driven PD (staff development) Activities

6. What experience do have as a teacher and as an SMT member?

7. Can you briefly share with me what do you understand your role to be as far as curriculum is concerned?

8. How often do hold SMT and or Departmental meetings

9. Do you experience any challenges when it comes to curriculum management?

10. Were YOU given the planner; did it help you in any way?

11. Do you prefer using a tracker or an ATP, give reasons?

12. What do you understand curriculum coverage to be?

13. What do you understand by the concept of professional supportive conversation?

14. During the professional supportive conversation, did you come across any challenge that you had to come up with the solution?

15. How did you resolve that challenge?

16. Have you ever been faced with a challenge presented to you that you just could not resolve?

17. How did you get yourself out of that situation?

18. Do you think one on one conversations leaves you a better manager or it leaves another the better teacher?

APPENDIX 9
ETHICAL CLEARANACE CERTIFICATE

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
INYUVESI YAKWAZULU-NATALI

17 March 2020

Mr Bongani Hosea Simelane (9406395)
School Of Education
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Dear Mr Simelane,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00000973/2020
Project title: The role of professional supportive conversations to enhance School Management Teams capacity in their practice of curriculum management.
Degree: Masters

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 07 January 2020 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**

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

This approval is valid until 17 March 2021.
To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

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

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]

Professor Urmilla Bob
University Dean of Research

/dd

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

APPENDIX 10
PERMISSION LETTER FROM KZN DoE

education

Department:
Education
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

Enquiries: Phindile Duma | Tel: 033 392 1063 | Ref.:2/4/8/4023

Mr BH Simelane
9 Paramount Park
Cleland
PIETERMARITZBURG
3201

Dear Mr Simelane

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: **"THE ROLE OF PROFESSIONAL SUPPORTIVE CONVERSATIONS TO ENHANCE SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAMS CAPACITY IN THEIR PRACTICE OF CURRICULUM MANAGEMENT"**, in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

1. The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2. The researcher must ensure that Educator and learning programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, Educators, Schools and Institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Heads of Institutions where the Intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6. The period of investigation is limited to the period from 19 November 2019 to 30 June 2022.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Miss Phindile Duma at the contact numbers below.
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report/dissertation/thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Office of the HOD, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to schools and institutions in KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education.

UMGUNGUNDLOVU DISTRICT

[redacted]

Dr. EV Nzama
Head of Department: Education
Date: 21 November 2019

...Leading Social Compact and Economic Emancipation Through a Revolutionary Education for All...

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

APPENDIX 11

TURNITIN RECEIPT

PROFESSIONAL SUPPORTIVE CONVERSATIONS AS A STRATEGY TO ENHANCE SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAM'S CAPACITY TO MANAGE THE CURRICULUM

ORIGINALITY REPORT

9%	7%	2%	3%
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES

1	researchspace.ukzn.ac.za Internet Source	1%
2	open.saide.ngo Internet Source	1%
3	Submitted to University of KwaZulu-Natal Student Paper	1%
4	repository.up.ac.za Internet Source	<1%
5	uir.unisa.ac.za Internet Source	<1%
6	hdl.handle.net Internet Source	<1%
7	libdspace.ufh.ac.za Internet Source	<1%
8	core.ac.uk Internet Source	<1%
	www.diva-portal.org	

APPENDIX 12

EDITING CERTIFICATE

EDITING CERTIFICATE

Date: 30 January 2022

I, Berdine Smit, ID 7712190011083, hereby certify that the **MASTERS IN EDUCATION** thesis by

BONGANI HOSEA SIMELANE:

AN EXPLORATION OF THE ROLE OF PROFESSIONAL SUPPORTIVE CONVERSATIONS AS A STRATEGY TO ENHANCE SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAM'S CAPACITY TO MANAGE THE CURRICULUM

has been edited by me according to the Harvard Author-date System (APA application).

[redacted]

BERDINE SMIT

BA. Publishing (UPE)

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berdine.smit@gmail.com

+(27) 82 882 9534