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PERSPECTIVES OF TEACHERS ON SUBJECT ADVISORS AS INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERS: A CASE STUDY OF TWO SCHOOLS AT UMBUMBULU CENTRAL CIRCUIT

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Perspectives of teachers on subject advisors as instructional leaders: A case study of two schools at Umbumbulu Central Circuit

By

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DECLARATION

I, Nonhlanhla Charity Dambuza, declare that: **Perspectives of teachers on subject advisors as instructional leaders: A case study of two schools at Umbumbulu Central Circuit,** abides by the following rules:

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SUPERVISOR'S STATEMENT

This dissertation is submitted with/without my approval.

_____

Dr S. E. Mthiyane (Supervisor)

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I lift up my heart in deepest gratitude to The Most High, for He is good and kind.

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DEDICATION

In loving memory of my late husband Thamsanqa Stephen Joshua (Noshi) Dambuza and my late father, Hertzog Ntokozo Mbonambi.

ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

INYUVESI YAKWAZULU-NATALI

5 June 2014

Mrs Nonhlanhla Charity Dambuza (981206506)
School of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear Mrs Dambuza

Protocol reference number: HSS/0437/014M
Project title: Perspectives of teachers on subject advisors as instructional leaders: A case study of two schools at Umbumbulu Central Circuit

Full Approval – Expedited

This letter serves to notify you that your application in connection with the above has now been granted **Full Approval**

Any alterations to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project; Location of the Study, Research Approach/Methods must be reviewed and approved through an amendment /modification prior to its implementation. Please quote the above reference number for all queries relating to this study. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research protocol

Yours faithfully

....
Dr Shénuka Singh (Chair)
Humanities & Social Science Research Ethics Committee

/pm

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ABSTRACT

This was a study of two secondary schools and it was a case of perceptions of teachers on subject advisors as instructional leaders. To fulfil the purpose of the study, critical questions such as how teachers' conceptualise the role of subject advisors in instructional leadership and what were teachers' experiences of instructional support offered by subject advisors. To increase the validity of the findings and to ensure a cross-sectional representation of the various levels of classroom-based teachers, five participants (principal, two heads of department and grade 12 teachers) were purposively selected in each school. Qualitative data generation methods which were used were semi-structured interviews and document analysis.

One of the most urgent agenda the government of South Africa seeks to deliver on, is quality education for all. In spite of the fact that since 1994, the government has been incrementally spending more on education than any other sector, there is little improvement in the quality of education. Research has established that district office-based officials are important role- players in supporting teachers to improve quality of teaching and learning, particularly during educational reform initiatives. It further states that differentiated and contextualised district office supports influences and shapes what teachers do in the classrooms. However, this study argues that there can never be a full understanding of what makes for effective teacher support without input from the teachers, who are the end-users of such support. Thus, it is important for professional development programme designers and subject advisors, in this case, to consider perspectives of teachers on what behaviours they think contribute to effective instructional support, for in the final analysis, teachers are the beneficiaries of such support.

The findings of this study suggested that the participants believed that there are essential conditions that should prevail for successful professional development of teachers to occur. The converse was also found to be true in that the participants' identified certain prevailing conditions which they believed sabotaged professional learning opportunities. It is thus important for the department of education to understand teachers' views so that professional development programmes can be tailored to meet the needs of teachers.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

SMTs	School Management Teams
NDP	National Development Plan
NCS	National Curriculum Statement
NCSL	National College for School Leadership
ACE	Advanced Certificate in Education
PSMDP	Primary School Management Development Project
USA	United States of America
PLCs	Professional Learning Communities
NCLB	No Child Left Behind
SEF	School Effectiveness Framework
QASOs	Quality Assurance Standards Officers
PCK	Pedagogical Content Knowledge
CAPS	Continuous Assessment and Policy Statement
HOD	Head of Department
MIP	Matric Intervention Programme
SBA	School Based Assessment

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

Since the dawn of democracy in 1994, South African government has decisively acted to improve the quality of education and redress the inequalities of the past. Not only were new educational policies and regulations installed, but government has been incrementally spending more on education than any other sector, with 19, 5% of total government spending allocated to education in 2013 (Spaull, 2013). Notwithstanding these intentional efforts, there are no significant improvements in the quality of education (Taylor, 2008; Christie, 2010; Spaull, 2013).

Diagnostic report to the National Planning Commission by Van der Berg, Taylor, Gustafsson, Spaull & Armstrong (2011) establishes that district offices do not have intervention and support programmes to act on challenges experienced by teachers and schools. In fact, district offices fulfil, almost exclusively; a monitoring role (Van Der Berg *et al*., 2011). It is against this backdrop that National Development Plan (NDP): Vision 2030 (2012) declares that improving the quality of education is a national priority. Van Der Berg *et al*., (2011) further proceed to make specific recommendations for what should happen for quality of education to improve in South African schools. One of the recommendations they make is that district office support to schools and teachers should be reconceptualised so that it fulfils both supportive and corrective roles. It is in accordance with the ideals of the NDP: Vision 2030 (2011) that *Policy on Organisation, Role and Responsibilities of District Office,* 2013, was promulgated. Among other things, the policy states that education districts are central to safeguarding learners' access to education of progressively high quality. It also specifies that the four roles of district office are: *planning*, *support, oversight and accountability and public engagement*.

The district office role that is of interest to this study is *support.* With regard to support, the Policy states, among other things, that district office is responsible for supporting and providing professional development of managers, educators and administrative staff members. Research (Weber, 1987; Hallinger, 2005) has established that some principals (and School Management Teams SMTs, for that matter) may not have subject expertise of all the subjects that are offered in their schools. This is particularly true in small secondary schools

where often there is one specialist teacher for each of the subjects offered. In such cases, the mediating instructional leadership role of subject advisors becomes even more crucial. Furthermore, for classroom-based teachers, the first line of contact with district office is by and large, the subject advisor. In this regard, subject advisors, among all district office officials, interface most directly with teachers in the provision of professional development and support. It is against this premise that teachers' perceptions about subject advisors as instructional leaders were investigated. The study was conducted at two secondary schools at Umbumbulu Central Circuit in Umlazi District.

1.2 Background to the study

I became interested in this study through personal and professional encounters with a number of subject advisors and colleagues in my twenty-two year teaching career. Personally, about six years ago, I attended a subject content workshop whereby what was announced by my then new subject advisor sparked my interest for this study. By way of introduction, she categorically informed teachers in my circuit that she would not visit classrooms because that domain fell out of her responsibilities. However, her predecessor was popular for being hands-on whenever teachers requested her assistance in classroom demonstrations for hard to-teach curricular topics.

At a professional level, two years ago a critical friend told me that he wished to be observed in the classroom practice for professional feedback. Being the only teacher of one the "critical subjects" at his school, he then requested his subject advisor to come and observe him. His request was however declined on the grounds that classroom observation was beyond the scope of his subject advisor's role. On the contrary, what I observed recently at my school contradicts these two experiences. I observed a subject advisor consulting with a teacher in the office and thereafter he proceeded to the classroom to model a lesson presentation for the teacher. From the foregoing, it was clear that the subject advisors' role in teacher support was subjective and subject to varied interpretations.

Ground-breaking research on the role of district office in supporting school improvement suggests that district office support and professional development programmes can only influence and shape what principals and teachers do in schools and classrooms when they are responsive to teachers' individual needs and focus on instructional practice (Elmore & Burney, 1997). However, what I observed in practice about teacher support, conflicts this

finding. In the main, subject advisors' support and professional development programmes were in the form of content workshops and school visits. Content workshops were often held on a once-off basis at the beginning of the school calendar year. For these workshops, teachers, within a circuit were invited to a three-hour workshop at a venue outside schools. The nature of these content workshops was generic and thus did not address teachers' individual needs and level of experience. Teachers did not have input on the content of workshops. For school visits, subject advisors usually consulted with teachers at the office and controlled teachers' files, specimen of learners' work and then made log book entries. Interestingly, Dr Matanzima Moeli, Acting Deputy Director General for Curriculum Delivery and Policy Implementation Unit for the Department of Basic Education (15 January, 2014) on *SA FM* radio show, describes subject advisors as "foot soldiers who provide instructional support to teachers" and "add value to teachers' professional experiences". Thus, this study proposed that teachers are favourably placed to provide information on whether instructional supports which they receive from subject advisors were responsive to their needs and if it shaped and influenced their classroom practice for improved learner achievement.

Given the above rationale, this study sought to explore and document perceptions and experiences of teachers on subject advisors' instructional leadership practices. It was believed that the study would provide valuable understanding on how teachers experienced the support provided by subject advisors and if these supports shaped and influenced the participants' classroom practice for improved quality of teaching and learning.

1.3 Objectives and key questions of the study

The aims and objectives of this study were:
- To explore what teachers perceive to be the role of subject advisors in the provision of instructional leadership.
- To examine why teachers need instructional support from subject advisors.
- To explore how subject advisors provide instructional support to teachers.

Collectively, this study sought to answer the following questions:
- What do teachers understand to be the role of subject advisors in providing instructional support?
- Why do teachers need instructional support from subject advisors?
- How do subject advisors give instructional support to teachers?

1.4 Clarification of key concepts

For purposes of this study and to ensure unambiguous understanding of key terms and concepts, the following were defined: subject advisor and instructional leadership.

1.4.1 Subject advisor

Subject advisor is a specialist office-based educator in a district office whose function is to facilitate curriculum implementation and improve the environment and process of learning and teaching by visiting schools, consulting with the principals and teachers on curriculum matters (*Policy on the Organisation, Role and Responsibility of District Office*, 2013, p.11).

1.4.2   Instructional leadership

Instructional leadership are intentional efforts at all levels of an educational system to guide, direct or support teachers as they seek to increase their repertoire of skills, gain professional knowledge, and ultimately improve student success (Knapp, Copland, Honig, Plecki & Portin, 2010, pp. 4-5).

1.5   Overview of research design and methodology

This study was located within the interpretivist paradigm (Krauss, 2005; Mack, 2010). The purpose of this study was to understand how teachers perceive instructional support rendered by subject advisors; qualitative methodology was thus preferred (Strydom & Delport in de Vos *et al*., 2005). This was a case study of ten teachers and it was a case of perceptions on subject advisors as instructional leaders. Selection for study participation was based on the researcher's discretion on which participants were deemed as best suited to provide the required information (McKenzie & Knipe, 2006; Marshall & Rossman, 2010; McMillan & Schumacher, 2011). To enhance credibility of research findings, interviews and documents analysis were the two data generation methods which were used to generate data for this study (Picciano, 2004). Content analysis approach was used to analyse data for the study (Cohen, Mannion & Morrison, 2011). A detailed discussion on research design and methodology ensues in Chapter Three.

1.6 Organisation of the study

Chapter One provides an overview of the study by presenting the background, purpose and rationale for the study. Literature review, research design and methodology issues are also highlighted in Chapter One.

Chapter Two presents the review of national, continental and international literature that were relevant to the study as well as the theoretical frameworks which underpinned the study.

Chapter Three presents a brief description of the research design and methodology for the study.

Chapter Four presents and discusses data that were generated for the study.

Chapter Five presents the conclusions as well as recommendations of the study.

1.7 Chapter summary

This chapter introduced the study and explained its background. It also provided a brief description of the context in which the study was conducted as well as its research design and methodology. The next chapter presents the literature review and the theoretical frameworks that underpin the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented a bird's eye view of the study. Accordingly, the background, purpose, rationale, objectives and key questions of the study were presented. Furthermore, research design and methodology of the study were discussed. This chapter presents the review of literature that is pertinent to this study.

According to Merriam (2009, p. 74) literature review is "a narrative essay that integrates, synthesizes, and critiques the important thinking and research on a particular topic." To facilitate coherence of the ensuing discussion, literature review is presented under the following sub-headings: outline of literature review, educational leadership, history of instructional leadership; instructional leadership behaviour, current landscape of instructional leadership internationally, current landscape of instructional leadership in Africa and current landscape of instructional leadership in South Africa; role of district offices in instructional leadership; role of subject advisors as instructional leaders. The review of literature concludes with discussion of Weber's (1996) model of instructional leadership and Spillane, Halverson and Diamond's (2001) theory of distributed leadership which are the theoretical frameworks that underpinned this study.

2.2 Outline of literature review

To paraphrase Prinsloo (2001), the overriding purpose of an educational system is to prepare the young people of its country to accomplish and fulfil their latent abilities so that they can actively contribute and participate in the society. This, he continues, the educational system achieves by providing its young people with quality education. Ironically, educational reformers, educationists and policy makers are continually confounded as they continually struggle to figure out how exactly to improve the quality of teaching and learning (Goldstein, 2010). It is for this reason that this literature review focuses on instructional leadership and efforts to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

Research on district office support conclusively suggests that district officials are important agents for supporting educational reform and learner achievement (Bantwini & King-

McKenzie, 2011; Leon, 2010, Chinsamy, 2002). Similarly, South African researchers (King-McKenzie, Bantwini & Bogan, 2013; Bantwini & Diko, 2011, Chinsamy, 2002) and policy makers (NDP: Vision 2030) view district offices as key stakeholders in developing and building capacity of teachers so that new policies can be effectively implemented.

Elmore and Burney (1997) found that district officials' influence obtains when they provide district professional development programmes and instructional supports that are responsive to the needs of schools and teachers and focus on instructional practices. Such professional development programmes and support ultimately shapes and influence what principals and teachers do in schools and classrooms, respectively (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2003). Fullan (2010) echoes the same sentiment that good partnership between schools and districts results in improved learning and performance. On the other side, as Lauer (2006) warns about lack of teacher support, he observes that lack of teacher support results in teachers using instructional practices that they saw their own teachers using. Thus, it can be concluded that availability, form and shape of teacher support are crucial factors in the improvement of teaching and learning.

Similarly, Bantwini and Diko (2011) and Smith (2011) found that teachers complain about lacking support from local district officials that are responsible for helping them (teachers) with their needs and that district official's lack capacity to support teachers. Hence there are specific recommendations by the NDP: Vision 2030 (2011) that district office support be reconceptualised so that it offers targeted support to teachers and schools in the light of the glaring deficiencies in school and teacher supports. Capacity-building and development of teachers' subject knowledge base are fundamental and fair prerequisite for holding teachers accountable for learner performance (Chinsamy, 2002; Spaull, 2013). A detailed discussion is presented and discussed in this chapter.

2.3 Educational leadership

Leadership and teachers' classroom practice are one of the main factors which influence learner achievement (Jenkins, 2009; Bush, Joubert, Kiggundu & van Rooyen, 2009; Hornig & Loeb, 2010). It is for this reason that this review of literature commences by outlining the concept of educational leadership. Robertson (2008, p.20) defines educational leadership as "the actions taken to improve opportunities for learning." Similarly, Caldwell (2003, p.26) offers that educational leadership "is a capacity to nurture a learning community." Based on

these two definitions, it can then be said that the agenda to which educational leaders are expected to deliver, are supporting and improving environments which promote teacher learning and development. Bush (2003) believes that there is a definite connection between educational leadership and learner outcomes. From this, it follows that educational leaders are not born but they are prepared and developed for leadership. Bush (2003) feels strongly about leadership preparation and development so much so that he views it as a moral obligation. At the heart of his argument is that raised standards in educational leadership and management and improved school and learner outcomes are the two sides of the same coin. Bush's argument seems to enjoy support among educational researchers as evidenced in countless initiatives, programmes and competing models that have seen the light of the day, all for the specific purpose of preparing future school leaders and/or capacitating practising leaders. Bush (2003) and Fullan (2010) do not contest the existence of multiple approaches to educational leadership. They state that educational institutions have diverse contexts and so they encounter different problems which require different approaches for realisation of context-sensitive solutions.

In light of the view that educational systems the world over are reforming to realise quality education for all, it then becomes important to understand the role of educational leadership in implementing and managing change. Change is a necessary requirement in any improvement enterprises, according to Yukl (2006), leading change is one of the most important leadership responsibilities According to Marishane (2011), there are two ways in which change is linked to educational leadership. First, he contends that educational reform is about change, and change in education is about improvement. Thus, if change is to bring about sustainable improvement, there should be effective leadership in place to lead and direct change. The second link he makes is that leadership needs change in order to bring about improvements. Southworth (2002) observes that most studies on leadership tended to seek understanding of leadership from the perspective of the leader and thus presented a one-sided view to a phenomenon that has multiple stakeholders who may have differing views and expectations from the same process. He correctly argues that effective leadership cannot be completely understood without due consideration of the perspectives of all role players and how they experience and understand leadership practices as enacted by their leaders. Thus, for Southworth (2002), leadership is a socially constructed discourse. According to the social constructionist view, it is important to understand many perceptions on what effective leadership is and how it impacts on those that are being led. So, leadership practices warrant

interrogation for it is through such that reflections can be made on whether they achieve the intended goals or not. It was against this understanding that this study sought to understand subject advisors instructional leadership practices from the view of teachers.

The next part of this literature review discusses the history of instructional leadership which frames this study. Instructional leadership was chosen because it is the educational leadership model which is acclaimed in South Africa and across the world as the most effective model in educational reforms and instructional improvement efforts.

2.4 History of instructional leadership

Instructional leadership is one of the many models of educational leadership. According to Bush (2014), of all the educational leadership models, instructional leadership is the first educational leadership approach that promulgated a link between leadership and learning. Instructional leadership first came into being in the beginning of the 1970's with the advent of the effective schools movement of the 1970' and 1980's in the United States of America (Prestine & Nelson, 2005; Jenkins, 2009; Hornig & Loeb, 2010). Its popularity with the effective schools movement was due to that it expressly targeted the core business of schools which are teaching and learning, learner growth and achievement and professional development of teachers (Southworth, 2002; Bush, 2003;). Thus, central to instructional leadership approach was the relationship between leadership and learner achievement (Jenkins, 2009).

In its initial form, instructional leadership projected the principal as the sole instructional leader in the school (Prestine & Nelson, 2005). In other words, principals were viewed as having the capacity to single-handedly exercise influence on learner achievement. This view was informed by research that identified a correlation between high-quality leadership and positive learner performance. Soon instructional leadership rapidly spread to other countries like United Kingdom, Australia, Hong Kong, Singapore and in some states in Germany (Hallinger, 2007).

With great emphasis being on the principal as the sole instructional leader, more attention was then given to recruitment and development of principals (Hornig & Loeb, 2010). As a result, various government sponsored initiatives across the globe established academies and/or programmes to build-capacity and develop school principals for instructional leadership (Hallinger, 2005; Muijs, 2011). Some examples of such programmes were the establishment of Britain's National College for School Leadership (NCSL) in 2001 for the

specific purpose of preparing and developing principals for school leadership. Other countries followed a similar pattern by making it compulsory for principals to participate in leadership development as well as induction programmes (Muijs, 2011). In South Africa, the introduction of Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE) for School Leadership (for principals) is indicative of the fact that there is a definite government resolve to develop and prepare principals for instructional leadership role (Naicker, 2011). Likewise, in Botswana, the Primary School Management Development Project (PSMDP) was launched to develop principals of primary school and school management teams to enact their instructional roles efficiently (Pansiri, 2008).

However, in spite of its popularity, instructional leadership remained an elusive concept so much that even programme designers in the leadership academies were not sure what exactly they should be preparing principals to do as instructional leaders (Hallinger, 2005). There was a discord between the expectations of policy makers and the candidates who were being prepared for principal ships. The ideals of policy makers which conceptualised principals as sole instructional leaders were overwhelming for the principals who aspired to be instructional leaders, and they only fuelled feeling of inadequacies (Hallinger, 2005). This ultimately led to the main criticism against instructional leadership that it conceptualised teaching and learning in terms of the principal when in fact there are other role players who are equally important (Bush, 2003 & 2014). Another criticism was that it focused exclusively on teaching and ignored the learning aspect which inherently meant that it ignored the effects of other school life's aspects such as context, learner welfare and self-esteem (Bush, 2003 & 2014). It was mainly due to these criticisms that the mid-1990s saw a remarkable dwindling interest in instructional leadership. Instructional leadership was then overtaken by school-based management and facilitative leadership (Hallinger 1992a, as cited in Bush, 2003) and transformational leadership (Jenkins, 2009).

However, the 21st century has not only seen a great resurgence of instructional leadership but its reconfigured view as well. On this, the US Department of Education (2005) newsletter points out that USA has shifted from instructional leadership that is mainly administrative to the one that seeks to focus and impact on the teaching and learning in the classroom. With this new understanding, the knight in shining armour view of principals as the sole instructional leaders was replaced by the all-important realisation that instructional leadership is a mammoth task which cannot be realistically accomplished by a single person (Hallinger, 2007). Accordingly, there was a paradigm shift. With the reconfiguration of instructional

leadership, emerged the notions of leadership for learning in United Kingdom (Southworth, 2002, Bush, 2014), learning -centred leadership (Knapp, Copland, Honig, Plecki & Portin, 2010) and distributed instructional leadership (Lashway, 2002) in USA.

Southworth (2005) explains that learning-centred leadership seeks to influence teaching by taking views of teachers on how they want their leaders to exercise leadership that promotes and supports teaching and learning. Therefore, learning-centred leadership is potentially influential as "it meets with teachers' expectations of their leaders" (p.91). In support of Southworth's claim about the nature of learning-centred leadership, Bush, Bell and Middlewood (2003) offer that preparation and development of instructional leaders focuses on the behaviours of teachers as they engage in in activities that directly impact on learner achievement and growth.

In South Africa, instructional leadership was commonly referred to as curriculum management or managing teaching and learning (Bush, 2014). At the time Christie (2010) wrote, principals' work was prescribed in terms of being an organisational manager than a leader, with greater emphasis being placed on "leadership" than "instructional leadership", and so there was minimal, if any, reference to instructional leadership (Christie, 2010).

However, instructional leadership approach is increasingly becoming common in South Africa (Msila, 2013). Evidence to its increasing popularity is found in the recent literature by Van Der Berg, Taylor, Gustafsson, Armstrong and Spaull (2011) where they recommend to the Department of Basic Education that instructional leadership is the most suitable educational leadership approach to facilitate educational transformation in South African schools. According to Bush (2008, p.21), instructional leadership approach gained favour with the new South African government simply because it is an educational leadership model that endeavors to "change the mindset of leaders to regard the process of teaching and learning as central to their role, rather than simply leaving such matters to classroom teachers."

Broadly speaking, the authors discussed above hold that instructional leadership is a responsibility that is a distributed practice and which is distributed among others, heads of departments, deputy-principals, district officials who are subject specialists who are concerned with curriculum delivery, support and advisory, curriculum specialists and consultants who are subject experts. Collectively, all these stakeholders combine to constitute instructional leadership cadre (Knapp *et al*., 2010). The notion of instructional leadership

cadre holds that instructional leadership is distributed among different players of different ranks, from the district office level to the classroom teacher. In essence, this view does not confine accountability for learner performance to the classroom teacher since the base of role-players who are held accountable is wide and ranges from classroom teachers to the district office officials. Southworth's assertion that the views of teachers ought to inform leadership practices is particularly relevant for this study in that it affirms that teachers ought to have a voice on how they need instructional leaders to support them. This means that instructional leaders' practices are not an end in themselves, but they are enacted deliberately and purposefully for achieving particular instructional goals. Thus, this review of literature now turns to discuss what research has uncovered as behaviours of effective instructional leaders.

2.5 Instructional leadership behaviour

As alluded to earlier on, teachers' classroom practices have an impact on learner achievement (Bush *et al.*, 2009). In other words, what teachers do or do not in their classrooms have a direct consequence on how learners perform. Therefore, teachers are the most important people on the government's mandate to deliver on the agenda of quality education for all. The importance of the role played by teachers in education is captured in Abdul's (2009, p.8) apt remark that "people in the organisation are taken for granted and yet this is the force that affects the organization the most. An employee's performance depends not so much on his ability to than on the extent to which the organization can enable him to perform at his best." Abdul's observation seems to suggest that teachers need supports so that they can effectively perform their job. In schools, teacher support is normally rendered by instructional leaders who are school-management teams (SMT) as well as subject advisory services from the district offices. Instructional leaders play an important role in supporting and developing teachers' classroom practices for improved learner gains and growth. Hill (2009) laments that teacher professional development system, in its current state, does not meet with teachers' expectations and so it needs an overhaul. She further points out that teachers have knowledge of instructional leadership practices that yield good returns for their professional development and growth. It then becomes important for this literature review to discuss leadership behaviours that are often associated with effective instructional leadership in educational management. Literature (Southworth, 2002; Blasé and Blasé, 2000; Zepeda, 2004) is replete with findings of describable behaviours, practices and attitudes that are often associated with effective instructional leaders.

For the purposes of this study, instructional leadership behaviours are discussed in terms of the ground-breaking research study which was conducted by Blasé and Blasé (2000). Blasé and Blasé' study (2000) is relevant for this project because it investigated teachers' perceptions to determine the day to day behaviours of effective instructional leaders, and how these behaviours shaped and influenced teachers' classroom practices. Like this study, Blasé and Blase view leadership as a social construction in that the voices and views of the followers on leaders' instructional leadership practices should be considered as a valuable source of information and feedback on whether leadership practices speak to the expectations and needs of the followers (Southworth, 2002). In other words, this study and that of Blasé and Blasé (2000) both sought to understand instructional leadership practices and their effects on teacher' classroom behaviour through the lens of the end-users or the beneficiaries, who are the teachers themselves.

However, there is also difference between the two studies in that Blasé and Blasé (2000) explored teachers' perceptions on principals' instructional leadership behaviours, while this project sought to explore teachers' perceptions on subject advisors' instructional leadership practices. It was then concluded that the similarity between the two studies is stronger than the difference in that subject advisors, just like principals, are instructional leaders. But, unlike principals who interact daily with teachers, subject advisors are subject-specialist instructional leaders who are based at district offices, and thus they do not interact on a day-to-day basis with teachers. However, it was believed that there are some findings by Blasé and Blase that could possibly lend themselves to transfer to other instructional leaders, such as subject advisors.

Blasé and Blasé (2000) conducted a study of more than 800 teachers to explore teachers perceptions on what were the everyday behaviours of the best and the worst principals and how these behaviours impacted on their classroom instructional practice. The spread of participants was fairly representative of both genders, and it included urban and rural schools, primary and secondary school teachers and thus it can be said to be representative of different educational contexts. They concluded that effective instructional leaders exhibited certain behaviours and attitudes, used certain strategies and had school goals in which all contributed to what participants deemed as effective instructional leadership

They found that there were two distinct behaviour themes which characterised leadership approach of effective instructional leaders. These themes were "talking with teachers

(conferencing) to promote reflection" and "promoting teachers' professional development" (Blasé & Blasé, 2000, p.133).

2.5.1 Talking with teachers

Under the theme of talking with teachers, they concluded that effective instructional leaders talked *with* rather than talked *to* teachers in order to help them think and reflect on their classroom practice and what they learned. In talking with teachers, effective instructional leaders used five talking strategies. These strategies are "making suggestions, giving feedback, modelling, using inquiry and soliciting advice and opinions and giving praise" (Blasé & Blasé, 2000, p.133). Each of these strategies is discussed below.

Firstly, effective instructional leaders were generous with suggestions to teachers so that teachers received suggestions both in informal daily exchanges, and formally in before- and after-observation meetings. Suggestions that were offered by effective instructional leaders to teachers under their charge were characterised by relevance, focus, and lack of hostility. Effective instructional leaders were also good listeners and shared their instructional experiences willingly. They also provided examples (but were not prescriptive) and they encouraged teachers to take risks. They also provided demonstrations of hard to teach topics. These behaviours had a positive effect on teachers who in turn felt supported, motivated, self-assured and unthreatened.

Providing feedback was another behaviour which was demonstrated by effective instructional leaders. Feedback provided to teachers was informed by observed classroom behaviour and it was given with care and concern. Effective instructional leaders also provided feedback that addressed teachers' concerns about learners and emphasized the availability of the instructional leader to follow-up meetings. Such feedback was reported to develop teachers' confidence and reflective thinking and behaviour.

Modelling is another behaviour that was characteristic of effective instructional leaders. It involved classroom demonstrations of effective instructional practices as well as modelling positive communication methods with learners.

Effective instructional leaders were also found to ask questions, advice and opinions of others in matter pertaining to classroom practice. DuFour (2004) also concurs that a strong instructional leader asks questions to encourage reflective thinking than imposing solutions. They also gave praise to teachers based on observable effective teaching practices and

strategies. Praise was found to reinforce teachers' use of observed effective teaching methods.

Additional to the above strategies, it emerged that effective instructional leaders also provided teachers with relevant professional literature, providing opportunities for teachers to attend workshops and conferences, and fostering collaborative practices. The second characteristic of effective instructional leaders was promoting teacher's professional development.

2.5.2 Promoting teachers' professional development

Under the second theme of promoting teachers' professional development they concluded that effective instructional leaders encouraged teacher professional development on improving teaching strategies and sharing of best instructional practices among teachers within or across schools. There are six tactics that were used by effective instructional leaders to develop and improve teaching strategies of teachers. These strategies were: emphasising the study of teaching and learning, supporting collaboration efforts among educators, developing coaching relationships among teachers, encouraging and supporting redesign of programmes, applying the principles of adult learning, growth and development to all phases of staff development and implementing action research to inform instructional decision making (Blasé & Blasé, 2000). Below is a discussion of each of the strategies used for encouraging teachers' professional development.

2.5.2.1 Focus on the study of teaching and learning

Effective instructional leaders were found to create staff development opportunities as a discourse for mediating arising instructional needs of teachers. The content of the staff development programmes were informed by the teachers themselves. Effective instructional leaders did not make attendance to the staff development programmes compulsory but they left the decision to attend on individual teachers, for it is believed that teachers better understand what their professional development needs are. It was found that teachers were better motivated to attend staff development programmes in which they had input and they perceived such programmes as of better quality and in turn such staff development programmes had positive impact on their classroom practices. Furthermore, effective instructional leaders also engaged in continuous learning themselves by learners becoming fellow learners with their teachers in staff development programmes.

2.5.2.2 Creating coaching liaisons among teachers

Effective instructional leaders believed that collaborative networks among teachers to promote effective teaching and learning and so they encouraged it by modelling teamwork and creating time for collaborative work. Collaborative networking included among others, teachers meeting to reflect on their present practices and how these impact on learner achievement, discussing individual teacher and learner needs, new policies and strategies that might be used to implement change, if needed.

2.5.2.3 Promoting coaching relationships among teachers

Effective instructional leaders were found to promote collaborative practices among teachers and encouraged peer-coaching. Teachers who demonstrated best practices were acknowledged and were used as coaches for their colleagues to enhance teacher development. Coaching often involved observing model teachers in practice and/or sharing of effective teaching strategies. Likewise, Boatright, Galluci, Swanson and Yoon (2008) observe that coaching is an effective professional learning strategy that circumvents the ever-present challenge of relevance in professional development programmes because it is job-embedded and customised to teachers' self-identified professional needs. Job-embedded professional learning lends itself to immediate   "transfer and application of newly learned skills into classroom practice, development of professionalism and collegiality and school improvement" and are more effective than the disconnected type of in-service workshops (Zepeda, 1999, p.76).   Additional to peer-coaching, there are other job-embedded professional learning strategies such as mentoring, reflection and study groups (Zepeda, 1999). Coaching is a professional learning strategy that is highly effective in facilitating reform agenda and it has the potential to yield high quality professional development (Boatright *et al.,* 2008).

2.5.2.4 Inspiring and promoting redesign of programmes

Teachers reported that effective instructional leaders gave them freedom to experiment with new ideas and to adapt teaching programmes and strategies according to the context and learners' instructional needs. They also demonstrated commitment to this cause by sponsoring resources, such as time and material resources to make redesign of programmes feasible.

2.5.2.5 Consideration for principles of adult learning, growth and development to staff development

Adult learners are motivated to learn when what they are learning is relevant to their life experiences. Similarly, effective instructional leaders were found to incorporate principle of adult learning in design and presentation of professional development programmes. Similarly, Zepeda (1999) also affirms that it is important for those who plan and implement teachers' professional development programmes to be mindful of the principles that inform adult learning. Professional learning communities (PLCs) is one professional development model which addresses the principles of adult learning, growth and teacher professional development. PLCs are premised on the notion that learner achievement is attained through improved teaching practice. According to Vescio, Ross and Adams (2008), PLCs are based on two assumptions. The first assumption is that knowledge resides in the daily work experiences of teachers, and it is created through critical reflection with other teachers who share similar experience. The second assumption is that by actively engaging in PLCs, teachers will enhance professional knowledge and learner performance. Newmann, 1996 (as cited in Vescio *et al.,*1998) found strong evidence to suggest that teachers who participated in PLC changed their classroom practice to be more learner centred, used a variety of teaching strategies and were more accommodative to learners with varying levels of content mastery. Therefore, PLCs is a professional development approach which addresses the principles of adult learning and it results in growth and professional development. Clustering in and/or across schools is another in-service professional development approach which lends itself to principles of adult learning. Clusters have the same purpose as PLCs. The main difference between PLCs and clusters is that PLCs are often school-based while clusters can within and/or across schools or in combination of the two. Like PLCs, clusters promote teacher agency in professional development, focused on improving classroom practice for improved learner performance, promotes sharing of problems and critical reflection and uses problem solving approach to professional development (Leu, 2004). While clustering is teacher-driven, it requires material support from schools and/or district office for it to sustain.

2.5.2.6 Using action research to inform instructional decision making

According to the findings, teachers felt that effective instructional leaders used school-based and classroom based action research to assess the impact of employing new teaching strategies. Action research serves as mirror to see if new teaching strategies have a positive

impact on learner achievement or not. In other words, action research helps to evaluate the impact of change brought about by introduction of new teaching strategies on learner achievement.

2.6 Current landscape of instructional leadership internationally

Internationally, United States of America, Wales and Finland are the three countries whose landscapes of instructional leadership were reviewed.

2.6.1 United States of America

Goldstein (2010) writes that USA is faced with the challenge of improving the quality of education. Discussions on educational reforms to improve quality of teaching and learning were dominated by two main philosophies which were professional development/ teacher professionalism and accountability. Each of these views was informed by different convictions about how educational change is best achieved.

Professional development/ teacher professionalism model was advocated by teachers, including teacher unions, and it argued that capacity building and development of teachers should be the model for improving quality of education. Therefore, in the mid-1980's educational reforms which were based on professional development/ teacher professionalism, were implemented over a period of fifteen years. This view was propelled by the belief that teaching is an intricate activity and that teachers' lack of ability to function at optimal levels was responsible for poor learner performance. Thus, it was deemed necessary to empower teachers and professionalise teaching so that educational reform could be effected (Goldstein, 2010). Accordingly, professional development policies, mentoring and peer coaching policies that were aimed at supporting and providing opportunities for continuous dialogue and collaborative efforts among teachers were enacted (Goldstein, 2010). Some of these collaborative efforts were creation of opportunities for teachers to share and observe good instructional practices from skilful peers and to engage in critical self-reflection through action research. Teacher networks or clusters were formed across classrooms, schools and districts. Master teachers who demonstrated and shared their expertise were incentivised to attract and retain high-quality teachers in the education system (Firestone & Martinez, 2007). Professional development/teacher professionalism model was focused on inputs and therefore, teacher qualifications and licensing were of great premium. In this way, it

succeeded to develop a pool of skilled practitioners and to promote collaborative practices (Goldstein, 2010).

As Sergiovanni and Starratt (1993) observe, change that is driven from the outside or top-down is not easy to achieve. It was in regard to manifestation of change that professional development/teacher professionalism faced its main challenge. This model was criticised for lacking recourse for teachers who did not improve, be it due to apathy or organisational challenges. Thus, professional development/ teacher professionalism did not achieve significant educational reform as it had been anticipated. By 2000, strategic plans were underway to introduce another educational reform that sought to raise student academic achievement (Birman, Desimone, Porter & Garet, 2000).

Accordingly, in 2001, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Policy, was implemented. It focused, almost exclusively, on standardised tests, accountability and performance measurement and, in this sense, it emphasised outputs. Accountability is premised on the notion that teaching is not an intricate activity and thus it supposes that teachers inherently know what to do and have resources to provide quality teaching but negative posture toward their work causes them to wilfully underperform hence the poor quality of teaching and learning (Goldstein, 2010). Calls for educational reforms based on accountability came from those outside education and those who are in the different levels of the hierarchy of the educational system (Goldstein, 2010). Standard-based educational reform was viewed as the recourse to professional development/professionalisation to improve learning for improved learner achievement. Standards-based reform was based on standards to which schools and teachers should adhere or face sanction in the form of dismissal (Birman, *et al.*, 2000), cut in state-funding and naming and shaming (Goldstein, 2010) or closing down the school (King-McKenzie, Bantwini & Bogan, 2013). Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson and Orphanos, (2009) report that professional development was deemed as central to teacher preparation and development for successful standards-based reform to occur.

Accordingly, state and federal policies were implemented to ensure that teachers have time and the required resources to engage in professional learning and collaboration that addressed school improvement priorities. However, it was left to different states to adopt their preferred initiatives to ensure that teachers engage in professional learning experiences and to assess the impact of these experiences on learner achievement. However, most professional

development programmes that were offered to teachers did not respond to the challenges that came with standards-based reform (Birman, *et al.,* 2000).

In the final analysis, NCLB is criticised for focusing on learner achievement but doing little to build capacity of teachers to meet with the challenges of standards-based reform and so, USA is facing instructional leadership challenge as most of the teachers report that professional development that they receive does not fulfil all these criteria of effective professional development (Darling-Hammond, *et al.*, 2009).

Some strengths of NCLB are that it helped to measure successful learning by identifying what students need to know and be able to perform. Secondly, it made teachers and principals to take responsibility for academic achievement of the previously marginalised communities. It also sought to narrow academic performance margins (Goldstein, 2010). Its limitations were that it did not provide ways and tools on what teachers can do to narrow academic performance margins. Furthermore, the tone of standards-based reform did not help to bring significant changes in education, instead it served to further alienate teachers (Goldstein, 2010). Unlike the professional development/ teacher professionalism which sought to develop teacher knowledge and skills through capacity building and development, NCLB hoped to improve learner achievement by naming and shaming schools that continuously underperformed and by cutting state funding (Anderson as cited in Goldstein, 2010). It is against this background that policymakers and teachers are now calling for Standards-based Reform 2.0 which focuses more on building teacher capacity and creation of professional learning communities so that higher standards can be delivered for all the children in the country (Darling-Hammond *et al.*, 2009).

2.6.2 Wales

Unlike USA, Wales, adopted a different approach to teacher development for educational reform. At the time Harris and Jones (2010) wrote, Wales was in the process of implementing purposeful and deliberate efforts to reform the educational system in totality in a bid to ensure achievement for each learner in the country. In accordance with this, in 2006, the Welsh Assembly Government released two documents entitled, the Learning Country and The Learning Country: Vision into Action. These two documents provide details of strategies to improve learner achievement. The strategies contained in the documents are informed by research on school effectiveness and improvement. Consequently, in 2006/2007, the Welsh Assembly Government introduced national School Effectiveness Framework (SEF). The SEF

is the main policy document that would propel reform and improvement for Welsh schools and the system-wide reform. In Wales, professional learning communities (PLCs) have been identified as the main capacity building strategy to develop and support teachers during the reform process. It thus can be said that Wales' educational reform is based on the philosophy of professionalism which holds that a strong teaching force is key to effecting successful educational reform. Harris and Jones (2010, p.173) define a professional learning community as "a group of connected and engaged individuals who are responsible for driving change and improvement within , between and across schools that will directly benefit learners." PLCs are thus central to the implementation of the SEF though it is realised that there are other strategies. PLCs are preferred for they are believed to be a potent staff development model that creates opportunities for professionals to acquire and learn new practices and to create knowledge that will help improve their practice. The PLC model that is adopted by the Welsh puts a great premium on collaboration and professional networking. Leu (2004) writes that networking or clustering is a fairly new professional development model that is being popularly received among teachers. In support of Leu's (2004) contention, in New Zealand, Starkey, Yates, Meyer, Hall, Stevens, Toia (2009) found that most teachers preferred networking or clustering as their form of subject-based professional development. Similarly, in Wales, PLCs have been created "within, between and across schools (Harris & Jones, 2010, p.173).

2.6.3 Finland

Finland is a shining example the world over for successfully reforming their educational system (which was one of the poorest) to become the first among the developed nations. Educational reforms in Finland began in the 1970s. Darling-Hammond (2010) alludes to some strategies that were used by Finnish policymakers to enact the reforms in education. The first strategy for reforms in education was investing in extensive teacher preparation education. Thus it can be said that Finland's successful educational policy is based on the philosophy of professionalism. Evidence to the success of Finnish educational reform is that thirty five years later on, all teachers in Finnish classrooms hold at least a Master's degree in the subjects which they teach. What is also remarkable about teacher preparation in Finland is that it prepares all teachers to competent to teach learners with special learning needs. The philosophy behind such is that if teachers can successfully teach learners with special needs learner, then they can successfully teach any other learner. Teacher preparation focuses on subject content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge and research methods. Training

in research methods is in line with the expectation that teachers are expected to be researchers who should contribute to solving educational problem.

Secondly, unlike in many countries where high-stakes standardised testing characterises educational reforms, in Finland, there are no standardised tests to classify learners and schools. Though there is a national core curriculum which also stipulates the recommended assessment criteria for all grades per subject, but design of teaching programmes and assessment programmes are decentralised to schools and are thus more responsive to the needs of the local learners. The intensive teacher preparation programmes develops teachers to be competent to formulate learner outcomes for their schools using   assessment criteria set in the national core curriculum as benchmark.

For professional development, Finland has decidedly moved away from the traditional forms of professional development. Instead of the traditional workshops, professional learning communities are at the heart of teacher development. Schools make time for teachers to meet at least one afternoon in a week to discuss instructional issues, such as planning and developing their own school curriculum. In other words, schools do not look for outside intervention for addressing their problems but they look and find solutions within themselves. Furthermore, teachers are given time during work-week to engage in professional development so as to increase their professionalism and skills repertoire. Success of the Finnish educational reform can also be attributed to the fact that the elements of changes were introduced incrementally to ensure that they successfully take root before another one was introduced.

2.7 Current landscape of instructional leadership in Africa

Two African countries whose instructional leadership landscapes were reviewed were Kenya and Botswana.

2.7.1 Kenya

Like most countries in the world, Kenya is also faced with the challenge of improving the quality of education. In a study conducted to explore perceptions of teachers, principals and senior government officials on the practices and procedures of internal instructional supervision and staff development in Kenyan public secondary schools, Wanzari (2012) reports that efforts to improve teaching and learning are based on external instructional supervision.

Instructional supervision is conducted by Quality Assurance Standards Officers (QASOs) who are an agency of the ministry of education. External supervision seeks to ensure that educational standards are adhered to. Internal instructional supervision is conducted by principals and they are to ascertain that the prescribed curriculum is implement and that teaching and learning occurs in schools. In sum, the purpose of instructional supervision is to capacitate and develop teachers professionally so that learner achievement is improved.

Professional developments programmes are determined by QASOs which they base on their assessments of what teachers professional development needs are. Second, external instructional supervision by QASOs seems to fulfil, almost exclusively, a monitoring role and is thus lacking in providing support to teachers (Wanzare, 2012).

Furthermore, while Wanzare (2012) found that Kenyan teachers perceive instructional supervision as a necessary process that helped them, among other things, to implement the curriculum effectively, ensure that syllabus is covered and provide instructional resources, they expressed concern with the current procedure and processes of instructional supervision. Teachers felt that instructional supervisors did not possess necessary supervisory skills, did not provide worthwhile instructional supervision feedback, paid more attention to non-instructional activities, used classroom observations as occasions for parading teachers' shortcomings and this led to teachers experiencing stress, embarrassment and demoralisation. Wanzare (2012, p.200) also notes that "discrimination, subjectivity, favouritism, biases, corruption and dishonesty" are some of the practices that are abound in school instructional supervision, with some participants viewing it as "witch-hunting" used by principals to frustrate them and "for the majority of participants, questionable supervisory practices and procedures that teachers experienced demoralized, stressed, and embarrassed them."

As Wanzare (2012) concedes, efforts by Kenyan ministry of education to install external instructional supervision as means to improve the quality of education have been unsuccessful. This has resulted in low teacher morale. Wanzare (2012) reports that calls are being made to advance internal instructional supervision as an alternative strategy to improve the quality of education. Internal instructional supervision would be the prime responsibility of principals who would share this responsibility with deputy-principals, heads of department and subject heads based in a school. Internal supervision is also viewed as having an added benefit of being economical compared to sustaining QASOs (Lodiaga, 1995 as cited in Wanzare, 2012).

Wanzare (2012) recommends that to improve the quality of education in Kenya, teachers, principals and senior government officials who conduct external instructional supervision should be given a platform to share their perceptions about the present and better-liked practices of instructional supervision. This, he continues, will ensure that teachers' expectations and/or needs are aligned to professional and developmental programmes that are provided. Wanzare's recommendation echoes McLaughlin and Talbert's (2003) claim that effective professional development programmes are informed by their beneficiaries.

2.7.2 Botswana

In Botswana, the Primary School Management Development (PSMD) Project was launched in July 1999 with a purpose to train and develop school management teams in skills they lacked to effect instructional leadership that would enhance quality learning. A decade after the launch of the PSMD Project, Pansiri (2008) conducted a study to assess the extent of the impact of the project, found that while there were strides that were made in instructional leadership; they were however, not enough to improve learner achievement.

School management teams (SMTs) were found to be doing well in five instructional areas. These are: coordinating school development plans, scheduling and conducting classroom visits, praising their teachers for good work, conducting school-based workshops to address curriculum needs. Principals were found to be visiting classrooms to check on how learners were doing.

However, there were seven instructional areas in which SMTs were found lacking. They lacked in ways to enhance parents' involvement, they did not conduct coaching and demonstration lessons to show teachers they supervise how difficult topics could be taught, teachers did not get adequate support from school management teams, materials and resources were not distributed on time, they did not have conflict management skills and they lacked in developing and encouraging teacher innovation and creativity in classroom management.

To improve quality of education in Botswana, Pansiri (2008) makes some recommendations to the ministry of education that there should be further research on management of curriculum change and training of classroom teachers in pedagogic skills and as transformation practitioners. Pansiri (2008) also recommends that future instructional leadership initiatives should be contextualised so that they are sensitive to the values and cultural practices of the communities in which they will be implemented. Lack of sensitivity

to community values and cultural experiences had a counter effect on instructional leadership gains in the PSMD Project in Botswana. In schools located in very remote communities of the region, its practices only served to further alienate teachers, parents and learners attitude towards classroom work. Pansiri's (2008) finding resonates with Christie's (2010) conclusion that South Africa's new educational policies were decontexualised and thus they further compounded instructional leadership challenges. This is discussed in detail below.

2.8 Current landscape of instructional leadership in South Africa

In a bid to improve the quality of education and give redress to the inequalities of the past, South African government has not only installed new educational policies and regulations but it has also injected considerable money into education. Since 1994, with the birth of democracy, national government has been incrementally spending more on education than any other sector. Currently, 19, 5% of total government spending is on education. In spite of the new educational policies and regulations and increased government spending, there are no significant improvements in the quality of education.

However, the poor quality of education in South Africa persists and it is also well documented (Taylor, 2008; Christie, 2010; Spaull, 2013 & 2012). For instance, Spaull (2013) reports that only 25% of the public schools in South Africa are functional and 75% are dysfunctional. He also reports that international assessments conducted in 2007 revealed that South African grade six learners were ranked at the tenth place on numeracy and literacy, fairing behind much poorer countries like Kenya, Tanzania and Swaziland.

In terms of buying into instructional leadership, Bush (2009, p.162) observes that South Africa is increasingly realising "that managing teaching and learning is one of the most important (if not the most important) activities for principals and other school leaders" hence the universal trend of developing and capacitating school leaders. In line with the global view that instructional leadership is central and crucial in improving learner performance and growth (Jenkins, 2009; Hornig & Loeb, 2010), South Africa introduced a capacity-building and professional development programme especially for school principals. The Advanced Certificate in Education for school leadership was introduced to help develop and capacitate principals for their role as instructional leaders. It is a mandatory qualification that school principals have to acquire within three years of their appointment as principals (Naicker, 2011; Bush, 2014).

In South Africa, instructional leadership support, professional development and capacity building programmes for classroom-based teachers are two-tiered. At school level, these are offered by school management team (heads of department, deputy-principals, and/or principal). At district office level, subject advisors provide subject-specific instructional support, capacity building and professional development programmes. At school level, the responsibility of managing teaching and learning at South African public schools is entrusted with school principals (Naicker, Chikoko & Mthiyane, 2013, Bush, *et al.,* 2009). School management teams comprise of the principal, deputy principal and heads of departments (Taylor, 2008; Lumadi, 2012).

In her study on the landscape of leadership in South African schools, Christie (2010) reviewed education policy documents as well as performance analysis in national and international tests. She concluded that instructional leadership in the new South Africa is complex and has been worsened by the very educational policies and regulations that were implemented post-1994. She carves in her argument by tracing educational changes that have been effected since the dawn of democracy and how these have contributed to the current state of education. Firstly, she is convinced that the many new educational policies on governance, performance measurement and teacher trade unionism were promulgated in short succession of each other. This, she argues, created policy overload which, ironically, served to further complicate the work of principals instead of simplifying it. In support of Christie's view are King-McKenzie, Bantwini and Bogan (2013) who also found that teachers were confused by the numerous educational policies that were enacted in quick succession of each other. Chinsamy (2002) offers a different view to Christie (2010) and King-McKenzie *et al.,* (2013) for he believes that the new educational policies were actually progressive but it was poor implementation at district office level which resulted in their incapacitation.

Secondly, Christie (2010) argues that, save for slight adaptations; South African new educational policies are based on research on educational leadership and management conducted in the United Kingdom, the USA and Australia. In her view, educational policy makers made simplistic generalisations by assuming that practices that worked in foreign countries might be harvested for use in the South African context. Christie (2010) is of the view that these educational policies were decontextualised and so they created unrealistic expectations as they lack consideration for principals' capabilities, their everyday contextual realities and inequalities in schools which are a legacy of apartheid. Therefore, according to

Christie, the substantial disjuncture between the actual and the ideal also contributed to the worsening of the work of principals as instructional leaders.

Thirdly, Christie (2010) states that the introduction of performance management/ supervisory model that is borrowed from a business discourse model of evaluation has failed to improve quality of teaching and learning. Instead, she argues, it introduced professional standards which conflict with the idea of professional accountability, evidence of which is manifest in South Africa's continued dismal performance in international assessments. She recommends that performance measurement system should be re-modelled to accommodate the different school contexts.

Fourth, South African researchers and the department of education (Bantwini & Diko, 2011, Lumadi, 2012; KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Curriculum Management and Delivery Strategy, 2009; Spaull, 2012 & 2013,) concur that the major challenge in South Africa's instructional landscape is poor content knowledge among teachers. In terms of the observation made by King-McKenzie, Bantwini and Bogan (2013) and Mouton, Louw and Strydom (2013) argue that inadequate teacher education in South Africa is an impediment to quality education. These researchers seem to support Elmore's argument (as cited in Goldstein, 2010) that lack of knowledge base among teachers is the biggest problem that contributes to poor quality of teaching and learning. In addition, KwaZulu-Natal Curriculum Management and Delivery Strategy (2009) also writes that principals, deputy principals and heads of departments lack basic instructional leadership skills that are necessary for monitoring that curriculum is implemented properly in classrooms, King-McKenzie *et al.*, (2013) are of the view that successful implementation of the reformist curriculum will continue to be a challenge for as long as most South African teachers are not competent. They propose that South Africa has to develop teachers to attain basic competency in the subjects which they teach. Their view seems to be informed by Shulman's (1987) argument that one of the three basic components of knowledge effective that teachers should possess is content knowledge.

However, Maphosa, Mutekwe, Machingambi, Wadesango and Ndofirepi (2012) have a contrasting view. They believe that poor quality of education is not due to lack of proper training of teachers. They attribute poor quality of education to lack of teacher professionalism which they believe can be curbed. They suggest that to curb lack of professionalism, teachers should be developed properly so that they can be held accountable

for learners' performance. Their basic idea is that quality of education will improve once acceptable standards of accountability are installed. They further assume that accountability standards will improve teachers' posture towards their work, which in turn, will improve the quality of instruction that teachers offer in the classroom, which will in turn improve learner achievement. This view seems to suggest that teachers inherently know what they require to achieve quality teaching and that they possess means to do so and failure to deliver quality teaching is as a result of teacher unprofessionalism (Goldstein, 2010). Maphosa's *et al.* (2012) view seems to be informed by the tried and tested philosophy of professionalism which has successfully worked in Finland, particularly. However, this view is constricted for the South African instructional landscape in that it solely ascribes educational problems to teachers' lack of professional ethics. Furthermore, it fails to provide strategies that should be adopted to improve teacher professionalism in the light of other challenges such as teachers' lack of subject content knowledge, PCK, and poor district office support which research has established as some of the main challenges in South Africa's instructional leadership landscape. In this sense, it reduces South Africa's educational problems to simplistic generalisations by sponsoring a cause-and-effect solution that does not consider contextual realities.

Fifth, principals and SMTs do not prioritise management of teaching and learning (Bush *et al.*, 2009; Hoadley *et al.*, (2009). In a study conducted in 142 schools in the Western Cape and Eastern Cape Provinces, Hoadley *et al.* (2009) found that only 17% of principals directly managed teaching and learning. Most of the principals' time was spent on administrative tasks rather than making sure that teaching and learning is taking place. Bush *et al.'s* (2009, pp.164-165) study to explore how principals and SMT members manage teaching and learning in Limpopo and Mpumalanga Provinces also concluded that management of teaching and learning was not a priority as it "does not appear to be a central role for most eight principals" and that "SMT appears to have little impact on teaching and learning either because it rarely meets, or because their meetings do not address teaching and learning".

Sixth, the process by which principals are appointed poses yet another challenge in South Africa's instructional leadership quality. Hornig and Loeb (2010) note that there is a correlation between high quality leadership and positive learner performance. However, in South Africa, the process by which principals are appointed seems to conflict this view. Teacher unions not only exert influence on who gets promoted to being a principal but they also view principalship appointment as political deployments. Consequently, a trend has

emerged that sees principals getting appointed on the strength of their political connections as against their level of competency as instructional leaders. Research shows that politically appointed incumbents prioritised their allegiance to the teacher union, its activities and its political affiliates at the expense of their position as instructional leaders (Lumadi, 2012; Zengele, 2012). On the other hand, the studies by Naicker, Chikoko and Mthiyane (2013) and Mawdsley, Bipath and Mawdsley (2012) conducted in KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng provinces respectively, seem to suggest that principals appointed on the strength of their competency as instructional leaders, promote learner achievement. They further found that, unlike politically deployed principal, principals appointed on merit maintained high visibility in the school, had in-house and customised professional development programmes, led by example as subject teachers and exercised distributed form of leadership. These behavioural patterns exhibit characteristics of one of the essential skills for instructional leadership which Whittaker 1997 (cited in Jenkins 2009, p.36) terms "visible presence" as well as "interpersonal skills" Lashway, 2002 (cited in Jenkins, 2009, p.37). From the foregoing discussion, it can therefore be concluded that the motivation behind the appointment of a principal, his/her leadership and management style and the behavior he/she models invariably shapes and impacts on the quality of instructional leadership the principal provides, which in turn influences learners' academic performance.

2.9 Role of district offices in instructional leadership

Teachers need to be supported as successful implementation of educational reform hinges on teachers' professional competencies for translation into practice. National and international research has established that district officials are important role players in supporting instructional development of teachers and improving quality of teaching and learning (Chinsamy, 2002; Du Plessis et al., 2007; Leon, 2010; Fullan, 2010; Knapp et al., 2010; KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Curriculum Management and Delivery Strategy 2009; Smith, 2011; Bantwini & King-McKenzie, 2011; Bantwini & Diko, 2011). However, in reality the opposite seems to be true as most district offices fail to deliver on the agenda of teacher development and support.

Leon (2010) conducted one of the largest researches on high performing districts and concluded that most districts do not fulfill the instructional leadership of supporting instructional development of teachers. This poses a great challenge in the instructional leadership link especially because on-going teacher professional development is important

particularly when there are curriculum reforms as is the case in most countries across the world, South Africa included (Bantwini & King-McKenzie, 2011). Research points to a number of challenges that limit district office capacity to support teaching and learning for improved learner achievement.

In their ground-breaking study on effective districts, Elmore and Burney (1997) concluded that district office capacity building, professional development programmes and instructional supports that are responsive and focus on instructional practices successfully shape and influence what principals and teachers do in schools. Fullan (2010) and McLaughlin and Talbert (2003) concur that professional synergy between schools and district offices yield improved learner performance. Hallinger and Heck (2010) add that effective supervision and support obtain when leaders have understanding of contextual factors and dynamics of schools which they supervise. Therefore, these authors seem to suggest that district officials are important role players that can potentially shape and inform effective instructional practices of teachers and principals if they offer professional development programmes that are responsive to the needs of schools and teachers (Elmore & Burney, 1997). They also suggest that effective professional development and support programmes obtain when they are informed by their beneficiaries. Evidence to these assertions is contained in the study of successful district office instructional leadership by Knapp, *et al*. (2010) detailed some strategies and practices which were implemented by district officials to support and improve learning and leadership in schools. They observed that district officials, among other practices, gave individual coaching on instruction to classroom teachers, provided regular instructional support to all teachers to build human capacity for instructional leadership by for example, diffusing teachers' self-consciousness about their inadequacies and defensive posture by engaging with teachers on problem-solving process about specific student learning issues or hard-to-teach curricular topics. These district officials' practices are said to have resulted in increased learner performance.

In South Africa, district offices came into being after the educational reforms of 1994. District offices represent the provincial department of education, and ultimately the national department to which teachers are accountable. Since then, the country has seen four changes to the curriculum. But, it was only in 2013 that a policy that sets the roles and responsibilities of district offices was promulgated. The policy states that the three main roles of education districts are support, accountability and public information. Researchers (Taylor, 2006; Prew, 2008; Smith, 2011; Spaull, 2013) point to the dual role of accountability and support

that districts should enact as mediators between the schools and provincial departments and national departments, ultimately. In other words, district offices are walking the metaphoric tightrope of providing support while applying pressure.

In their study of how district officials understand teacher learning and reform at one district in the Eastern Cape, Bantwini and King-McKenzie (2011) found that among the important roles district officials play are being instructional actors in educational reforms and capacity builders for teachers. Given that more South African researchers (Taylor, 2006, Lumadi, 2012; Spaull, 2013,) have identified teachers' poor content knowledge and PCK as some causes of poor quality of education, there are more calls to develop and build capacity of South African teachers while at the same holding them accountable for performance (Chinsamy, 2002; Taylor, 2006; Prew, 2008). To build a strong teaching force, Du Plessis *et al*., (2007) recommend that teachers should be entitled to professional development and that both the teachers and the ministry of education (via district office) should be responsible for it. However, the full potential of the district office in terms of teacher support and development has yet to be realised as district offices are currently fulfilling, almost exclusively, a monitoring role (Van Der berg, Taylor, Gustafsson, Spaull & Armstrong, 2011). To effectively deliver on this mandate, it seems as if district offices themselves still have to get their house in order so as to battle the many challenges that limit district offices' capacity to support schools and teachers (Bantwini & King-McKenzie, 2011).

For instance, in a study of self-perception of district officials in South Africa, Smith (2011) found that most district officials conceived their role in terms of bureaucratic administration and those who understood that they had to provide teacher support and development admitted that they lacked capacity to do so. This indicates that district officials (who often had been classroom based-teachers themselves) need to be developed and capacitated so that they can successfully enact their instructional leadership roles. According to Shulman (1987), for instructional leaders to be effective, they should have at least three components of professional knowledge which are: content knowledge; pedagogical knowledge and knowledge of students. However, In South Africa, research reveals that some subject advisors are constricted in this regard. For instance, the number of subject advisors against the schools they supervise is one limitation in the district office instructional leadership capabilities. Thus, it becomes nearly impossible for subject advisors to knowledge of learners they work with. A case in point is a study conducted by Bantwini and Diko (2011) in the Eastern Cape Province to explore factors that affect district officials' capacity to provide effective teacher

support. They found that huge workload is a challenge among subject advisors. One subject advisor who was a participant in the study stated that he was responsible for 466 schools within the district. Similarly, in Umlazi District of KwaZulu-Natal, where this study was conducted it appeared as if the subject advisors also had a lot on their plates in terms of the number of schools they supervise. For instance, for gateway subjects, Mathematics and Physical Sciences there were 2 and 3 subject advisors respectively who served a total of 201 secondary schools in the district. This suggests that the ratio of subject advisors against the schools that they supervise was a hindering factor. Some teachers reported that they had no knowledge of who their subject advisor was as they had never been with them. Clearly, this ratio goes against what research suggests for effective instructional leadership that the instructional leader should have knowledge of learners (Shulman, 1987) and maintain high visibility (Blasé & Blasé, 2000; Leon 2010; Naicker, Chikoko & Mthiyane, 2013).

Furthermore, Bantwini and King-McKenzie (2011) seem to raise a similar argument that district officials lack knowledge of the teachers they work with. They found that district officials' assumptions about teacher learning and change as one factor that hampers successful implementation of curriculum reforms in South Africa. Teachers are adult learners. Adults learn best when the content they learn is relevant to their work experiences. According to Bantwini and McKenzie (2011) district officials lack this crucial understanding. They contend that district officials' views about how teachers learn are limiting district offices' ability to help teachers learn. In other words, for professional development programmes to be effective, they should be informed by the principles of adult learning which cannot be said of many district support programmes in South Africa.

Marishane (2011), on the other hand, blames district offices for principals not taking their instructional leadership role seriously. According to Marishane, education district offices do not seem to validate the behaviour of principals who spend most of their time being directly involved with teaching and learning activities. The district office seems to reinforce the notion that principals ought to be of more of administrators than instructional enactors. For instance, principals who are efficient instructional leaders are often overlooked for promotion posts to district office while those who were oriented to administration were often appointed to promotional management posts on the basis of their administration efficiency.

 In the light of the echoed calls to improve the poor quality of education in South Africa, van Der Berg *et al*., (2011) recommended to the National Planning Commission that the district

office, as one of the central key role players in curriculum delivery and implementation, should engage in staggered programmes to provide targeted support to schools that will develop school management for instructional leadership, build teachers' capacity as well as strengthen accountability and support between schools and school district offices. From this recommendation, NDP: Vision 2030 (2012) accordingly declares that relationships of accountability and support among stakeholders throughout the school system need to be strengthened. This, it continues, will be achieved by developing strong leadership, especially among district officials. With the promulgation of the *Policy on Organisation, Role and Responsibilities of District Office (2013),* it can be said that there is marked effort to heighten the role of district office in improving the quality of education in South Africa. This literature review now discusses the two theoretical frameworks which projected this study.

2.10. Theoretical frameworks

2.10. 1 Weber's (1996) model of instructional leadership

Weber's (1996) model of instructional leadership has five domains: defining school's mission, managing curriculum and instruction, promoting a positive learning climate, observing and improving instruction and assessing instructional programmes. Weber's (1996) model of instructional leadership was deemed appropriate for this study because it seeks to create or sustain a teaching and learning environment that promotes learner achievement. Furthermore, it lends itself to the current standards based accountability system of education wherein not only the principal but teachers and education officials alike are more watched and held accountable for learner performance (Lashway, 2002; Townsend, Acker-Hocevar, Ballinger & Place, 2013). The following is a discussion of the five domains.

2.10. 1. 1 Defining the school's mission

It is of great importance for the principal to define the mission of the school. Without a mission, a school is like a ship without a sail. The school's mission spells out the goals, values and vision of what the school strives to achieve and inculcate, how it is going to achieve and/or inculcate that, and what it hopes to be in future. The mission of a school thus becomes a glue that holds all the school's stakeholders together in common purpose and aim. In framing the school's mission, it is necessary that the instructional leader conducts a community survey to determine what the community's (within which the school is nested) expectations are about the school, for the school mission should speak directly to the community needs. Community needs change from time to time and thus its expectations of

the school, in terms of what it can provide to meet their current goals, change accordingly. Therefore, a school mission should be reviewed from time to time so that it remains relevant to the community it serves. To promote ownership of the school mission, all stakeholders (such as teachers, parents, students, community leaders, civil organisations) should be involved in framing it. Thus crafting of a school mission is a not a sole mandate of the instructional leader but it is a collaborative effort by all stakeholders. Collective ownership of the school mission enhances chances of its successful implementation. The principal's role in framing the mission of the school is facilitative. He/she provides resources and guidance on what the survey reveals about community expectations of the school. Once the school mission has been defined, it is imperative that the principal, as the instructional leader, articulates it clearly and repeatedly for all, so that it informs and shapes all the daily instructional practices of the school. Weber (1987) provides an example, among others, of the annual management design that clarified practical goal of Tyler Independent School District in Tyler, Texas. Their annual management design of practical goals was set in six stages: "(1) identifying instructional needs in the school; (2) establishing goals for the year; (3) developing a plan of action; (4) managing the resources, including providing staff development (5) implementing the plan (6) evaluating the process.''

2.10.1. 2 Managing curriculum and instruction

Implementation of the school's mission manifests in the curriculum delivery and instruction. It is important for the instructional leader to understand instructional options that are viable for teachers in his/her particular school, and then together with teachers select those that best work within the limitations that may be imposed by their unique school context. Therefore, it is important that the instructional leader possess a wide understanding of instructional methods and areas of knowledge. This in essence, means that the instructional leader should possess working knowledge of the long list of subjects offered in his/her school for him/her to be an effective curriculum advisor. However, Weber (1987) states that it is not really necessary for principals to have knowledge of every curricular area of the subjects that are taught in their schools. Weber (1987, p.24) further states that the main ingredient to successful management of curriculum and instruction is expertise on the general principles of effective teaching or at the minimum and that instructional leaders should understand basic principles of learning which are "that examples allow concretion of ideas, that students should grasp one concept before moving to another, and that group instruction and individual instruction may meet different needs." While the instructional leader may not possess all the knowledge base of the subjects in the school, it is important he/she must be resourceful by

keeping abreast with recent trends pertaining to instructional best practices and models that are newly developed that can positively impact on classroom practices to promote the mission of the school.

The third aspect of managing curriculum and instruction is willingness to learn from teachers. Often instructional leaders cannot have complete knowledge of all the curricular areas in their schools, thus they should guard against hastily arriving at judgments or having unrealistic expectations of teachers. Instead listening with patience to teachers can enhance their own insight on curriculum knowledge and further their understanding of instruction.

The final aspect of managing curriculum and instruction is that the instructional leader should encourage and promote collaborative planning for improved instruction. It is a known fact that principals cannot single-handedly run all school activities. Weber (1987) writes that principals have other equally important management tasks besides managing instructional activities that should not be neglected and so they should practice shared leadership. This calls for the principal to trust the capabilities and expertise of teachers around him/her and delegate some duties. For instance, a head of department might have deeper subject knowledge and more understanding of instructional methods for a particular subject. Thus, it would be wise for the principal to let the head of department lead in teacher observation and goal-setting in that particular subject. The principal's role remains as the primary goal setter and supervisor, collaborating and supervising the people he/she has delegated responsibilities to (Weber, 1987). Weber (1987) also discusses the practice of shared leadership in identifying and solving instructional problems that limit attainment of the school vision. In practical terms, this can be achieved by forming teams of teachers who can plan learning goals or an ad hoc task team can be formed to find ways to deal with a school wide instructional problem, for instance, late-coming, absenteeism, poor literacy/numeracy skills or not doing homework. In such cases, teachers identify the instructional problem that hinders curriculum delivery and then the ad hoc team (based on area of expertise) is formed accordingly. The instructional leader plays a monitoring role in this arrangement by ensuring that the goals set by the ad hoc team are aligned with the school vision.

2.10.1.3 Promoting a positive learning climate

According to Weber (1987), school environment, learning climate, social climate, and learning environment are phrases that are used to describe the different aspects of schooling.

Positive learning environment does not begin at the door of the classroom but it is conveyed and transmitted in subtle ways that are sometimes abstract. These include physical structure of the school buildings, noise levels, standards sets by parents and teachers, degree of collegiality among teachers and staff. Change in any of these aspects has a ripple effect on the school's climate. These factors reinforce the standards of the school before they are even verbally articulated. In the South African context, the manner in which students present themselves in their school uniform also contributes to the learning climate. All the same, it is upon the instructional leader to emphasise basic skills of instruction and communicate high expectations to teachers, parents as well as students and to ensure that teachers. In turn, it is important for teachers to communicate high performance expectations to their students; for research indicates that there is a correlation between teacher expectations and student achievement. The instructional leader also creates a positive learning environment by ensuring that there is discipline, safety and no vandalism so that an environment that is conducive to effective teaching and learning is created and sustained.

2.10.1.4 Observing and improving instruction

According to Weber (1987) instructional supervision, curriculum review and evaluation of student outcomes are the three duties of a principal that are related to leading the school's instructional process. Successful fulfilment of these three main duties maintains or improves conditions that promote successful student learning which is the ultimate goal of instructional leaders. However, Weber (1987) warns that in trying to fulfill these instructional duties, a principal needs to consider the contextual factors such as the unique needs of a school, the unique needs of its community, as well as the resources which the principal can bring to instructional management. Weber (1987) writes that it is important for instructional leaders to have knowledge and skills for effective supervision. The three knowledge areas of observation and evaluation ensure that the teachers share the same goals as their instructional leader. In-service training is a valuable strategy in establishing common vocabulary of teaching that is shared by all teachers across the school and it also helps establish school-wide goals. In-service training can be departmental or school focused. The instructional leaders should also create opportunities for professional development wherein teachers take responsibility for their own learning to build their repertoire of skills and knowledge base and also engage in collaborative learning to share good instructional practices for improved student achievement.

2.10.1.5 Assessing the instructional programmes

The last domain of Weber's model of instructional leadership is assessing the instructional programmes. According to Weber (1996), assessing the instructional program is central in improving the instructional programme. It is the instructional leader who plays an important role in planning, designing, administering and analysis of assessments that evaluate whether the curriculum is effective or not (Weber, 1996). Appraising effectiveness of instructional programmes leads to curriculum development and instructional improvement for it provides teachers with an opportunity to understand where their students' instructional needs are, and then design appropriate remedial strategies.

2.10.2 Spillane, Halverson and Diamond's (2001) theory of distributed leadership

Spillane, Halverson and Diamond's (2001) theory of distributed leadership is anchored on four in ideas: leadership tasks and functions, task enactment, social distribution of task enactment and situational distribution of task enactment. At the heart of distributed leadership is the conviction that leadership is not an exclusive prerogative of a formal leader, like a subject advisor, in this study. It however holds that leadership is a shared activity that is extended to all members of staff in various contexts. This study projected distributed theory of leadership because it allowed for an examination of how subject advisors distribute leadership to create and promote quality teaching and learning.

Spillane, Halverson and Diamond's (2001) theory of distributed leadership is framed within the distributed cognition and activity theory. Distributed cognition and activity theory accentuates the importance of the social context in performing purposeful activity. It holds that the nature of the social action is distributed between the individual and the social context. Thus, the actions of human beings are not only a result of their mental ability (skills and knowledge) but also of the social context in which the activity is taking place. The social context either promotes or restricts conditions for human mental ability. Therefore, an individual's mental ability cannot be understood outside the social context in which the activity takes places. Furthermore, it holds that there is a strong interdependence between the individual and other people, the language, theories of action, interpretive schema and cultural and material tools that prevail in a given social context. Thus an individual's cognition and actions, whether performing an individual or collaborative effort, are informed by the understanding that is based on these social objects (Spillane *et al.,* 2001).

According to Spillane, Halverson and Diamond (2001), a complete understanding of leadership practice focuses not only on the organisational structures, programmes and processes but also on the thinking and actions of leaders. The distributed view of leadership in a school environment seeks to understand how leadership activities are practiced to create enabling environment for others to transform teaching and learning, thereby achieving organisational goals. In this sense, the theory of distributed leadership does not focus on the individual leader within the school. Rather, as Spillane *et al.,* (2001, p.24) explain, it "focuses on how leadership is distributed among both positional and informal leaders." Therefore, "leadership involves the identification, acquisition, allocation, coordination, and use of the social, material, and cultural resources necessary to establish the conditions for the possibility of teaching and learning," Spillane *et al.*, (2001, p.24). They further propose that distributed leadership is based on four ideas: leadership tasks and functions; task enactment; social distribution of task enactment, and situational distribution of task enactment. These four ideas are discussed below.

2.10.2.1 Leadership tasks and functions

According to Spillane *et al*., (2001), distributed leadership holds that school leaders' tasks and functions are not centred on their roles or positions, rather on tasks around which they organise their leadership practice. The two tasks around which school leaders organise their practice are macro-functions and micro tasks. Macro functions are major organisational tasks that are vital for instructional leadership. Spillane *et al.,* (2001, p.24) list some examples of macro functions as "constructing and selling an instructional vision, building norms of trust, collaboration, and academic press; supporting teacher development and monitoring instruction and innovation." Micro tasks are the tasks that are performed for the daily functioning of the school. The large nature of macro functions does not readily and easily lend itself to distributed leadership. However, leadership practice can and should be distributed in execution of micro-tasks. Invariably, micro tasks are informed, linked to and shaped by macro functions. In this sense, micro functions serve to bring macro functions to fruition. Thus, for a complete understanding of leadership practice, a full analysis of micro tasks is necessary. In this sense, it does not suffice to understand only **what** the micro tasks are but it becomes imperative to also understand **how** micro tasks are executed. Understanding how micro tasks are performed means examining "how school leaders define, present and carry out these micro tasks, exploring how they interact with others in the process … (and) what school leaders do, the moves they make as they execute micro tasks in their

daily work" Spillane *et al.*, (2001, p.24). In other words, understanding how micro tasks are performed provides a lens of examining how macro functions and micro tasks are related to instruction and instructional improvement. Similarly, this study seeks to understand, through teachers, how subject advisors enact their day to day activities to support classroom instruction and instructional improvement.

2.10.2.2 Task enactment

Spillane *et a*l., (2001) highlight the irony in leadership and management practice in schools. They surmise that literature on leadership and management practice affirms that what teachers do is shaped and influenced mainly by how leadership is enacted. However, they note, school leaders do not give much attention to how they enact leadership practices. Task enactments are informed by two practices. These two practices are "espoused theories of practice" or "canonical practice" as well as "theories in use" or "non- canonical practice". Espoused theories or canonical practice express "ideal or desired ways of enacting tasks" while theories in use or non-canonical practice mirror what people do in enacting tasks. In a school, espoused theories of practice or canonical practice can be the various policy documents of the department of education. For example, the *Policy on the Organisation, Roles and Responsibilities of Education Districts (2013)*, which triggered the interest for this study, can be said to be reflecting espoused theory of practice or canonical practice for district officials. However, in practice, district officials might not necessarily be enacting their tasks as per espoused theory of practice or canonical practice. Spillane *et al.*, (2001, p.25) correctly observe that "theories of practice that are found in formal accounts, official policies, and job descriptions are often abstracted from day-to-day practice". Espoused theories of practice or canonical practices are lucid explanations of an ideal practice but they inherently fall short of taking into account the realities of challenges that might militate against task enactment. Thus, over and above studying policy documents, it is equally important to understand theories in use that are shaped and influenced by "the knowledge, expertise and skills that the leaders bring to the execution of the task" (Spillane *et al*., 2001, p.25). Similarly, while the theory of practice for district officials is espoused in the *Policy on the Organisation, Roles and Responsibilities of Education Districts (2013),* this study seeks to explore non-canonical practices or theories in use of district officials (as perceived by teachers) as they enact tasks of supporting teachers' professional developmental needs and instructional improvement for improved learner achievement.

2.10.2.3 Social distribution of task enactment

Spillane's *et al.,* (2001) third idea is that leadership tasks are often enacted by distributing them across various leaders in a school, including principals, deputy principals, curriculum specialist, head of departments and teachers. In practical terms, distributed leadership can be practiced in a school when the principal, being the formally appointed leader does not assume all leadership responsibilities simply because of his/her positional title. Rather he/she actively involves others with particular skills and expertise to leadership practice as and when the need arises. As Spillane *et al.,* (2001, p.25) argue, "depending on the particular leadership task, school leaders' knowledge and expertise may be best explored at the group or collective level rather than at the individual level leader." Thus social distribution of task enactment places a great premium on interactions of various stakeholders within an organisation. In support of social distribution of task enactment, Elmore (2000) surmises that however bold the leader may be, however well laid and strong the plans maybe, change cannot succeed if leadership is concentrated on a few individuals. It can thus be said that distributed leadership signals a paradigm shift from the monopolistic description of leadership in terms of the principal. As Lashway (2002) comments, in distributed leadership, formal leaders do not lead in isolation but their leadership efforts are interdependent and are without boundaries on who fulfils leadership role. Dimmock (2003, p.3) shares a similar view and explains that the distributed concept of leadership suggests "that leadership is a permeable process that is widely distributed throughout the school." On distributed leadership, Weber (1987) contends that even in schools where leadership is not officially shared, it is already shared in the sense that in any given school scenario, there would be teachers and other members of staff who unofficially assume and/or fulfill leadership roles. Unofficial leadership is therefore inherent in a school context. The downside of unofficial leadership is that it most likely will be fulfilled by people who by virtue of being "unofficial" might hold different views to that of the official leadership. The views and actions of unofficial leaders may hamper working towards achieving common school goals as unofficial leaders might, without being aware, contradict plans of the official leadership. Accordingly, Weber (1987) suggests that principals would benefit from recognising and working together with unofficial leadership to accomplish academic goals. Furthermore, as Goldstein (2010) correctly observes, principals do not have knowledge of all the subject contents offered or expertise for all grades in their schools. Sometimes, due to the size of the school, it might be practically impossible for principals to personally observe all the teachers in a school. Therefore, providing

instructional support to teachers who may have more knowledge and expertise than the supervisor might be counter-productive and meaningless. In such situations, principals can actively promote the leadership of the teachers around them. Similarly, district offices can use the same *modus operandi* by identifying teacher leaders that can lead clusters or professional learning communities to facilitate professional development and collaborative practices among teachers especially in the light of shortage of subject advisors. This can be an example of a formal leader being willing to trust that the informal leader (based on their experience, skill and/or expertise) will make the right decision that will contribute to the realisation of the common goal. According to Lashway (2002), distributed leadership has implications for formal leaders that they should create an environment which is conducive for its practice. This the formal leader accomplishes by making all stakeholders understand that they (stakeholders) are all accountable to a common goal and that the organisational practices, policies and resources are aligned with that goals.

2.10.2.4 Situational distribution of task enactment

The idea of situational distribution of task enactment is premised on the assumption that the situation or environment in which leadership is distributed is practiced is framed against material tools. Material tools are externally formulated ideas that are guidelines for leaders. An example of material goods is teacher evaluation policy. Spillane *et al.,* (2001) are of the view that material goods and the school organisational structure are not to be viewed as unrelated entities to leadership practice. Rather they should define leadership practice within the organisation. In other words, material goods are not an end by themselves rather leaders use them to facilitate realisation of organisational goals.

2.11   Chapter summary

This chapter discussed literature under the following sub-headings: educational leadership, history of instructional leadership, international, continental and national landscapes of instructional leadership, the role of district office in instructional leadership, the role of subject advisors in instructional leadership and it concluded with the discussion of Weber's (1996) model of instructional leadership and Spillane, Halverson and Diamond's (2001) theory of distributed leadership. The next chapter presents research design and methodology.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter reviewed pertinent literature and two theoretical frameworks that project this study. Chapter Three discusses the research design and methodology of the study. Accordingly, the following aspects are discussed: research design, research paradigm, methodology, sampling and data generation methods. Furthermore, data analysis, issues of trustworthiness, ethical issues, limitations and delimitations of the study are also discussed.

3.2 Research paradigm

Babbie (2007) defines paradigms as important frames of reference that shape our perceptions and thoughts. Research paradigms are important because they influence the choice of approaches to methodology for a study. In turn, methodology influences choice of literature, research methods and data generation techniques as well as the way in which knowledge is studied (McKenzie & Knipe, 2006; Cohen, *et al.,* 2011).

Various researchers employ different classifications and references for paradigms. For instance, Lincoln and Guba (1994) are of the view that the four paradigms are positivism, postpositivism, critical theory and constructivism. TerreBlanche and Durrheim (2006) classify paradigms into positivist, interpretive and constructivist, while Creswell (2007) holds the view that the main paradigms are postpositivism, social constructivism, advocacy/participatory and pragmatism. On the other hand, McKenzie and Knipe (2006) hold that the three paradigms are positivism and postpositivism, interpretivist/ constructivist and transformative paradigms. Similarly, Mack (2010) identifies three paradigms as positivist/ scientific; intepretivist and critical paradigms. From the foregoing discussion, it is evident that the number and classifications of research paradigms is highly contested.

Each paradigm has its basic assumptions about ontology, epistemology and methodology. Ontology refers to what is assumed to be the nature of truth and/or reality. Epistemology are basic beliefs about the nature of relationship between the knower (researcher) and what can be known.

For the purpose of this study, interpretivism paradigm was used (Mack, 2010). In terms of ontology, interpretivist paradigm assumes that reality is a subjective experience. Consequently, the role of researcher in interpretivist paradigm is to understand human experience. In a quest to understand human experience, the researcher relies on the views of participants of the situation being studied. Interpretivist paradigm also holds that reality is an individual and unique experience by social actors. Therefore, multiple perspectives to a similar experience exist. In other words, it holds that there are multiple realities which give rise to many truths. In this sense, interpretivist research gives individual participants a voice so that they are able to construct their individual meanings of their experiences. Interpretivist paradigm not only advocates for studying participants in their natural setting but it also uses research methods that promote interaction and dialogue (Mack, 2010; Wahyuni, 2012). In terms of epistemology, interpretivist paradigm rests on the belief that knowledge is situational and a personal experience. The central ontological features of interpretivist paradigm that were deemed attractive for this study were that it relies on the views of participants of the situation being studied. It also holds that different people interpret social events differently and thus there are multiple perspectives of an incident (Krauss, 2005; McKenzie & Knipe, 2006; Mack, 2010; Marshall & Rossman, 2010; McMillan & Schumacher, 2011). Therefore, epistemologically, interpretivism paradigm believes that knowledge cannot be reduced to simplistic interpretations. Interpretivist paradigm therefore premises that the situational and personal nature of experiences of events cannot be generalisable to the whole.

Key criticisms levelled against interpretivist paradigm are two. First is that it is subjective since it does not start with a theory. Second, it is said to lack objectivity because the researcher is involved in the inquiry (McKenzie & Knipe, 2006; Mack, 2010).

3.3 Methodology

Haralambos, Holborn and Heald (2004) explain that methodology provides detailed account of research methods that the study uses to generate data as well as the philosophical foundations that underpin data generation and data analysis methods. According to

McMillan and Schumacher (2011, p. 28) in the methodology section, "the researcher indicates the research design, participants, instruments, interventions, and procedures used in the study." The two broad categories of research methodology are quantitative and qualitative methodologies (Haralambos, *et al.,* 2004).

Since the purpose of this study was to examine perspectives of teachers on the role of subject advisors in supporting teaching and learning for improved learner achievement, this study used qualitative methodology. The following reasons justify why qualitative methodology was deemed the best fit for this study. According to Firestone (1987, p.20), the main strength of qualitative methods "are concrete depiction of detail, portrayal of process in an active mode, and attention to the perspectives of those studied." Qualitative methodology aims to establish an understanding of a particular complex phenomenon. Naturalistic, interpretive and critical genres usually project qualitative methodology (Marshall & Rossman, 2010) which is why this study used interpretivist paradigm. Qualitative researchers seek to understand a phenomenon from the perspectives of the participants as against explaining from the outside. Therefore, they emphasise uniqueness of individual persons. True to the nature of qualitative methodology, this study sought to understand the phenomenon under investigation from the perspectives of teachers (who in this case were insiders) because they were the beneficiaries of instructional supports that were provided by subject advisors.

Qualitative researchers believe that there are multiple truths as each person experiences a different reality to the same experience (Krauss, 2005). They are thus mindful of the complexity of interplay of individual and contextual factors hence the researcher sought to hear personal accounts of individual teachers on their experiences regarding instructional support they received from their subject advisors. Qualitative research therefore, unlike quantitative research, does not begin with a theory, rather it generates knowledge inductively to decipher a pattern of meanings to enhance understanding of a social phenomenon. It aims to generate localised theories for practice. As a result, findings from interpretive inquiry cannot be generalised for the whole (Struwig & Stead, 2001; Picciano, 2004).

Qualitative research uses emic view to understand the nature of the truth. Emic view is the view held by insiders (Morrow, 2004). Insiders in this study were the participant teachers. To generate data, qualitative research employs multiple research methods that are humanistic and interactive such as interviews, documents reviews and observations. Humanistic and interactive research methods provide participants with the opportunity to express and

thoroughly explain their feelings and personal experiences. They also allow participants to refer to their past and present experiences as well as the future thereby giving researcher a holistic picture of the phenomenon under investigation. The humanistic and interview research methods that will be used in this study are semi-structured interviews and documents review. Qualitative research also tends to employ idiographic approach (Struwig & Stead, 2001). Idiographic approach does not claim to generalise findings to the wider population of the sample being studied hence it often uses case studies or small samples (Struwig & Stead, 2001; Terre Blanche & Kelly 2006; Marshall & Rossman, 2010). Accordingly, this study used a case study research design.

3.4 Research design

Designing a study is a process that involves making multiple decisions regarding data generation methods, data analysis method up to the final stage of ensuring that the final research report answers the research questions (Durrheim, 2006). McMillan and Schumacher (2011) propose that there are five interactive qualitative designs, namely, ethnography; phenomenology; case study; grounded theory and critical studies. This study employed a case study design. Picciano (2004, p.42) describes case study research as a "descriptive research that involves describing and interpreting events, conditions, or situations that are occurring in the present." Mark in De Vos (2005) identifies three types of case study as the intrinsic case study, the instrumental case study and the collective case study. This study used the intrinsic case study because, like this study, it seeks to facilitate a better understanding and description of a single case that is being studied. The single case that was being investigated in this study was the case of subject advisors as instructional leaders.

Furthermore, case study design was preferred for this study because it shares common characteristics with qualitative methodology. Case study is qualitative in nature because it allows for in-depth investigation of a real-life contemporary phenomenon that the researcher wishes to understand in its natural setting (Opie, 2004; Picciano, 2004; Fouche, 2005; Delport & Fouche, 2005; Babbie, 2007; Merriam, 2009; Wayhuni, 2012). Wayhuni (2012) is of the view that case study research is ideal when it employs multiple case study methods that are conducted in multiple sites so that comparisons can be made among what participants say. This, she adds, has two advantages. Firstly, it enables researcher to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon being investigated as compared to information generated on a single case study. Secondly, it increases a researcher's confidence in the findings. Based

on foregoing, this was a multiple case study of ten teachers from two sites and it is a case of perceptions on subject advisors as instructional leaders. It was believed that information generated from the ten participants would enable the researcher to emerge with a comprehensive understanding of the topic under investigation. Since this was a case study, its findings will not be generalisable to other teachers.

3.5 Sampling

Jackson (2008, p.177) describes sampling as "the process of selecting a subset of cases in order to draw conclusions about the entire set." Sampling procedure is important in the study because it indicates the degree to which research findings can be generalised. Qualitative research usually employs non-probability sampling methods (Strydom & Delport, 2005). Qualitative study usually employs non-probability sampling methods (Strydom & Delport in de Vos *et al*., 2005). Purposive sampling is the non-probability sampling method that was used to select participants for this study. This was a case study of two secondary schools in Umbumbulu Central Circuit. Two grade twelve teachers, two heads of department and a principal from each school were purposively chosen for participation. The total number of participants for the study was ten. Selection for study participation was based on the researcher's discretion on which participants were deemed as best suited to provide the required information

The non-probability sampling method that was used to select participants for this study was purposive sampling method. Babbie (2007, p.184) defines purposive sampling as "a type of non-probability sampling in which the units (to be studied) are selected on the basis of the researcher's judgement for their suitability and relevance". Babbie (2007) also refers to purposive sampling as judgemental sampling. Purposive sampling was preferred for this study because it allowed the researcher to target the unique participants that were judged to be the only ones who could provide understanding that the researcher requires (Shank, 2007). In purposive sampling, the researcher chooses particular cases on the basis of the features that are of interest to a particular study (Strydom & Delport, 2005). The researcher then identified and formulated selection criteria for participants. Based on the set criterion, the cases to be studied were chosen accordingly (Shank, 2007). Sample size was determined by considering how much information was required for the study (Merriam, 2009). Consequently, participants for this study were purposively selected according to the

researcher's judgment on who could provide information that would enable the researcher to arrive at an understanding on how teachers perceive subject advisors as instructional leaders.

For sampling, two secondary schools that were located in Umbumbulu Central Circuit were studied. These two schools were selected because they were in close proximity to where the researcher was stationed. In each school, the following set of participants was targeted for participation in the study: two level one teachers who teach grade twelve, two heads of department and the principal. All together there were five participants per site. Between the two sites, the study had a total of ten participants. Grade twelve teachers were selected for participation in the study because they, of all teachers in a school, were assumed to be provided with targeted and specialised district support and developmental programmes to help them improve student achievement in the National Senior Certificate examinations. In this sense, these teachers were better situated to share views and experiences of instructional support from subject advisors since they purportedly, interface regularly with them. Heads of department were targeted for participation in the study because they, by virtue of being school-based instructional supervisors of their respective departments, had the most frequent and direct contact with subject advisors on instructional supports encounters. They were therefore, uniquely placed to provide insightful information and experiences on the role played by subject advisors in instructional leadership. Principals were targeted for participation because they, additional to being subject teachers, were the first line of communication between schools and district officials, including but not limited to subject advisors. Hence, they are thought to be in a position to provide insight on the role of subject advisors on instructional leadership. Two teachers, one head of department, and the principal were considered to be a representative spread of school-based teachers across all levels and ranks in the school.

3.6 Data generation methods

Struwig and Stead (2001) state that primary, secondary and commercial data are the three potential sources of data generation. Primary data are personally generated by the researcher. Secondary data are data that have already been generated by someone else for other purposes or for a different project. Commercial data are generated for market-research purposes by market research companies who then sell the reports. The two data sources that were used to generate data in this study were primary data and secondary data.

McMillan and Schumacher (2011) point out three distinguishing features about data generation in qualitative research designs. They state that qualitative research designs favour generating data on natural occurring contexts. They add that most of the data are generally in the form of words rather than numbers. They also state that a qualitative researcher explores with a number of data generation methods in order to achieve a deep understanding of the phenomenon being studied (McMillan & Schumacher, 2011) and to enhance the credibility of research findings (Picciano, 2004). For this study, multiple-data generation methods which were used were semi-structured interviews and document analysis. Primary data were generated from participants through semi- structured interviews. Three sets of interview schedules were generated for principals, head of departments and teachers and used to generate data from the respective participants. Secondary data were generated through review of documents. Documents that were reviewed were log books for the two schools, with special reference to entries made by subject advisors over a two year period between June 2012 and June 2014, *Continuous Assessment and Policy Statement (Further Education and Training Phase: Grades 10-12 (CAPS), Umlazi District Circular Number 1 of 2014*. These documents were analysed to elicit data that refuted or corroborated information that was provided by the participants on subject advisors as instructional leaders.

3.6.1 Interviews

Interviews were a data generation method that was used to generate primary data for this study. Interviews were appropriate for this study because they are a specific type of conversation that allowed the researcher to elicit information from the participants by probing for more clarifications on responses, finding opinions and insights and establishing motives and feelings. Such information enabled the researcher to harvest rich descriptive data which in turn facilitated the researcher's understanding of how the participants construct knowledge and social reality (Struwig & Stead, 2001; Opie, 2004; Lauer 2006; Shank, 2007; Bell, 2010). Interviews were also ideal for this study because they also increased the response rate and they were adjustable to any context (Struwig & Stead, 2001; Kelly, 2006; McMillan & Schumacher, 2011).

The interview protocol that was used for this study was semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews are also known as non-standardised or qualitative interviews (Wayhuni, 2012). Semi-structured interviews were preferred because they reduced purposeless narrations (Lauer, 2006) by allowing for questions to be formulated around topics of specific

interest but they still allowed for adjustment and depth of interview (Fouche, 2005). Accordingly, one interview schedule was generated and learned in advance so as to facilitate a natural flow of the interview. All the interviews were voice-recorded. Permission to voice-record the interviews was sought in advance and in writing from the participants. Voice-recording the interviews ensured that the researcher focused exclusively on what the participants were saying and not being distracted by taking copious notes during the interviews (Fouche, 2005). Secondly, voice-recording ensured that original data was retained (McMillan & Schumacher, 2011). To retain original data, all voice recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim (Maree & van der Westhuizen, 2009). Retaining original data was important because it enabled the   researcher to provide information back to the participants so that they could check against misinterpretation and/or bias (Opie, 2004), facilitate the process of checking for information gaps that might have required follow up interviews and for the purpose of data analysis. Recorded interviews gave more credibility to the data as they lessened inaccuracies and they produced a complete record compared to taking interview notes (Lauer, 2006). Participants were preferably interviewed in their homes because the home environment tends to influence participants to provide more truthful responses (Struwig & Stead, 2001). In cases where home interviews were not preferred, interviews were conducted at a quiet place (McMillan & Schumacher, 2011) in a convenient shopping centre (Struwig & Stead, 2001) that was agreed upon by the researcher and the study participants. Each of the participants was interviewed once for duration of forty-five to sixty minutes. Voice recordings of interviews were transcribed verbatim. Confidentiality concerns were addressed by transferring voice recorded interviews to the password-protected computer of the researcher immediately after the interviews are completed and soon thereafter deleting from the researcher's voice recorder (Wayhuni, 2012).

3.6.2 Documents review

Documents are a record of human activity that is a source of valuable data in a case study research (Olson, 2010).   Since documents do not necessarily speak for themselves, the researcher carefully analysed and interpreted the factual information contained in them for meaning (Cohen, *et al.*, 2011) so as to support or refute opinions and claims which were made by the participants (Shank, 2007). The advantage of document analysis was that reactivity was eliminated in that their producers never anticipated that their documents might be analysed at a later stage, thus researcher activity did not influence the document content (Strydom & Delport, 2005; Merriam, 2009) thus documents were a source of rich data.

Documents that were reviewed were log books of the two schools where the study was conducted, *Policy on Role and Functions of District Offices, 2013; CAPS (Further Education and Training Phase: Grades 10 to 12)*, *Umlazi District Circular 1 of 2014* and *the NDP: Vision 2030 of 2011.* Log books were suitable for this study because they were compiled and maintained on a continuous basis and thus they were more formal and structured than personal documents (McMillan & Schumacher, 2011). *Policy on Role and Functions of District Offices, 2013; CAPS* and *Umlazi District Circular 1 0f 2014 and NDP: Vision 2030* were of interest to this study because they alluded to the roles and responsibilities of subject advisors in relation to teacher support and development. Log book entries that were reviewed were the ones that provided deeper insight into subject advisors' activities and practices in relation to teacher support during their school visits (Olson, 2010) in the period between June 2012 and June 2014.

3.7 Data analysis

This study used content analysis to analyse the data. According to Struwig and Stead (2001), content analysis is a process of generating and analysing textual messages. Textual messages can be written, spoken or visualised words, meanings, symbols and themes. Content analysis was a fit for this study because it classified voluminous texts into manageable content categories (Struwig & Stead, 2001). Since data sources are inherently biased it was important for the researcher to use more than one data source so that data was triangulated (Creswell in de Vos, 2005). According to De Vos (2005), the four types of data triangulation are data triangulation, investigator or observer triangulation, theory triangulation and methodological triangulation. This study used data triangulation and theory triangulation. Data triangulation occurs when the researcher uses more than one method to generate data. Accordingly, the primary data which were generated through semi-structured interviews were triangulated by the secondary data which were generated from documents review. Data triangulation was chosen for this study because it addressed the issues of trustworthiness in that it served as a method to verify or refute information and claims which were made by the participants thereby increasing the researcher's confidence about the findings of the study (De Vos, 2005).

To facilitate analysis and interpretation of data, a document analysis schedule was generated and used for fulfill this purpose. Trustworthiness of the study was increased by triangulating the information provided by the participants against the information provided by subject advisors in the log book entries. Additionally, other official documents such as *The Policy on the Roles and Functions of District Offices of 2013; CAPS for FET Band and Umlazi District Circular No. 1 of 2014 (Grade 10, 11 and 12 Orientation and CAPS Workshops for 2014)* which provide information about the role of subject advisors in supporting teaching and learning at schools were also studied and interpreted for meaning.

Theory triangulation occurs when the researcher employs more than one theory or perspectives to interrogate one set of data. Accordingly, this study used two theories to interpret the data. These two theories were Weber's (1996) theory of instructional leadership as well as Spillane, Halverson and Diamond's (2001) theory of distributed leadership. Theory triangulation was preferred for this study because it provided two lenses of viewing the same phenomenon thereby enhancing comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon that was being investigated (De Vos, 2005). Data were further triangulated against the literature that was reviewed in Chapter Two.

In a qualitative study, data analysis is concerned with making meaning of raw data. Qualitative data analysis is based on an interpretive philosophy which aims to examine meaningful and symbolic content of qualitative data (Niewenhuis, 2007). Large amounts of textual, descriptive narratives and observations make qualitative data (Lauer, 2006). The nature of qualitative data necessitates systematic data analysis to ensure that conclusions drawn are valid. Mack (2010) notes that though interpretive researchers are known for being subjective, they keep objectivity when analysing data they have generated. Cohen, *et al.* (2011, pp. 538-539) impress that it is important that the researcher be certain as to what purpose will be fulfilled by data analysis in relation to the aim of the study. Thus, to make meaning, data analysis was undertaken mainly "to discover patterns, generate themes, to explore, to raise issues, understand individuals and idiographic features and to discover commonalities, differences and similarities" This was achieved by recording all interviews and transcribing them verbatim. Thereafter, interview transcripts were checked against the voice records for accuracy to eliminate researcher bias and to facilitate identification of gaps in information provided by participants (Opie, 2004). Content analysis was the method that was used to analyse verbatim interview transcripts. According to Struwig and Stead (2001), content analysis is a process of generating and analysing textual messages. Textual messages

can be written, spoken or visualised words, meanings, symbols and themes. Content analysis was a fit for this study because, firstly, it was deemed appropriate for textual data such as interviews and documents analysis because it helped to keep the richness of themes that emerge from the talk of participants (Cohen, *et al.*, 2011). Secondly, content analysis classified voluminous text into manageable content categories (Struwig & Stead, 2001). Thirdly, it classified and summarised the narrative descriptions and behaviours into manageable content categories and their messages (Struwig & Stead, 2001; Cohen, *et al.*; 2011). Content analysis was done by identifying patterns and themes that emerged in the interview transcripts. Patterns and themes were then coded. Coding means assigning a code to each category of data. Codes were linked to a word, a phrase, a sentence or paragraph or a larger section of data so as to interpret each code within a certain context and in relationship to other codes (Struwig & Stead, 2001; Wayhuni, 2012). Inductive analysis was used to identify multiple realities that were present in data (Maree & van der Westhuizen, 2007).

3.8 Issues of trustworthiness

According to Wayhuni (2012), qualitative research widely uses Lincoln and Guba's four-fold criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability to ensure research trustworthiness. Morrow (2004) suggests that qualitative research criteria of credibility, transferability dependability and confirmability in qualitative research are parallel to quantitative research criteria of internal validity, external validity or generalisability, reliability and objectivity, respectively.

Sturman (as cited in Scaife, 2004) emphasises that credibility is mainly used for case study research because it is the main indicator of its goodness. For this study, credibility was about ensuring that the data generated was accurate to reflect the phenomenon being studied (Wayhuni, 2012). According to Mouton (1996), triangulation is the use of multiple data generation methods in a research study to increase reliability of findings. In other words, triangulation militates against any bias inherent in a particular source of data, researcher and research methods (Creswell, 2007). Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p.6) state that triangulation invites readers and audiences "to explore competing visions of the context, to become immersed in and merge with new realities to comprehend" Accordingly, to enhance credibility of this study, the verification method of triangulating data generated from primary source (semi-structured interviews) against data generated from secondary source (documents review) was used (Lauer, 2006).

Morrow (2004), states that reliability is about explaining the procedure and techniques used to arrive at the findings such that the study can be repeated over and over again. To increase reliability of this study, the following measures were undertaken. Firstly, procedures used to generate data were explained in detail (Scaife, 2004). Secondly, data were presented in a transparent manner (Scaife, 2004). Thirdly, the method used to handle and analyse data was explained in detail (Scaife, 2004). Fourthly, primary data (data generated from participants) were separated from secondary data (data generated from document analysis) (Scaife, 2004). Fifth, because the researcher was a practising teacher, researcher bias was acknowledged (Scaife, 2004). To eliminate researcher bias, member checking was conducted through reporting the results of data analyses to the participants to verify that the researcher's interpretations were correct (Lauer, 2006). Member checking was done by giving a summary of the interview to participants for approval on the way data were presented (Lauer, 2006; Fouche, 2005). Lastly, relationship between claims made by the study and supporting evidence from research data were clearly articulated (Scaife, 2004).

3.9 Ethical issues

Research ethics ensured that the welfare of research participants was not compromised and that the researcher is conduct was above reproach as per code of conduct of researchers (Wassenaar, 2006; Creswell, 2009). According to Wassenaar (2006), the four main philosophical principles are autonomy and respect for the dignity of persons; nonmaleficence; beneficence and justice. These four philosophical principles are collectively referred to as principilism (Wassenaar, 2006). This study addressed ethical issues by observing principilism.

3.9.1 Autonomy and respect for the dignity of persons

For this study, autonomy and respect for the dignity of persons was observed by generating informed consent in a form of a letter wherein the identity and background of the researcher were declared to the potential participants. Informed consent also declared to potential participants the following information: intentions of the study; that participation in the study was entirely voluntary and that participants could withdraw from participation at any time. In the informed consent, participants were alerted that their identity and any identifying characteristics would not be disclosed in the research report or anywhere else to guarantee their anonymity. To guarantee anonymity of participants and confidentiality of information,

raw data were cleaned by omitting all information that might identify the participants and the sites where the study was conducted. In accordance with this, pseudonyms were used to refer to the two schools and the ten participants. The two schools which were sites for this study were given fictitious names, Planet and Cosmic High Schools. Each of the ten participants was also allocated a pseudonym. The principal of Planet High School was Mr Moon. The heads of department at Planet High School were Mr Saturn (Mathematics and Sciences) and Miss Venus (Languages). The two teachers at the same school were Miss Jupiter and Mr Earth. For Cosmic High School, the principal was Mr Sun. The head of departments at this school were Mr Neptune (Languages) and Mrs Mars (Mathematics and Sciences). Mr Uranus and Mrs Mercury were teachers at the same school. These participants were requested to respond in writing to declare whether they accepted or declined participation in the study and whether they also consented to their interviews being voice recorded (Mouton, 1996; Babbie, 2007; Cohen, *et al*., 2011).

3.9.2 Nonmaleficence

The principle of nonmaleficence ensured that no harm, wrong or embarrassment was suffered by participants as a result of participation in the study (Wassennar, 2006, Babbie, 2007; Cohen *et al.* 2011). To adhere to the principle of nonmaleficence, potential participants were guaranteed that no harm to employment circumstances, professional and/or personal relationships, embarrassment or any other form of prejudice would befall them as a result of participation in the study (Wassenaar, 2006). Potential participants were also informed that the information they provided would not be disclosed to anyone but would be used for research purposes only and that data interpretations would not be presented in a manner that was embarrassing and hurting to participants (Flick, 2007).

3.9.3 Beneficence

The principle of beneficence works together with the principle of nonmaleficence (Wassenaar, 2006). The principle of nonmaleficence declares that the researcher should attempt to ensure that the research yields some direct benefits (against risks) to the potential participants but importantly the benefits should not be offset by offering participants monetary incentives (Wassenaar, 2006). Beneficence was ensured by providing participants with copies of the findings of the study so that they could gain a better understanding and knowledge of the topic (Wassenaar, 2006). In this study, participants gained a better

understanding of how teachers perceive the role of subject advisors in instructional leadership.

3.9.4 Justice

The principle of justice declares among other things that participants are treated with fairness and equity to consider direct benefits of their research benefits of their research study against the personal costs to participants, a process that Cohen, *et al.* (2011) refers to as "cost/benefit ratio". Wassenaar (2006, p.68) explains that "the burdens of the research are borne by participants while the benefits accrue to the researcher who gains degrees, publications, prestige and promotion, while the circumstances of participants remain unchanged." For this study, justice was ensured in that knowledge gained in the study has potential benefit to the participants in the sense that it enhanced teachers' reflection and understanding of the role played by subject advisors in providing instructional support.

Over and above observing principilism, permissions to conduct research at schools and access to schools were obtained from the relevant officials and gatekeepers (Creswell, 2009). In this study, the relevant official was Dr N.P. Sishi, who is the Head of Department (HOD) for Education in KwaZulu-Natal Province. A letter requesting for permission to access the two schools to conduct research was written to Dr N.P. Sishi and permission was granted. Gatekeepers are authorities whose permission is needed to conduct research in their setting (Singleton & Strait, 1999). The gatekeepers in this study were the two principals of the schools wherein the study was conducted. Letters seeking for permission to conduct research in the two schools were written to the two principals and permission was granted for both schools.

Furthermore, letters were written to the selected potential participants in the two sites to request for their permission to participate in the research study. The potential participants declared their willingness to participate in the research study by completing a declaration form which was attached to the letter. The declaration form was also sent with the letter which requested each of the potential participants to indicate if they consented to their interviews being voice recorded.

3.10 Limitations of the study

Limitations are the factors that are beyond the control of the researcher that can potentially limit the extent of the study (Morrow, 2004). This study had two limitations. The first

limitation included researcher subjectivity since the researcher was also a practising grade twelve teacher. To counter this limitation, member checking (Fouche, 2005) was conducted by seeking participants' validation on the interpretation of data into final analysis (Flick, 2007). The second limitation was participant bias. To act against this limitation, information provided by the participants (who were representative of the three levels of school-based teachers: post level one teacher, heads of department and principals) was triangulated against each other. Triangulation of the three sets of data against each other served to establish similarities and contrasts in participants' views on the role of subject advisors as instructional leaders. This increased the validity of the participants' responses.

3.11 Delimitations of the study

Delimitations are the parameters or boundaries of the study that are defined by the researcher (Maree & van der Westhuizen, 2009; Simon & Goes, 2013). Defining the parameters of the study, in terms of its data, methodology, research design and sample, enhances the validity of the research findings because it guards researchers against over-generalisation (Fleck, 2007). Accordingly, this case study was delimited to ten purposefully selected teachers in two schools within a circuit. Therefore, its findings were not generalised to other teachers (Simon & Goes, 2013).

3.12 Chapter summary

This chapter discussed the methodology and design of the study. It also presented issues of trustworthiness, ethical issues as well as limitations and delimitations of the study. The proceeding chapter presents the discussion of data from the field.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter discussed the research design, methodology, limitations and delimitations of the study. This chapter presents data that were generated from semi-structured interviews and documents analysis of teachers' perceptions on subject advisors as instructional leaders. The study, which was conducted at two secondary schools in Umbumbulu Central Circuit, sought to address the following key questions:

- What do teachers understand the role of subject advisors to be in providing instructional support?
- Why do teachers need instructional support from subject advisors?
- How do subject advisors provide instructional support to teachers?

To address the issues of trustworthiness and increase the confidence in the research findings, this study used data triangulation and theory triangulations (De Vos, 2005) as discussed in the previous chapter. Additionally, the data were also interrogated through the pertinent literature and the two theoretical frameworks as reviewed in Chapter Two.

4.2 Discussion of themes emerging from the data

When analysing the data, a total of five themes emerged through content analysis. These were: participants' conceptualisation of subject advisors as instructional leaders, why participants need instructional support from subject advisors, participants' experiences of instructional supports that are provided by subject advisors, how subject advisors involve or

collaborate with others to support teaching and learning and participants' views on how else subject advisors should render instructional supports to them. Each of the emerging themes also had sub-themes. To facilitate coherence and logic of the ensuing discussion, the emerging themes and their respective sub-themes are used to present the data and to discuss the findings. *Verbatim* quotations are integrated in the discussion to illustrate the arguments made by the participants.

4.2.1 Participants' conceptualisation of subject advisors as instructional leaders

In the data analysis, it emerged that the participants were of the view that subject advisors are important role players in supporting and improving the quality of instruction in their respective subjects. Furthermore, it emerged that four words were frequently mentioned by the participants to describe their understanding of the role of subject advisors in supporting teaching and learning. Accordingly, these recurring words were then used to form sub-themes for this particular theme. The words which constituted the sub-themes for this theme were: providing guidance; mentoring; coaching; and monitoring. It must be noted that during the interviews, it was discovered that most participants used the words "coaching" and "mentoring" indiscriminately though literature on teacher professional development (Zepeda & Mayers, 2004; Robertson, 2008) differentiates between these two processes.

4.2.1.1 Subject advisors as providers of guidance

Most participants were of the view that providing guidance was one of the roles that should be fulfilled by subject advisors.

Mr Earth mentioned that, according to his understanding, a subject advisor should primarily provide guidance and direction in his subject so that there could be improved performance. His sentiment is captured in the following quotation:

> *My understanding of the role of subject advisor, to me as an educator, first of all, is to provide guidance in the subject and give direction on how we enact turnaround strategies to improve quality of teaching and learning in Physical Sciences so that we meet the requirements of the Department of Education* (Mr Earth, Physical Sciences teacher at Planet High School).

Sharing Mr Earth's view was Miss Jupiter. Though, in her response, Miss Jupiter did not use the word "guidance" per se, her explanation was however suggestive of the same idea. Like Mr Earth, Miss Jupiter seemed to expect her subject advisor to guide her on what and how

she taught in the classroom so that she could meet the expectations of the Department of Education. The following quotation describes her thought:

> *I think the role of the (subject) advisor is to ..... make sure that I'm teaching, and that I'm teaching the relevant content for that year and that I go according to what is expected of that subject* (Miss Jupiter, Economics and Mathematical Literacy teacher at Planet High School).

Data analysis further revealed that it was not only level one teachers who viewed subject advisors as providers of guidance. Mr Neptune, who is Head of Department at Cosmic High School expressed a similar view. His view was that while subject advisors should support teachers, it was just as important that they extend their guidance to heads of department as well. Being a head of department, Mr Neptune felt that he also needed subject advisors' guidance on how he should discharge his instructional supervision responsibilities. This is what he said:

> *I expect them to assist educators whenever they encounter problems in their respective subjects but I also expect them to work together with the heads of department so as to guide us on how to monitor the work of educators* (Mr Neptune, HOD for Languages at Cosmic High School).

Likewise, Mr Sun, who is the principal of Cosmic High School, also felt that the role of subject advisors was to provide guidance, not only to teachers but to members of the school management team (SMT) as well. He described his thought in this way:

> *Subject advisors are at the core of teaching and learning. Theirs should be supporting and guiding teachers and school management in achieving the main goal of the school which is educative learning* (Mr Sun, Principal of Cosmic High School).

The foregoing excerpts provide evidence that some participants, irrespective of their post levels and ranks, believe that one of the roles of subject advisors should be providing guidance and support to teachers. The participants' understanding seems to corroborate national and international research on district offices that argues that district officials play a fundamental role in bringing about educational reform through capacity building and professional development of teachers (Bantwini & King-McKenzie 2011; Smith, 2011; Fullan, 2010). Additional to this, the documents review of log books for the two schools

supported the participants' conceptualisation of the role of subject advisors as providers of support and guidance. Log books evidence revealed that on their visits, subject advisors generally recorded that they provided, among other things, guidance, support, monitoring of both teachers' and learners work and motivating learners. However, the majority of such log book entries did not provide detailed explanation of the actual practices or actions that were performed by subject advisors in the name of providing guidance and support. A typical log book entry at Cosmic High School which supports this claim read thus:

> *08/08/2013 Advisor for Economics (X) and advisor for Mathematical Literacy (Y), TLS-FET visited the school to give support and guidance to Economics and Mathematical Literacy teachers and to check on content coverage* (Log book entry by subject advisor at Cosmic High School).

However, at Planet High School, a particular log book entry was found wherein a detailed explanation of the actions that were performed by the subject advisor as part of support and guidance was given. Unlike in the foregoing example and many others, in this particular log book entry the subject advisor explained that guidance and support was provided and then further explained the points of discussion that she had with the teacher concerned. In other words, this particular log book entry provided an insight into the subject advisor's understanding of some of the actions that constitute guidance and support. This particular log book entry read as follows:

> *13/02/14 X from TLS-FET, IsiZulu Home Language, subject advisor visited the school to provide support and guidance on implementation and interpretation of CAPS. The following was discussed with Y, who is the subject teacher: teaching plan, lesson plan, marking of classwork and homework (informal) activities. Activities are CAPS compliant* (Log book entry by subject advisor at Planet High School).

Notably, this particular subject advisor's understanding of what makes for support and guidance, by and large, fitted in with most of the role expectation of some of the participants, as alluded to at the beginning of this particular sub-theme.

4.2.1.2 Subject advisors as coaches

Some of the participants felt that another role of the subject advisor should be coaching the teachers. However, it was particularly interesting to note that the participants had varied

opinions on who should be coached and how the said coaching should be provided. For instance, Mr Moon, the principal of Planet High was of the view that it was teachers who should be coached. He explained that coaching was necessary for teachers who are battling with hard-to-teach curricular topics, especially in the gateway subjects. When probed to explain further how he thought coaching should occur, he then responded in this way:

> *There are topics that pose challenges in some subjects like Physical Sciences, Mathematics and Accounting. I think subject advisors must go to the classroom to demonstrate for teachers how to teach some of these topics. If you are a coach you must sometimes physically go into the sports field and show the player (that) you're coaching how to play the game the way you want them to. You can't be shouting from the side lines all the time. You must go into the pitch and show your players how a penalty is taken. So, likewise subject advisors must go into the classroom and teach …. so as to demonstrate to educators how to approach particular topics* (Mr Moon, principal at Planet High School).

Mr Saturn, Head of Department at Planet High School, also viewed subject advisors as central to the professional development of teacher. However, unlike Mr Moon who felt coaching should involve classroom demonstrations of hard-to-teach curricular topics; Mr Saturn's view of coaching was workshop-based. He said that subject advisors should develop teachers through workshops. The following quotation reveals his thoughts:

> *I'd say (that) the role of subject advisor is to develop educators through workshops wherein they get knowledge and information that is relevant to their particular subjects so as to improve teaching and learning* (Mr Saturn, HOD for Mathematics and Sciences at Planet High School).

The principal of Cosmic High School, Mr Sun shared a similar sentiment as Mr Moon. Though Mr Sun's explanation was allusive to subject advisors fulfilling the role of a coach to teachers, he was, however, non-specific on the trajectory which should be adopted for coaching. When asked what support of teaching and learning by subject advisors meant for him, he responded by saying that subject advisors are the port of call for teachers should they experience problems regarding curriculum delivery. It seemed as if his understanding of coaching was not restricted to a particular mode. On how he understood to be the role of

subject advisors in supporting teaching and learning, he then explained his thought in this way:

> *Among other things, it could mean that a teacher in the classroom should not find himself/herself wanting in as far as strategies for imparting knowledge and skills to learners are concerned. In a case where a teacher is faced with certain problem, I mean a subject advisor should be the central person to render advice and solution* (Mr Sun, Principal of Cosmic High School).

Unlike Mr Moon, who felt that subject advisors should coach teachers by conducting classroom demonstrations, Mrs Mercury, a teacher at Cosmic High School, seemed to share the same understanding as Mr Saturn. She was adamant that subject advisors should coach teachers outside of the classroom environment. This is what she said:

> *A subject advisor is not concerned with learners, the subject advisor should give clarity to the educator concerned and the educator will then go back to the classroom and teach* (Mrs Mercury, Economics teacher at Planet High School).

Mrs Mercury's perception that subject advisors should not interact with learners but should restrict their support to teachers was disproved by evidence from log book entries of both schools. The log book entries suggested that certain subject advisors not only supported teachers but they also extended their support to learners in the classroom by, among others, motivating learners and coaching them on strategies of mastering subject content during revision. One such log book entry which confirmed this entry read as follows:

> *28/08/13 Business Studies advisor provided support by assisting educator and learners in the classroom. Motivated learners on challenges and strategies* (Log book entry by subject advisor at Cosmic High School).

With regards to Mr Saturn' perception that subject advisors should develop teachers through workshops, the review of documents affirmed that workshops were provided for the professional development of teachers as revealed in the analysis of Umlazi District Circular Number 1 of 2014. The Circular, dated 14 November 2014, had an attachment of workshop venues for all grades 10 to 12 subjects. Workshops for each of the listed subjects were clustered according to the four circuits within the district. The Circular was marked for the

attention of cluster managers, ward managers, principals of secondary schools and grade 10, 11 and 12 teachers. Here is an extract from the Circular:

GRADE 10, 11 & 12 ORIENTATION & CAPS WORKSHOPS FOR 2014

The above-mentioned workshops will take place according to the details in the attached schedule. Teachers will be updated on matters from the examiners' reports, the scope of work for the common testing programme (where applicable), the SBA requirements and revision strategies, amongst other issues. Teachers will also have the opportunity of indicating their needs so that subject advisors could arrange on-going support.

- *Orientation/content workshops are schedule to start at 08h00, unless otherwise stated.*
- *At least one teacher teaching the relevant subject and grade during 2014 must attend.*
- *Consult the relevant subject advisor for any further information.* (Umlazi District Circular No.1 of 2014).

From the above, it can be concluded that the participants' conceptualisation of the role of subject advisors as coaches is in line with some of the tasks that are carried out by some subject advisors. As the review of documents suggest, some subject advisors provided varied forms of coaching which took various forms such as subject workshops, demonstration lessons, observing teachers in practice, motivating and coaching learners on study techniques. The participants' conceptualisation of the role of subject advisors as coaches is affirmed by Zepeda (1999) who offers that processes such as observing teachers in practice, training, addressing and creating an environment that accepts change are part of coaching.

4.2.1.3 Subject advisors as mentors

The majority of the participants also seemed to understand mentoring as one of the roles that should be fulfilled by subject advisors.

For instance, Mr Moon's perception was that subject advisors should not only mentor new teachers but old teachers as well. He felt that the frequently changing-curriculum makes it necessary for all teachers to be continually mentored. The following quotation encapsulates his view on this issue:

They (subject advisors) must mentor the new educators, the new ones who have just come into the system and as a matter of fact, they must give ongoing assistance to those educators who are already in the system, that is, the old educators because our curriculum is ever-changing. The subject content changes and so should be the teaching approaches and therefore subject advisors must always be there (Mr Moon, Principal of Cosmic High School).

Sharing Mr Moon's sentiment was Mrs Mercury. Remarkably, these two participants who were from different schools, occupied vastly unequal positions, with the former being a principal and the latter being a level one teacher. It was however evident that their view of the role of subject advisors as mentors was similar. Like Mr Moon, Mrs Mercury's assumption was that subject advisors have a wealth of subject knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge. She thus perceived subject advisors as being in a unique position to offer advice whenever teachers encounter instructional challenges. She expressed her thought in this way:

I think the role of subject advisors is to advise teachers in areas of concerns in their respective subjects because they are supposed to have deep understanding and more knowledge about all the topics in the subject. I also expect them to know how to advise teachers to impart knowledge and skills so that learners understand the matter better. If there is a problem area, the subject advisor must give clarity so that everyone is clear (Mrs Mercury, Economics teacher at Cosmic High School).

The data generated from the log book of Planet High School suggested that one subject advisor had made a log entry wherein he/she stated that he/she had been to the school to offer what was interpreted as mentoring. What was particularly interesting about this particular entry was that the subject advisor indicated that he/she would return for another visit the following day. Subject advisors are known to be constantly hassled for time. So, it was remarkable that the subject advisor had committed to revisit the same teacher for two days in succession. The following excerpt reveals the purpose of the visit on the first day:

27/08/2013 (Y), SES-Mathematical Literacy visited the school to monitor content coverage and to give support and guidance to Mathematical Literacy educators. Will be coming back the following day (Log book entry by subject advisor at Cosmic High School).

True to his/her word, the log book entry made on the following suggested that the subject advisor made good on the promise to return for another visit the next day. The following excerpt reveals the purpose of the visit on the second day:

28/08/13 (Y), SES-Mathematical Literacy visited the school to give clarity on some topics and provided the work schedule and some material for revision (Log book entry by subject advisor at Cosmic High School).

On face value, the above quotations reveal the activities which the subject advisor undertook on the first and second day of the visits. However, when viewed in conjunction, the two log book entries seem to imply that there is more to the second visit than meets the eye. Firstly, surmising from the log book entry made on the second day of the visit, the researcher is of the opinion that the subject advisor's visit of the following day was necessitated by the discovery that the teacher visited had been without a work schedule for the better part of the year. Hence the subject advisor had to make a return trip to the school to bring the work schedule for the teacher.

To get a better understanding of how it came about that a teacher did not have a work schedule till latter days of August, the researcher requested the principal to explain the circumstances surrounding the two log book entries. The principal explained that the results for June 2013 examinations of the particular subject were poor. He then used the examination results to inform his decision to do an internal swop of teachers. In August, when the newly swopped teacher was to assume with her new duty load, she then discovered that the old teacher did not have a work schedule. It was at that point that the subject advisor was called by the principal.

This was found to be paradoxical, considering that a work schedule is one of the most fundamental tools in the process of teaching and learning. To all intents and purposes, a work schedule serves to inform and guide the teacher on the subject content to be taught, the order in which the content should be taught and the time that should be allocated for teaching each topic. It was therefore incomprehensible that a teacher was without a work schedule at such an advanced stage of year. This also called into serious question this subject advisor's familiarity with what was happening in the subject at the school he/she was in charge of. In fact, this suggested that the subject advisor was falling short, in certain ways, as a mentor. In education sector, a mentor is expected to fulfil to the mentee such roles as providing policies, helping the mentee identify weaknesses in their practice and suggesting possible

solutions, counselling, sponsoring intervention and being a channel for information (Ganser, 1996 & Zey, 1984 as cited in Zepeda, 1999).

When viewed in conjunction, these two log book suggest that the subject advisor's first visit was inclined on "*monitoring and giving support and guidance*". On the log book entry made on the second day, the subject advisor stated that he/she came for "*giving clarity on certain topics and providing work schedule*". The conclusion drawn from this was that for this subject advisor, monitoring seemed to take precedence over mentoring. It is evident that supportive intervention was only made when it was realised that there were serious underlying problems.

For this sub-theme, the participants appeared to view mentoring as one of the roles which they believed should be fulfilled by their subject advisors. While, there was evidence that suggested that subject advisors fulfilled a mentoring role in supporting development of the participants, there were some inconsistencies between the strict sense of the word and the practices that were enacted by subject advisors in the name of mentoring. Among some of the mentoring role expectations that the subject advisors practiced was identifying weaknesses in the practices of the teachers. However, evidence suggested subject advisors did not follow through by suggesting possible remedies for the identified weaknesses. Their role was then misconstrued as being fault-finders.

4.2.1.4 Subject advisors as monitors

Data revealed that some participants' conceptualised the role of subject advisors as a monitors. Mr Moon, the principal of Cosmic High School was adamant that the monitoring role of subject advisors was crucial. Mr Moon felt that the constant changes in education necessitated that subject advisors should monitor teachers. His view was that both novice and veteran teachers should be regularly monitored by subject advisors in respect of the content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge (PCK). Mr Moon believed that frequent monitoring would ensure that teachers have competent subject and pedagogical knowledge and that if any of these was lacking, subject advisors could immediately identify the problem and intervene before too much damage was done on the quality of teaching and learning.

> *One of the very important roles of subject advisors in this new dispensation is*
> *to monitor. They have to monitor new and old educators in their respective*
> *subjects. ......They must have a plan to monitor teachers' work maybe one a*
> *month so that when there are any weaknesses....in terms of the content and in*

terms of the methodology that is used by the teachers, they can identify these earlier and this will assist to put remedial actions in place… before it's too late (Mr Moon, Principal of Planet High School).

Miss Jupiter, who was the Head of Department at Cosmic High seemed, to share the same idea. She however, did not use the word "monitor" but her description, by inference, was related to this concept. Remarkably, unlike Mr Saturn whose conception of monitoring role was confined to assessment, her view on monitoring by subject advisors was broad in that she thought that they should monitor all aspects of their subjects. This is what she said:

For me, the role of a subject advisor is ensuring that the subjects they are overseeing are well taken care of so that learners pass (Miss Venus, HOD for Languages at Planet High School).

When asked to provide a detailed explanation of how she understood subject advisors should fulfil the role of overseeing, her thoughts seemed to reveal that subject advisors should have an intimate understanding of what is going on in the subject they are supervising. This is how she expressed her view:

As a subject advisor when you get a call in the middle of the night and you are asked about any school that you are overseeing, you need to be able to give clear answers as to what is happening in your subject at that particular school (Miss Jupiter, HOD for Languages at Planet High School).

Mr Saturn, who is head of department at Planet High School, also ascribed the role of monitoring to subject advisors. However, his conception of monitoring by subject advisors seemed to be restricted to moderation of assessment tasks. The following excerpt reveals his opinion:

Subject advisors should ensure that they monitor assessment on regular basis through moderation (Mr Saturn, HOD for Sciences and Mathematics at Planet High School).

Review of log books provided evidence to suggest that subject advisors did provide monitoring. Between the two schools, there were two pieces of evidence wherein subject advisors had expressly described their visit to the schools as fulfilling monitoring role. One log book entry reads as follows:

> *13/08/13 Advisor for Life Sciences visited the school to monitor progress in the teaching of Life Sciences. In grade10, the teacher is in line with content coverage. However, there were no lesson preparations. The schedule was not completed and there was little work covered by learners in the form of activities. Lesson preparations for grades 11 and 12 were not found. The teacher is in line with content coverage and in grade 12 the teacher is behind by two weeks* (Log book entry by subject advisor at Cosmic High School).

While the above extract clearly states the purpose of the visit and the findings thereof, it however, conspicuously lacks information on what was discussed as a way forward, in the light of the many problems that the subject advisor seemed to have discovered. The expectation was that the subject advisor, after having discussed the issues raised with the teacher concerned, would log in the turn-around actions that need to be implemented by the teacher. As the log book entry stands, it seems to suggest that the subject advisor's role was just limited to completing a checklist of wrongs and rights. Being the supervisor, the expectation was that he/she would have provided recourse for corrective measures. There was another log book entry that suggested that towards the end of the first term, one subject advisor conducted a follow up monitoring of work done during the first term. Interestingly, having identified some problems, this particular subject advisor recorded two cell phone numbers on the log book. Leaving cell phone numbers on the time book seemed to suggest that the subject advisor was showing his/her immediate availability to the teacher (who happened to be absent on the day of the visit) to discuss issues of concerns or problems that had been identified during the visit. This is the excerpt of the log book entry:

> *03/06/13 Follow up to monitor GET band Life Orientation and Mathematics. Monitoring evidence of first term work. Problems experienced and tasks performed based on CAPS Policy. Life Orientation educator not available. *** **** *** and *** **** *** (Cell phone numbers)* (Log book entry by subject advisor at Cosmic High School).

There were other pieces of evidence wherein subject advisors did not explicitly state they conducted "monitoring". However, the descriptions of actions and motives as revealed in the data were implying that it they were conducting monitoring. For instance, one subject advisor stated that the purpose of the visit was to "administer the curriculum coverage tool".

Technically, administration of the curriculum coverage tool is tantamount to monitoring. This is how this particular log book entry was phrased:

> *18/06/12 Miss X, SES for Natural Sciences, visited the school to administer the curriculum coverage tool. A follow-up visit to check on evidence of the work done will be done on Thursday or Friday this week* (Log book entry by subject advisor at Planet High School).

Data generated from the review of documents concurred with the participants' understanding that one of the roles performed by subject advisors was monitoring. Further analysis of the data also revealed that monitoring was, in the main, conducted by other district and provincial officials of different ranks. For instance, data revealed that monitoring was also conducted by, among others, District Director and Provincial Intervention Team. However, as inferred from the data of review of documents, monitoring by subject advisors was subject-specific while monitoring conducted by other senior district and provincial officials tended to be generic. The conclusion drawn from this finding was that subject specific support, guidance and monitoring was the domain of subject advisors while monitoring of whole school functionality was bequeathed to more senior officials of the department of education.

Current thinking on the role of districts is that monitoring is a necessary process for ensuring accountability but it should be accompanied by necessary support and guidance (Taylor, 2008; Spaull, 2012 & 2013). However, the analysis of the order of the activities that were executed by the subject advisor, as revealed in the above excerpts, seems to confirm what literature on the role of district offices in supporting teaching and learning suggest (Van der Berg, Taylor, Gustafsson, Armstrong & Spaull, 2011; Smith, 2011). At the time of writing, Van der Berg *et al*., (2011) claimed that district offices satisfied the monitoring role only and did not provide support to schools. Similarly, Smith (2011) found that district offices had no capacity to support schools.

To summarise, the participants' understanding of instructional leadership roles of subject advisors seemed to share similar understanding of instructional roles that subject advisors should fulfil. Practices such as providing guidance, giving direction and support were viewed as fulfilling instructional leadership. Furthermore, all the participants' responses seemed to suggest they shared the same understanding as Knapp *et al*., (2010) that instructional leadership is not a sole mandate of the principal (and school management teams), but it is a collective responsibility of educational officials at all levels of the educational system. Their

conceptualisation seems to dovetail with literature (Robertson, 2008) that improved instructional practice can only be attained through continuing teacher professional development and capacity building processes that are based on partnerships such as coaching and mentoring. Additional to the four frequently mentioned words (providing guidance, coach, mentor and monitor), the participants provided a mixed bag of descriptive words to denote their conceptualisation of subject advisors as instructional leaders. These words were: subject expert, advisor, support provider, resource person, overseer for the subject, facilitator, assessor, moderator, custodian for departmental standards, morale and confidence booster were the other words that were used by the participants to conceptualise the role of subject advisors in supporting teaching and learning.

Noting that in years gone by, it was thought that instructional leadership was the principals' exclusive domain; it was interesting to observe that all participants seemed to hold the current thinking of instructional leadership as a collective effort, including district officials such as subject advisors. In this way, it can be said that the participants' understanding of the concept of instructional leadership seems to fit in with the definition by Knapp, Copland, Honig, Plecki and Portin (2010) which is adopted by this study. Knapp *et al*., (2010) believe that instructional leadership efforts include guiding, directing or supporting teachers as they strive to increase their range of skills and professional knowledge for improved learner success.

4.2.2 Why participants need instructional support from subject advisors?

On this theme, four sub-themes emerged. These sub-themes were: creating platforms for sharing instructional concerns, developing teachers' content and pedagogical content knowledge, and moderation of formal tasks.

4.2.2.1 Creating forums for sharing instructional problems

Some participants were of the view that subject advisors were uniquely placed to create meeting opportunities wherein teachers could meet to share and discuss their daily instructional problems. One participant who felt this way was Mr Saturn who expressed his view in this way:

> *Subject advisors are subject specialists who should create platforms in workshops to share ideas so that problems encountered by teachers….may be revealed … and maybe a solution can be received through sharing of ideas* (Mr Saturn, HOD for Mathematics and Sciences at Planet High School).

Miss Jupiter was more forthcoming in articulating some of the problems she experienced in her teaching. She mentioned poor learner material as one source of her woes. This is how she described it:

> *Learners are different. This year you may find a good crop and the other year you'll find that learners are not cooperating in class. Sometimes, you find that even the environment is not conducive for teaching and learning. So, if they could be there and experience this so that they can give relevant advice because really sometimes I run short of ideas when the classroom environment is not conducive for teaching and learning* (Miss Jupiter, Economics and Mathematical Literacy teacher at Planet High School)

Mr Neptune offered that, through informal discussion with his cluster colleagues, he had concluded that there was a great need for teachers to regularly meet for the express purpose of sharing and discussing their instructional concerns. It appeared that Mr Neptune and his cluster colleagues valued the idea of sharing and discussing their instructional challenges so much so that they, on their own accord, decided to create time on weekends which they expressly committed to share and discuss problems which they experience in their day-to-day practice. This is how he put:

> *When we are in (cluster) meetings, you get to realise that there are many challenges teachers are facing. But during those meetings, time is very limited so we can't really discuss much. As a result, we've decided to meet as a cluster over the weekends so that we could have ample time to discuss our issues that arise as we work in our different schools* (Mr Neptune, HOD for Languages at Cosmic High School).

In line with the views of the participants, literature views teacher collaboration as one feature of effective professional development (Akiba & LeTrende, 2009) because they provide teachers with opportunities to discuss and share their instructional problems and learn from each other. Teacher collaboration efforts are therefore not just needed but they are mandatory in the light of the myriad of challenges that are faced by both novice and veteran teachers. These challenges arise from the complex nature of the teaching profession and they include, among others, feelings of self-doubt and inadequacy, anxiety, isolation, lack of job satisfaction and job-induced stress (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009; Kardos & Johnson, 2010 Laine, 2011).

To summarise, under this sub-theme, the participants offered that they experienced various instructional problems which sometimes made them feel powerless. They indicated preference that such problems should be shared and discussed in teacher platforms which are designated to directly address such problems. From the preceding, it can be concluded that the participants did not necessarily expect their subject advisors to provide solutions to each of their daily problems. Rather they seemed to value discussion and sharing of ideas with other teachers as a more viable means of mediating their instructional problems.

The participants' view on creation of platforms for sharing instructional concerns seem to be valid in that it can be explained in terms of the second domain of Weber's (1996) model of instructional leadership which is managing instruction and curriculum. According to Weber, the first aspect of managing instruction and curriculum is that instructional leaders, without abdicating their instructional responsibilities as goal setters and supervisors, should jointly choose with teachers the instructional options that best serve the teachers in a particular context. This, Weber states, is important for instructional leaders do not and cannot have all the knowledge base and solutions for instructional problems and thus they should be willing o learn from teachers. In practical terms, if such platforms were to be created, shared or distributed leadership would be practiced in that subject advisors would remain as supervisors and monitors to ensure that goals set by the group are aligned with district or departmental vision. Teachers, on the other hand, would be actively involved in identifying and solving instructional problems that hamper the attainment of the vision.

4.2.2.2 Developing teachers' content and/or pedagogical content knowledge (PCK)

Some participants were of the view that subject advisors should meet their developmental needs in respect of content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge and teaching and learning materials. One such participant was Mr Uranus and this is how he expressed his view:

> *Subject advisors should give us support in terms of content knowledge, teaching and learning strategies and teaching and learning resources. They must also give us moral support to improve our self-esteem and confidence* (Mr Uranus, Accounting teacher at Cosmic High School).

While Mr Uranus felt that he needed his subject advisor to develop him on both content and pedagogical content knowledge and to provide emotional support to improve his confidence, Mr Earth, on the other hand, seemed to yearn for his subject advisor's support on the

development of pedagogical content knowledge. Mr Earth's idea seemed to be anchored on modelling. This is how he described his thought:

> *I believe that he (subject advisor) may also make his own videos that we may be able to watch and see how he implements some of the curricular requirements in action because I suppose that he is more exposed. He probably has experience on how other schools within our district do things and he is also exposed to other advisors within and outside the province. So he should share that knowledge by producing his own videos for us to learn from* (Mr Earth, Physical Sciences teacher at Planet High School).

Like Mr Earth, Miss Venus felt that her subject advisor should pay more attention to teacher development of pedagogical content knowledge. She was of the view that the workshops which were normally provided by her subject advisor did not speak to the development of pedagogical content knowledge of teachers. In fact, she described the workshops as bordering on lectures on "what to teach" and not on "how to teach". The following quotation reveals her thought:

> *We normally have workshops at the beginning of the year. In workshops, most of the time, it's about, "You must go teach this, this and that". It's basically being told what to teach but we're not necessarily told how to teach it…. Maybe, if we can improve on that and we have more of such workshops, I think that could improve teaching and learning of my subject* (Miss Venus, HOD for Languages at Planet High School).

Similarly, Mr Neptune felt that teachers need subject advisors' support on development of content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge. His view was that the changing curriculum necessitates such kind of supports. This is how he put it:

> *What I could say is that they (subject advisors) should organise more workshops that are specifically targeted at enhancing our understanding of our different subjects and skills on how to deliver content better understanding on our learners. Especially so, because our curriculum is ever-changing …….. So, if they can conduct more such workshops, teachers will be advantaged to have more knowledge which will improve their understanding of the content that will surely improve the quality teaching and learning* (Mr Neptune, HOD for Languages at Cosmic High School).

Mrs Mercury was another participant who felt that more content workshops would help her improve her instructional capabilities. She explained her view like this:

> *I think more workshops need to be done in Economics because there are new things day by day. We rely on current information as we are dealing with economy and choices of people…..Economics is new day by day, that's the nature of the subject. So, I think the subject advisor needs to come needs to come in and assist when a teacher has seen some new information but doesn't know how to fit or integrate that particular information to the topic that's being taught at the time* (Mrs Mercury, Economics teacher at Cosmic High School).

Likewise, Mrs Mars felt that subject advisors should conduct more content and pedagogical content workshops. Her view on this is revealed in the following excerpt:

> *I'd say that having an advance planning workshop with teachers at the end of the year, maybe just at the end of the examinations or before schools open at the beginning of the year so that teachers actually know what is expected of them in that subject from day one of school… because sometimes you find that the teacher IS qualified to teach the subject but due to the fact that there are regular changes, the teacher might then have new concepts that he or she cannot do by himself or herself* (Mrs Mars, HOD for Mathematics and Sciences at Cosmic High School).

Review of *Umlazi District Circular No. 1 of 2014* suggested that content was one of the issues that were discussed in the orientation workshops. Furthermore, the Circular invited teachers to indicate their needs to subject advisors so that "on-going support" could be arranged. Technically speaking, as per the Circular, all workshops were scheduled to start at 08h00 and would finish at 14h30 which meant that the duration of content workshops was a maximum of six hours. Secondly, by the participants' own admission, the content workshops were once-off in that they only occurred at the beginning of the year. Furthermore, review of log book entries for both schools did not suggest that there was a subject advisor who had indicated that they offered subject content development as part of "on-going support" during the school visits. From the foregoing, it could be inferred that the participants received a maximum time of six hours of subject content development. This conclusion is disconcerting when compared to countries such as Japan where grade ten teachers undergo about eighteen

days of on-site professional development and another seventeen days for off-site professional development. Between 2003 and 2004, teachers in USA who were in high performing schools reported to have undergone sixty four hours of professional development and eighty eight hours for teachers in schools which were targeted for improvement. Pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) is a branch of knowledge which transcends content knowledge in that it is specifically concerned with among others, how and/or how not various learners learn or fail to learn the subject content, how teachers use learning and teaching support material (LTSM) to enhance learners' understanding of the subject content (Shulman, 1987). PCK technically makes teaching the professional career that it is. However, most participants were of the opinion that they were short on PCK and also their subject advisors did not do much to help develop their PCK.

Theoretically, the fourth domain of Weber's (1996) theory of instructional leadership speaks to observing and improving instruction and it addresses the participants' views on professional development. There are two relevant points that speak to professional development as raised by the participants. First is that in-service training is a valuable strategy for ensuring that teachers possess and share standardised knowledge base on which they base their teaching. Weber's argument therefore seems to affirm the call by the participants for more professional development on content and pedagogical content knowledge to help improve their classroom practices seems correct in the light of the above comparison. However, the second argument Weber makes that instructional leaders should create opportunities for professional development wherein teachers take responsibility for their own learning to build and expand their knowledge base and skills repertoire through collaborative learning seems to conflict with the participants' views. The participants seem to corroborate the finding that lack of subject content knowledge is the primary problem among South African teachers as found in the TIMMS 2011 wherein a large number of teachers failed to answer a paper that was set for their learners (Spaull, 2012, 2013). Therefore, Weber's suggestion that teachers should work collaboratively to share good instructional practises which promote learner achievement might possibly not produce desired results simply because teachers need to acquire basic subject content knowledge before there could work be any talk of developing their pedagogical content knowledge (Spaull, 2012). However, Weber's suggestion would probably work well in USA, where teachers indicate that professional development programmes have sufficiently developed their subject or

academic content and they have identified for professional development on pedagogical content knowledge (Darling-Hammond *et al.,* 2009).

4.2.2.3 Moderation of formal assessment tasks

Some participants were of the view that they need subject advisors support in the moderation of formal assessment tasks so that learners would be exposed to assessments that were of national standards. One of the participants who held this view was Mrs Mercury. She said:

> *They (subject advisors) are in a position to see that questions or assignments and projects have been set in such a way that they are in line with national standards so that learners will get practice that is on the expected standard. Teachers should not be expected to always set the assignments and projects by themselves because sometimes you'll find that other teachers are not yet at the stage where they can set papers that are at national level* (Mrs Mars, HOD for Mathematics and Sciences at Cosmic High School).

Like Mrs Mars, Mr Moon was categorical in his view that some teachers were unable to set assessment tasks that met the national benchmark. Being a principal, he demonstrated his argument by citing an example which was indicative of disparity in standards of internally and externally set assessments. This is how he explained it:

> *Teachers need assistance with assessment techniques. So, subject advisors must come on board and assist educators with assessment techniques. You may find that a learner is achieving something like 90% in all internal assessments. Come ANA (Annual National Assessment) or end of the year in grade 12, the same learner who was achieving well in internal assessments is suddenly achieving 24%. Where is the problem now? The problem is with assessment techniques of the educator concerned. Therefore, subject advisors must assist educators with assessment techniques* (Mr Moon, principal of Planet High School).

Literature (Taylor, Yates, Meyer and Kinsella, 2011) suggests that, teachers in New Zealand, also identified a similar need for support and development during assessment reform between 2002 and 2004. Teachers then strongly demanded support and development on designing internal assessments and moderation. The Ministry of Education responded by establishing the Senior Subject Advisor (SSA) pilot which identified teachers who were experienced and

expert for one year university training. The role of SSAs was to support and develop teachers in designing internal assessment tasks and moderation. The introduction of SSAs resulted in improved teacher development practices which built the capacity of both the SSAs and the teachers.

Unlike New Zealand, in South Africa, there is no special agency that supports and develops teachers on designing internal assessment. So, teachers are left to their own devices when it comes to designing internal assessment tasks. As far as moderation of formal assessment tasks are concerned, CAPS: Further Education and Training Phase Grades 10-12 states that it is the role of subject advisors to moderate formal assessment tasks before they are administered to learners. This stipulation is on CAPS, p.87 that:

> *The subject advisor must moderate a sample of these tasks (formal assessment) during his/her school visits to verify the standard of tasks and the internal moderation…. (and that) subject advisors must moderate samples of tests and examination papers before they are written by learners to verify standards and guide teachers on the setting of these tasks.*

The preceding extract from the CAPS supports the participants' expectation that subject advisors should act as custodians of standards for formal assessment tasks. It also confirms the participants claim that moderation of formal tasks and control of standards should fall within the ambit of subject advisors.

Nonetheless, review of log books of both schools where the study was conducted did not provide any evidence to suggest that subject advisors did in fact moderate samples of formal tasks during school visits or guide teachers on the setting of formal tasks as per policy requirements. Theoretically, this finding is framed against the argument raised by Spillane, Halverson and Diamond (2001) in their theory of distributed leadership. They argue that the spotlight should fall on how educational leaders perform their day-to-day work. Therefore, leadership and management practices should be carefully scrutinised since the manner in which educational leaders perform their work invariably influences what teachers do in the classrooms. From this finding, it can be concluded that Halverson's *et al*., (2001) assertion that organisational policies, like CAPS in this instance, only mirror "espoused theories" or "canonical practice" which are stipulations of ideal practices for enacting tasks. The point these authors are making is that while organisational policies epitomise the ideal, they are not, and cannot be sufficient indicator of what practitioners do in reality which they refer to

as "theories in use" or "non-canonical practice". This particular finding seems to indicate that subject advisors did not observe "espoused theories" or "canonical practice" with regard to ensuring standards of formal assessment tasks.

Furthermore, the suggestion made by Weber's (1996) on his fifth domain of instructional leadership model seems to carry the argument made by the participants that subject advisors as instructional leaders should play a significant role on the assessment of instructional programmes. Weber argues that assessment of instructional programs is central to instructional improvement. He therefore argues that instructional leaders can only ascertain if the instructional programs are effective or not by being directly involved in the planning, designing, administration and analysis of assessment. What is currently happening is that instructional leaders, such as subject advisors, for whatever reason, are not directly involved in assessment of instructional programs for grades that are internally examined. Teachers, whether experienced or not, are responsible for setting internal assessment tasks. Subject advisors focus more on standardising and moderating Grade 12 assessment tasks whose results are used to benchmark schools' performance. This is problematic in the light of the participants' admission that assistance is required in moderation of tasks so that internally examined learners are exposed to national standards as well.

Under this sub-theme, teachers expressed a need for guidance, support and development in designing and moderating internal assessment tasks so as to pitch the assessment standards of the department of education. This seems to be a legitimate call in the light of South Africa's standards-based education and stricter teacher-accountability measures for learner performance.

4.2.3 Participants' experiences of instructional supports rendered by subject advisors

The findings from the data analysis showed that the participants had varied experiences of instructional supports by subject advisors. Through content analysis, eight sub-themes emerged under this theme. These sub-themes were guidance and support, maintaining high visibility, workshops, winter school intervention programme, monitoring, subject clusters, ignore-therapy, mellow-yellow means misery and judgemental attitude.

4.2.3.1 Guidance and support

Some participants mentioned that their subject advisors provided them with the support and guidance that they required. It emerged that guidance and support assumed various forms as

revealed below. For instance, for Miss Jupiter of Planet High School,   guidance and support was manifested when her subject advisor went into the classroom to motivate the learners and did revision in preparation for the examinations that were soon to come. This is how she explained it:

> *My Economics advisor went to the classroom and spoke with the learners and*
> *also did revision with them. It was towards the end of the year examinations*
> (Miss Jupiter, Economics teacher at Planet High School).

Mr Neptune, who is head of department at Cosmic High School, seemed to conceptualise the practice of guidance and support by subject advisors in the same way as Miss Jupiter. When asked to provide an example of an act which constituted guidance and support, he provided the following illustration:

> *There was a case where one of the teachers in my department was having a*
> *problem with a particular topic in the subject he was teaching at that time. He*
> *then asked the subject advisor to go to class and teach the topic. The subject*
> *advisor agreed and went to class and tackled the topic with the learners. So*
> *that was support* (Mr Neptune, HOD for Languages at Cosmic High School).

When Miss Venus, the head of department at Planet High School, was asked to explain her experience of support by subject advisor, she provided an example that was similar to Mr Neptune's. Miss Venus mentioned that she once saw a subject advisor providing instructional support to the teacher (of another department in her school) by going into the classroom to teach a topic that the teacher had challenges with. This is how she explained it:

> *There was once a situation where a science teacher had problems. He then*
> *organised with the subject advisor for guidance on how to tackle the problem*
> *in the classroom and they went to the classroom together. The subject advisor*
> *taught the specific topic that the teacher was not very clear on. I think that not*
> *only helped learners but it also helped to capacitate the teacher so that he*
> *would know what to do, going forward, when the subject advisor is not there*
> (Miss Jupiter, HOD for Languages at Planet High School).

Unlike Mr Neptune and Miss Venus who viewed support and guidance in terms of demonstration lessons by their subject advisors, for Mrs Mercury, the act of guidance and

support was made of the subject advisor's visit to the classrooms to observe teachers in practice and provide developmental feedback. She explained it in this way:

> *My subject advisor does not end with workshop, she also comes to your school if you feel you need her…. and maybe even go to class with you to see how you present a particular topic to your learners* (Mrs Mercury, Economics teacher at Cosmic High School).

Mr Sun, principal of Cosmic High School, conceded that some subject advisors provide guidance and support though he was not forthcoming on how they achieved this. This is what he said:

> *I must say that some (subject advisors) do justice… though it's not many of them. …. I know of some subject advisors who give us direction and guidance* (Mr Sun, Principal of Cosmic High School).

The views of the participants that subject advisors provided support and guidance were corroborated by the data generated from the documents review of log books. Though for some subjects there was no evidence to suggest that subject advisors had visited to offer either support or guidance or both. On the other hand, there was evidence to suggest that for certain subjects, subject advisors had made more than one visit in one school year. Cases in point were two Accounting subject advisors who had visited the teachers in the first term of the year. For the first visit, the log book entry specified its nature and purpose as providing support and guidance to the teachers and motivating students. This is the log book entry:

> *12/03/13 Mrs X and Mr Y (subject advisors for Accounting) visited the school to give support and guidance and motivate learners* (Log book entry by subject advisor at Planet High School).

However, in the last term of the year, the same subject advisors revisited the teachers concerned. Remarkably, unlike in the visit they conducted in the first term, their second visit in the last term of the year was two-pronged. Not only were they then visiting to provide guidance and support but they were also doing monitoring by using data (in the form of trial examination results) to determine level of students' performance and speculate on their level of readiness for the final examinations. The following excerpt reveals the purpose of their visit:

10/13 Mrs X and Mr Y (subject advisors for Accounting) visited the school to give support and guidance and distribute material for grade 12 Accounting and check on trial results (Log book entry by subject advisor at Planet High School).

As revealed from the preceding citation, the same subject advisors returned in the last term of the year to provide support, guidance, distribute subject material and also check on trial examination results. Inferring from the data, it seems as if some subject advisors would visit teachers at the beginning of the year to give guidance and support. Then, the second visits that normally occur in the third or fourth term appear to be follow- up visits that are aimed at monitoring the state of learners' readiness for final examinations. The above excerpts seem to indicate that some subject advisors made more than one visits to the same schools in a year with a purpose of making follow-up on their initial visits. However, there were also log book entries which indicated that subject advisors had paid one visit to the school in a period of a year. With some subjects, no evidence was found that the subject advisors had visited the schools over the two year period which was demarcated for the study.

Challenges and problems that teachers encounter during the various stages of their careers are well-documented (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009; Kardos & Johnson, 2010, Laigne, Sherratt & Lasagna, 2011). Therefore, teacher supports and guidance are not only essential but mandatory so as to keep and rebuild teacher commitment and to retain good teachers in the teaching profession.

Theoretically, support and guidance are framed within Weber's (1996) fourth domain of observing and improving instruction. Weber states that one of the aspects which inform observing and improving instruction is instructional supervision. In fulfilling instructional supervision, Weber warns that instructional leaders should provide support that is sensitive to contextual factors. From the statements made by the participants, it seemed like some subject advisors partly fulfilled the instructional leadership domain of observing and improving instruction by visiting teachers in schools to provide contextualised guidance and support.

Under this sub-theme, the participants conceded to receiving guidance and support from their subject advisors. From the responses of the participants, it was apparent that the experiences and/ or practices which they considered as being guidance and support were varied. This suggested that subject advisors provided various forms of support and guidance as per the need identified and the context.

4.2.3.2 Maintaining high visibility

The data suggested that some participants attributed high visibility of their subject advisors to being a positive experience which improved their instructional practices. For instance, Mr Sun, the principal of Cosmic High School cited Mathematics as one subject whose performance has been steadily improving over the years and he attributed the improvement to high visibility of the subject advisor concerned. This is how he put it:

> *With Mathematics, to be specific, yes the man seems to be active here. He's always around. If not, he'll be taking teachers to a workshop. As a result, when you study the history of Mathematics in this school, you'll see that the graph seems to be going upwards* (Mr Sun, Principal of Cosmic High School).

Similarly, Miss Venus, the head of department at Planet High School, felt that her subject advisor maintained high visibility. Remarkably, from her explanation, it was evident that Miss Venus did not refer to "visibility" in the literal sense as Mr Sun above. For Miss Venus, visibility of subject advisor transcended physical presence at the school. She provided a description of specific behaviours that were demonstrated by her subject advisor which she personally interpreted as symbols of being visible. This is what she said:

> *She (subject advisor) is visible which I think is proper..... We not only see her at workshops but if you need help you can also call. Even if you don't get her on the phone, she'll respond and when you send her a text message she does respond. So, she's ever ready to help. Obviously, it might not be at the time you want but she is quite alive. You know that you can go to her if you need help* (Miss Venus, HOD for Languages at Planet High School).

However, the data revealed that for some participants, subject advisors did not maintain high visibility. A case in point is Mr Uranus, a level one teacher at Cosmic High School. Mr Uranus said that normally the only times he meets with his subject advisor are at moderation and CASS verification meetings. He explained that other than those two occasions, a special meeting would be called by the subject advisor only when he had detected problems with a particular educator at the moderation meetings. Only then would the cluster meet with the subject advisor, other than for moderation and CASS verification purposes. This is how Mr Uranus explained his subject advisor's visibility:

I meet with my subject advisor when we go for cluster moderation. If he encounters a problem with a certain educator in a certain cluster, say for instance, a problem in terms of the work which is not according to the expected standard. Then he'll call that particular cluster to a special meeting at a venue outside our schools to find out why that particular educator in our cluster is having problems with his work because he expects us to always work together. That's when we see him besides moderation. When things are normal and he's satisfied, he doesn't come to us….We only see him for moderation and CASS verification. He doesn't call us for professional development (Mr Uranus, teacher at Cosmic High School).

Miss Venus, who said that her subject advisor is highly visible, mentioned that she also had knowledge of teachers in her school whose subject advisors were invisible. She said:

For instance, in my school a science teacher was sharing in the staffroom about his Science advisor who disappears and only reappears when he wants CASS marks for moderation. So when they go for moderation he's always worried because they only see this person at that time only and he said his advisor would expect work in the way he wants it done (Miss Venus, HOD for Languages at Planet High School).

Similarly, Mr Moon, the principal of Planet High School concurred that some subject advisors are hardly visible in the school. To this effect he said: "*They must not sit in their offices and come once a year or not come at all.*" The claim that some subject advisors did not maintain high visibility in the school was corroborated by evidence from the log book reviews of both Planet and Cosmic High Schools. Conspicuous by absence of log entries, it was concluded that, for certain subjects, there had been no school visit by subject advisors over the two year period that was demarcated for the study.

The participants' claim that high visibility of their subject advisors as instructional leaders contributed or supported their instructional practice is corroborated by Hoenig and Loeb (2010) who concluded that maintaining high visibility is a crucial element of instructional leadership because it enhances learner performance. Though, the study was on principals' instructional leadership practices, the general finding can be applicable to subject advisors' instructional leadership that their frequent visibility would enhance the participants' learning opportunities.

Under this sub-theme, data revealed that participants understood subject advisors' high visibility as meaning, among other things, providing on-site support during school visits, having regular meetings with subject advisors, being accessible by telephone and text messaging and conducting professional development workshops that speak to their specific needs.

4.2.3.3 Workshops

Some participants mentioned workshops as another strategy that was used by subject advisors to provide instructional support. It was however remarkable that the participants had varied experiences with regards to how their subject advisors conducted workshops. For instance, Mrs Mercury's experience was that her subject advisor elicited from teachers what their professional developments needs were. According to Mrs Mercury, her subject advisor would then use the information provided by the teachers to tailor-make workshops that would address the specific needs that were identified by the teachers themselves. This is how she explained it:

> Our subject advisor likes to know from us what our problematic areas are. If the majority of educators feel that a particular area gives them a problem, that's mainly with newly introduced concepts, then once or twice a term, runs workshops to address the problematic area. These workshops take place after golden hours and they last for about three to four hours. In these workshops, she explains to us and then gives us activities based on the topic. We then engage in group activities and then one educator per group will present their group activity for the rest of the cluster to demonstrate the understanding of the concept and various ways in which it can be presented in the classroom to the actual learners. If there are problems she identifies during presentations, she comes in and provide clarification…So, we do some activities together with her so that she can see how we attack those problematic topics. I think she does this so that it will be easy for her to know how much the educators know and understand and how well they can present that knowledge in the classroom. So overall, we have about seven workshops per year, excluding moderation….My subject advisor does not only end with workshops she also

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comes to your school if you need her (Mrs Mercury, Economics teacher at Cosmic High School).

Similarly, Miss Jupiter mentioned workshops as one professional development approach that was used by her subject advisor to provide support to teachers. Like Mrs Mercury, she revealed that her subject advisor would first establish from teachers which area they needed support on. However, her account of how workshops were presented was different to that of Mrs Mercury. She explained that her subject advisor let other teachers to present the workshops and then group discussions would follow after the presentations. She was however not sure of the criteria that was used by her subject advisor to select the teachers who became workshops facilitators. This is what she said:

> *She organises workshops. She checks with us which areas we actually need assistance with and then the workshop will be on those areas that we feel need to be further explained to us as educators…. In those workshops you find that they are not always run by subject advisors, there are some educators ….different educators who will be running those workshops and then we will have group discussion afterwards* (Miss Jupiter, Economics and Mathematical Literacy teacher at Planet High School).

Mr Saturn, head of department at Planet High School had yet a different account of how workshops were conducted by his subject advisor. Though he viewed workshops as an important strategy for teacher support, he however seemed discontented by the way his subject advisor conducted the workshop. He explained it in this way:

> *You go to workshops expecting to gain knowledge, only to find that you are being called to be handed out material without any explanation. So, workshops sometimes are a matter of going there to get the subject material. Sometimes they have a tendency of reading to us directly from the material or policy documents. I don't find that helpful at all because that's something I can also do by myself* (Mr Saturn, HOD for Mathematics and Sciences at Planet High School).

Current literature (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Taylor, Yates, Meyer & Kinsella, 2011) suggests that there is significant paradigm shift among teachers regarding the traditional workshop approach to professional development. Workshop model to professional development has fallen out of favour because workshops are inherently sporadic and

decontextualised. Teachers are said to be calling for professional development approaches that are not only continuous but that also offer opportunities for meaningful activities which are based on active learning and encourage dialogue and reflection thereby impacting on their classroom instructional practice for improved learner achievement.

Theoretically, Weber (1996) states to ensure effective management of curriculum and instruction, instructional leaders should, among others, keep abreast of recent developments and trends that are relevant to instructional best practices which can enhance classroom practices in the subjects which they are supervising, and let teachers take charge for their professional development. Therefore, it is important for instructional leaders to be aware and open to other models of professional development that might be viable which will promote meaningful and active learning opportunities of best classroom practices for improved learner achievement.

Under this sub-theme, it emerged that the participants had mixed bag of experiences on workshops as a model of professional development. Two of the three participants felt that workshops fulfilled professional development purposes, while one participant felt that workshops were a fruitless activity since the subject advisor read out the policy document without any attempt to interact with it to promote participants' understanding.

4.2.3.4 Monitoring of policy implementation and compliance

Some participants viewed monitoring of both their work and learners' work to ensure that *CAPS* is being properly implemented and that teaching and learning processes are policy compliant as one of the instructional supports that were provided by their subject advisors. However, there were also some who felt that monitoring was over-emphasised at the expense of support.

Mrs Mars, who is head of department at Cosmic High School, was decidedly disheartened that emphasis seemed to be more on monitoring and there was no consideration of contextual factors. This is how she explained her view:

> *They (subject advisors) only focus on seeing that the scope is covered. Actually, in all subjects that I'm in charge of they would only come to check whether work has been covered for that particular term, if the content is not covered they would complain….they seem to ignore contextual factors that*

give rise to the kind of learners that we are teaching (Mrs Mars, Head of Department -Mathematics and Sciences at Cosmic High School).

Sharing Mrs Mars' sentiment was Mr Uranus. Mr Uranus also felt that subject advisors were more focused on ensuring that the policy was implemented properly without considering if teachers were properly developed and capacitated on policy implementation. This is what he said:

Subject advisors focus more on policy implementation without giving us support on the content knowledge and teaching strategies so that we can have a better understanding and breakthroughs where we have challenges. That doesn't help anyone. Only when teachers are properly developed will the quality of teaching and learning improve and that will make subject results to improve as well (Mr Uranus, Accounting teacher at Cosmic High School).

Similarly, Miss Jupiter, a teacher at Planet High School, felt that her subject advisors were more into monitoring paper-trail as evidence that she implemented and complied with the policy properly than on what went on in her classroom. She expressed her concern in this way:

They do come once in a while and check our files whether we've got the records and we have done it but in terms of the learners, I think on that one they are not doing much. They are expecting to see evidence on the files but not on how the teacher has gone to teach what has been workshopped…. In terms of actually monitoring the teaching progress and quality, I think on that one, they are not doing enough to help achieve good results. They only focus only on the teachers and their paperwork …not on the actual teaching and learning. In terms of actually monitoring of teaching and learning of the subject, I think they are lacking there (Miss Jupiter, Economics and Mathematical Literacy teacher at Planet High School)

While the three participants were categorical on their dissatisfaction with more emphasis being placed on monitoring than support, Mr Saturn was the only participant who seemed apathetic about this experience. When asked to explain how his subject advisor executed this task during school visits, he then said:

It's a matter of checking learners' portfolios, checking whether the teacher is line with the PoAs, and also indicate where there are some shortcomings in terms of content coverage, like for instance to say " You're supposed to have done this and that , now you're a bit behind." That's about it, really (Mr Saturn, HOD for Mathematics and Sciences at Planet High School).

Spaull (2013) and McKinney in Smith (2011) support the participants' view that the present manner in which monitoring is being conducted by district officials does not focus on helping and supporting teachers to improve their instructional practice. They argue that, currently, monitoring emulates bureaucratic accountability which was mostly focused on ensuring policy compliance. Thus, there is a glaring need for district officials in South Africa, with special reference to subject advisors, to be provided with expert training so that they could be in a place to fulfil their curriculum support and monitoring functions effectively (Spaull, 2013; McKinney in Smith 2011).

Theoretically, according to Weber's (1996) model of instructional leadership, monitoring of policy compliance speaks to the fifth domain of assessing instructional programs. According to Weber, assessment of instructional programs is central in improving instructional program for it enables the instructional leader to use means of evaluating if the teaching and learning is effective or ineffective. Through monitoring and appraisal of instructional programs, teachers get to understand where their learners' instructional leaders are and then they can design appropriate remedial programs. In this sense, monitoring is important and central in instructional leadership because it ensures and promotes enhanced curriculum delivery and instructional improvement for increased learner achievement.

Under this theme, participants commented that another role that was fulfilled by subject advisors is monitoring policy compliance. While the participants generally agreed that monitoring of policy compliance was essential process, some however felt that there was a disparity between support of policy implementation and monitoring of policy compliance with more emphasis being placed on monitoring of policy compliance.

4.2.3.5 "Ignore-therapy"

Data revealed that some participants felt that their subject advisors gave lesser or no attention to them compared to teachers from other schools. Mrs Mars lamented that her subject advisor favoured urban schools over rural schools. Her view was that her subject advisor avoided to engage with bread-and-butter issues of rural schools and thus preferred to deal with urban

schools which, comparatively speaking, perform much better. Mrs Mars expressed her views like this:

> *I have always seen that (the different treatment) when we do moderations. You can clearly see that their focus is on those (urban) schools, I'd say they give us some form of ignore-therapy because we're actually battling with our learners who are rural second language speakers of English. They don't attend to us much. That is my feeling. For me, they should be advising us on methods that would help us to achieve the intended goal but they are actually not doing it* (Mrs Mars, head of department at Cosmic High School).

Like Mr Mars, Mr Uranus also felt that he was being ignored by his subject advisor. When asked if he had spoken to his subject advisor about requesting more attention, Mr Uranus explained that once he requested his subject advisor to go to the classroom with him but he was turned down. He said that his subject advisor claimed that time constraints did not permit for such. Mr Uranus was however adamant that the real reason behind was avoidance of his situation. He said:

> *I once asked my advisor (to go to the classroom with me) but he always says that he doesn't have time because he has move on to visit other schools. I don't believe that it's because of lack of time. He doesn't want to go to the classroom. He's just running away from seeing the actual (learner) material that I' working with because he wants to make a report that's based on his perception about what is supposed to be happening in my classroom. He's avoiding to see what is actually happening in my classroom* (Mr Uranus, teacher at Cosmic High School)   .

Interestingly, unlike Mrs Mars and Mr Uranus who perceived their subject advisors' lack of attention as associated to her school's remote geographic location and problems associated with that, Mrs Mercury had a different view on why she felt ignored. During the conversation held with Mrs Mercury, it emerged that she attains 100% pass every year in her subject, is a cluster coordinator and has good relations with her subject advisor. Her view was then that she was perceived by her subject advisor as being able to hold her own and was thus denied attention. She felt aggrieved by the lack of attention and she thought it was unfair. This is how she lamented her perceived discrimination:

Yes, we may perform differently but we must get equal attention. I know that my subject advisor prioritises visiting teachers that are not achieving well and then deliberately chooses not to visit those teachers that obtain 100%.....Even though I'm achieving 100%, I still need support too. Achieving 100% pass doesn't mean that I'm 100% in all aspects. Why should other teachers be visited thrice a year when others are not? I also need to be visited even just once a year because there are many schools and subject advisors are few
(Mrs Mercury, teacher at Cosmic High School)

Documents review of *NDP: Vision 2030* (2011) seems to refute Mrs Mercury's concern that she should be provided equal attention as other teachers. On improving the management of the education system, a specific recommendation is made that, "the general rule of thumb is that interventions, both supportive and corrective, need to be inversely proportional to school performance." (p.29). In the light of the understanding that Mrs Mercury's subject performance is 100%, it would therefore appear that her subject advisor is well-advised to focus on other schools that are not performing as expected.

According to Zepeda and Mayers (2004), relationships between and among people (at all levels) are crucial aspects in building and maintaining learning communities at schools. Elkjaer (1999) as cited in Zepeda and Mayers (2004) advises that work encounters between supervisors and teachers are very important because it is during those encounters that teachers' beliefs and attitudes are constructed and reconstructed. Thus, during social encounters supervisors should intentionally endeavour to create atmosphere that promotes collegiality and openness and is free of punitive overtures. Zepeda and Mayers (2004) further note that supervisors should aim to build positive relationships for it is through relationships that teachers will feel that they are being supported as they navigate the many challenges they encounter in doing their work. More relevant to the points made by the participants is that relationships push away the frontiers of separation and isolation that often characterise the nature of the teaching profession.

Theoretically, Weber's (1996) first domain of instructional leadership is the creation of positive learning environment. According to Weber, the learning environment is not only created physically but sometimes it is also conveyed and transmitted in indirect ways that are sometimes abstract. Among these abstract ways is collegiality. Collegial relations are formed or ruined through verbal and non-verbal communication. It is therefore important that

instructional leaders should be aware that through their non-verbal behaviour, subtle and indirect messages are decoded by teachers.

Under this sub-theme, the participants said that they felt that their subject advisors were ignoring them or were not giving them as much attention as was given to other teachers. The participants seemed to be dissatisfied by the lack of attention from their subject advisors.

4.2.3.6 "Mellow-yellow" means misery

The data revealed that some participants felt that visits by subject advisors were dreadful experience. When asked to comment on the quality of support that they receive from subject advisors, Mrs Mars explained that though she personally has not had a negative personal experience with her subject advisor, she mentioned that she was however aware that some of the teachers in her department do not cherish visits by their subject advisors. She further revealed that it is a norm for teachers in her school to alert one another if a "mellow-yellow" as they dubbed it in her school, was sighted approaching or arriving at the school. "Mellow yellow" refers to the yellowish cars that are often used by departmental officials. During the state of emergency in the mid- 1980's, "mellow-yellow" was a township reference to the police armoured vehicle which was dreaded because it was associated with police brutality. Mrs Mars also mentioned that subject advisors often visited the school frequently when their subjects did not perform well. Asked how she experienced school visits by subject advisors, Mrs Mars explained her view like this:

> *That is great stress. We know that when the mellow-yellow comes then we are in trouble. We usually call it the mellow yellow. That's when you seem to see subject advisors coming frequently. They'd require this and that and you so wish that the year would end quickly. So, I always try to exceed the 60% benchmark which is the requirement for grade 12 so as to avoid them…. They only look at mistakes made by teachers. There's not much support really* (Mrs Mars, HOD for Mathematics and Sciences at Cosmic High School).

Mr Uranus, like Mrs Mars, felt that visits by subject advisors are a source of stress to him. His view was that his subject advisor does not provide support but he focuses more on finding faults. Describing his feeling on the day of a visit by his subject advisor, Mr Uranus said this:

I always see my advisor as someone who comes to visit me to find mistakes. If he happens to come on that particular day, he comes to capitalise on the mistakes he finds… he really doesn't care how the content is imparted to learners and how my knowledge is of the content, and how the learners learn, if they know and understand. So it is not enjoyable to be visited by the advisor because I know for sure that he's here to find faults and criticise instead of giving me the support in relation to the subject so that I improve the performance….. That day you feel like you should not have been at school at all because you know exactly what is going to happen. It feels like it is an enemy who's hunting for that me has come to find me at school. Even other teachers feel sorry for me. As far as I'm concerned, advisors are very stressful when they come to school….they bring hard time when they come to school
(Mr Uranus, Accounting teacher at Cosmic High School)

While the above quotations reveal that some participants had acrimonious communications with their subject advisors, some participants explained that their experiences of support rendered by subject advisors were positive. They however offered that they had personally witnessed other teachers' subjected to unfavourable treatments by their subject advisors. For instance, Mrs Mercury stated that she had not personally experienced hostility from her subject advisor. In fact, she had nothing but praises for her subject advisor. She however added that she was aware of some teachers who had suffered distress at the hands of their subject advisors. This is what she said:

My subject advisor is very good, in fact she's brilliant…….. She's not harsh, maybe that's why we like her. When you ask questions she explains politely and you become satisfied. She's not a harsh person at all…..but there are educators who don't like to attend moderations…because their advisors are so difficult, so they say. If they happen to find a mistake, you suffer the consequences, but if my subject advisor finds something she's not happy about, she politely but firmly shares her concern and she will give you time to explain why you awarded such a mark for an essay or response against the memorandum. Then maybe you come to a compromise mark. But I know some subject advisors who are so harsh….. I know of one subject advisor who found that the educator had made some mistake with CASS calculation…He shouted and embarrassed the educator in public… Oh! That particular subject

advisor? He just screamed like he wanted everyone to hear, "WHY DID YOU DO THIS? YOU'RE AN OLD EDUCATOR….WHY DID YOU ADD LIKE THIS?"(participant shouting to simulate state of anger) (Mrs Mercury, Economics teacher at Cosmic High School).

Similarly, Mr Neptune, head of department at Cosmic High School, conceded that some subject advisors are supportive but he also stated that he was aware of teachers who had registered complaints to the school management team against their subject advisors.   He explained as follows:

We've had instances where educators complained, that at times, their subject advisors undermine them. One teacher claimed that his subject advisor called him incompetent. That's very bad. Complaints of that nature were forwarded to the principal. The principal said he'll see what he can do about it because really it is very demoralising when someone calls you incompetent (Mr Neptune, HOD for Languages at Cosmic High School).

Mr Sun, the principal of Cosmic High School, also affirmed that he had knowledge that some subject advisors did not treat teachers well. This is what he said:

It's a pity that we have such cases. You see, sometimes the manner in which the superior treats the subordinate is not actually something that should be happening in any workplace. It's just not necessary (Mr Sun, Principal of Cosmic High School)

From the data analysis of interview transcripts, it emerged that seven of the ten participants regarded school visits by subject advisors as unhelpful, punitive and distressing. The other three participants were, however, appreciative of the same experience as they found it rewarding in terms of their professional developmental needs and support. This finding seems to support (Knapp, Honig, Plecki & Portin, 2010; Sharma, Yusoff & Kannan, 2011; Lumadi, 2012; Wanzare, 2012) that teachers' experiences of instructional supervision are usually characterised by distressing encounters wherein they are stereotyped, harassed and manipulated and made to feel powerless. Such experiences often result in teachers' loss of self-confidence, independence and they tend to heighten teachers' defensive posture (Knapp *et al*., 2010). Effective supervision is characterised by emergence of learning opportunities. For learning to occur, teachers need to know and trust that feedback from the supervision process is beneficial and objective (Zepeda & Meyers, 2004).

Theoretically, one of Weber (1996) domains of instructional leadership is promoting a positive learning climate. According to Weber, successful teaching and learning can only occur in a positive learning environment. Therefore, it is important for instructional leaders to create and maintain a learning environment that is characterised by clearly articulated standards for all stakeholders yet is non-threatening, disciplined, collegial and safe for all. Weber warns that change in any of these aspects cause a ripple effect on the social climate. Therefore, instructional leaders have to make intentional efforts to create and sustain an environment that promotes a positive learning and teaching social climate. Expression of stress and worry was characterised as being indicative of negative learning environment which was created by some subject advisors.

Under this sub-theme, the participants' shared that they had personally experienced or witnessed colleagues having a negative and stressful encounter with subject advisors. Some participants indicated that such experiences adversely affected the creation of a learning space and trust.

4.2.3.7 Judgemental attitude

Findings from some of the participants seemed to express the feeling that their subject advisors were judgemental when teachers truthfully shared their instructional challenges and opinions. So, to avoid the risk of being judged negatively, some teachers tended to exercise caution when communicating with their respective subject advisors. Fear of being judged negatively affects the form of communication that prevails between teachers and subject advisors. Miss Jupiter, Mr Earth and Mr Uranus are cases in point. Though the three participants shared a similar feeling of being judged by their subject advisors, the circumstances under which they experienced being judged were different.

For instance, Mr Earth shared that his experience of being judged came about after he had conducted an internet search on how to conduct a particular experiment. He said that he decided to share some of the suggestions with his subject advisor who made him look stupid. Mr Earth is adamant that it was the subject advisor who was ill-advised on the discussion that was at hand. This is how he explained the situation:

> *I went to the internet and googled how this particular experiment can be conducted. I then suggested how it could be done. I just assumed that now we all have access to the internet and we are all open to the world. That was until I talked to my subject advisor about how that experiment could be done. He couldn't be open and admit*

that he was unaware of what I was talking about. Instead, he doubted suggestions which were based on knowledge that is universally accepted. That was bad. Personally, I felt he is judging instead of advising. I don't have confidence in him (Mr Earth, Physical Sciences teacher at Planet High School)

Likewise, Miss Jupiter stated that some subject advisors are judgemental. Miss Jupiter said she felt that talking openly to her subject advisor about her challenges carried the risk of being judged as lacking competency. She explained that to avoid being judged negatively, she consciously chose not to share all her instructional challenges and concerns with her subject advisors. The following comment reveals her thoughts:

Some (subject) advisors want to maintain that distance and so you'll find that you also maintain that formal communication. In that case, you can't actually tell everything to them. It's not easy to tell everything because sometimes they will judge you. For sure, I don't want to be judged as an empty-head, so I cannot tell them every challenge I come across (Miss Jupiter, Economics and Mathematical Literacy teacher at Planet High School).

In the same way, Mr Uranus, a level one teacher at Cosmic High School had the opinion that his subject advisor's school visits were mainly about judging what wrong he (Mr Uranus) had done. Asked if he found school visits by his subject advisor beneficial to his professional development needs, Mr Uranus said:

No, I don't benefit from those (school visits) because on top of the so-called discussion is just criticism ...and not about what is actually happening in teaching and learning in the classrooms (Mr Uranus, Accounting teacher at Cosmic High School).

Literature (Goldstein, 2010; Sharma, Yusoff, Kannan & Baba, 2011) seems to affirm the participants' experiences that teachers' encounters with their supervisors are not problem-focused or concern-focused (Dorasamy, 2005) but they are often characterised by evaluative judgements which are based on minimal evidence and/or information (Goldstein, 2010). Teachers, in turn, tend to have a defensive posture. Strained teacher-supervisor professional relationships sabotage effectiveness of professional development efforts (Fullan, 2010).

Theoretically, Weber's (1996) second domain of managing curriculum and instruction suggests that instructional leaders should be willing to learn from teachers. Willingness and

openness to learn from teachers is important because it is highly improbable that instructional leaders can have complete knowledge and understanding of every aspect of the curricular areas and teachers' instructional concerns. Weber further notes that instructional leaders need to listen with patience to teachers so that they can learn from teachers' experiences. As observed in this study, unwillingness to learn from teachers result in instructional leaders hastily making judgements or having unrealistic expectations of teachers.

Under this sub-theme, the participants expressed ambivalence towards freely discussing ideas and concerns with their subject advisors. They felt openness carried the risk of being judged as lacking competency and thus they preferred to withhold certain information from their subject advisors. Therefore, the participants' interactions with their subject advisors appeared to be mainly superficial, guarded and mistrustful.

4.2.4 How subject advisors involve or collaborate with others to support teaching and learning.

There were two sub-themes which emerged under this theme. These sub-themes were subject clusters and lead teachers and they are discussed below.

4.2.4.1 Subject clusters

Most participants agreed that clustering is one of the main strategies that were used by subject advisors to enhance professional development. Mr Uranus explained how his cluster operated:

> *My subject advisor uses the circuit and wards as per departmental demarcations to form clusters so that from time to time we meet as a cluster. Once in a while he does visit the cluster. So when he visits the cluster it's because there is a problem. Sometimes the cluster visit will be because he has seen that things are not moving correctly, then he'll come…not to give support in the normal sense …. But to do an audit to try and maintain his standards and expectations. So, he encourages us to work together by meeting from time to time without his supervision* (Mr Uranus, Accounting teacher at Cosmic High School).

Mrs Mercury also stated that one of the ways her subject advisor involved others to manage teaching and learning was by clustering. Being a cluster coordinator, Mrs Mercury provided

greater insight into how her subject advisor involved her to manage teaching and learning and to promote collaborative learning among teachers of the subject. This is how she explained it:

> *We are a group of ten educators… I am the cluster coordinator so I choose the date of the meeting with the cluster, and we normally meet after 15H00. As a cluster coordinator, I must take minutes to be submitted to the subject advisor as evidence of what the cluster did during the meeting…. I also check the work they have (cluster members) done in class during that particular term, I also check their PoA's (Programmes of Assessment), their management plans which outline what we are supposed to be doing daily, from Monday to Friday, each teacher's expectations in terms of his/her learners' performance. I also check if the mark grid is completely filled in with records for marks of controlled tests and projects for that particular term and that marks are accurately calculated. Even how teachers mark the essays, projects and tests is moderated by the cluster coordinator. I also check if the necessary people have signed the CASS mark grid, that is, the teacher, HoD, the principal, myself as cluster coordinator and then finally it must be signed by the subject advisor….. So, when we go to the subject advisor during the final moderation, if there's any mistake, the subject advisor expects me to account for any irregularity as the cluster coordinator. In fact, when the subject advisor comes to check at final moderation, she expects that everything must be correct and accurate* (Mrs Mercury, Economics teacher at Cosmic High School).

Similarly, Mr Neptune mentioned clustering as one way by which his subject advisor managed teaching and learning. Interestingly though, unlike Mr Uranus and Mrs Mercury whose descriptions of how their clusters functioned were suggestive of being meetings for fulfilling administrative duties, Mr Neptune's account of how he worked with his cluster members suggested that their cluster was for a platform for professional learning. This is how he described it:

> *Yes, they (subject advisors) encourage us to form clusters to network in case there is something that is a problem then we may refer to one another. They (subject advisors) say that maybe if you refer to a teacher from another school, that teacher may come to your rescue. Clustering is very, very important….. We discuss topics that we have to tackle and problems some of*

the teachers in the cluster are experiencing and we share ideas on how we can help each other to sort those problems. For cluster moderation we meet once after two months. In most cases, we meet when we prepare for the moderation that is called by the advisor……When we are in those meetings you could see that there are many challenges teachers are facing but time is limited. As a resulted, we've decided to meet over the weekends so that we could have ample time to discuss our issues that arise as we work in our different schools (Mr Neptune, HOD for Languages at Cosmic High School).

Clustering or networking is a fairly new professional development approach that is being popularly received among teachers (Leu, 2004). For instance, Starkey, Yates, Meyer, Hall, Taylor, Stevens and Toia (2009) concluded that 15 of the 28 schools in their study on professional development designs that would help teachers enact educational reforms chose and made clustering or networking as their most preferred form of subject-based professional development. Clustering is usually driven a teacher driven process with the support of the relevant authorities.

Theoretically, clustering or networking speaks to Spillane, Halverson & Diamond's (2001) third idea of social distribution of task enactment. They postulate that leadership tasks should not be centralised. Rather, formal leaders, such as subject advisors, should distribute leadership tasks by actively involving others who have been identified as possessing particular skills or expertise for particular leadership tasks. So, by identifying cluster coordinators to lead and manage clusters, the subject advisors can be said to use Spillane *et al.*'s (2001) idea of social distribution of task enactment.

Under this theme, the participants revealed that they participate in subject clusters. True to the character of clusters, all participants conceded that their subject clusters were teacher-driven but it appeared that the clusters were mainly used for administration procedures such as moderation of formal assessment tasks. However, the participants indicated that clusters had a potential of being a platform for sharing instructional concerns and learning from each other.

4.2.4.2 Lead teachers

Some participants mentioned winter and spring schools for grade 12 which are commonly known as matric intervention programme (MIP) as one of the experiences wherein their subject advisors involved or collaborated with others to support and manage teaching and

learning. Strictly speaking, winter and spring schools MIPs are run by the district office. However, the participants mentioned that subject advisors play a pivotal role in the selection, training and placement of lead teachers in MIP centres. Describing the role that is played by her subject advisor in the selection, training and placement of lead teachers for winter and spring schools MIP Mrs Mercury said:

> *The subject advisor chooses among us, maybe thirty of us. She chooses teachers who understand the subject better. Then she calls those identified teachers to a special workshop on a weekend just to prepare them so that they can go impart knowledge to other schools during the winter school. These teachers become lead teachers…….. In that workshop, she also chooses for you the centre where you will teach (during winter school). She targets the schools of educators who didn't get 100% in Economics. She'll tell you that you need to go and teach to uplift those learners maybe to get closer to 100% because her target is 100% pass for Economics* (Mrs Mercury, Economics teacher at Cosmic High School).

Explaining how his subject advisor involved or collaborated with others, Mr Saturn who was selected as a lead educator said this:

> *Let me take an example of the winter intervention programme. We are called to a workshop wherein we are given booklets for revision. There is a document for the lead educator and another for learners. Then we are given a pace setter according to session 1 and session 2 which you are supposed to cover during that particular programme. Like for instance in my case, I have session 1 which has five topics that I have to cover within a period of five days…..I should think that they are trying to standardise the level of understanding of the subject because all the content taught in the various centres is the same……Other subjects also have lead educators from other schools…..I think through MIP we learn a lot and I'd say learners benefit a lot* (Mr Saturn, HOD for Mathematics and Sciences at Planet High School).

In addition, Miss Venus mentioned three ways by which her subject advisor collaborated or involved others in supporting and managing teaching and learning. According to Miss Venus, her subject advisor involved teachers in moderation of orals, teaching in winter and spring

matric intervention programmes and setting of district common papers. This is how she explained it:

> *I think my subject advisor knows that she can't be everywhere every time. So, she makes clever use of those teachers that she trusts. For example, when we do moderation for our orals, she doesn't go to all the clusters. She picks some of the teachers she believes will help her do her task very well and she delegates them to moderate on her behalf. Mostly, the teachers she chooses to be moderators are cluster coordinators. So, even if she's not physically there, her work is done. Secondly, right now, we are also having a winter school programme which is on as we speak. She picked certain teachers to go and help in certain schools and she tried not to take a teacher to his or her own school so that learners can see a new face and listen to a new voice. So, she obviously uses and trusts other people to give support and help in the teaching and learning of the subject. Thirdly, since last year, she picks a group of teachers to get together and set paper two to be written by our learners in our district. I believe that is involving others, especially those who've been in the profession for quite some time and have good knowledge of the subject. She believes that there are others under her supervision that are very good teachers and she makes use of those through delegation* (Miss Venus, HOD for Languages at Cosmic High School).

Miss Venus was the only participant who mentioned that her subject advisor involved other teachers in conducting subject workshops. Interestingly, Miss Jupiter ascribed her subject advisor's involvement of other teachers to lack of competency in the subject. This is how she explained it:

> *I think the subject advisor is doing all she can to make sure that we understand the subject. She provides help through workshops, even though the subject advisor is not that good in the subject but she organises other people that can help us. ...So, sometimes the workshops are not run by the subject advisor but some educators will be used instead and thereafter we'll have group discussions. I'm not really sure how those educators are chosen but I think they check their experience and the results that they are producing* (Miss Jupiter, Economics and Mathematical Literacy teacher at Planet High School).

According to Taylor, Yates, Meyer and Kinsella (2011), teacher leadership is a world-wide growing initiative to professional development. They further differentiate on the processes that are involved in appointment of teacher leaders. From the explanations provided by the participants, it can be concluded that the teacher leaders whom the participants referred to in this study were informally appointed by subject advisors and that they did not have any formal certification. Furthermore, the participants did not provide any information to suggest that teacher leaders had marked professional growth which emanated from the teacher leadership experience nor did they mention that it contributed to their professional development. On the other hand, Taylor *et al.*, (2011) found that teacher leaders who were formally appointed and had received formal one year university training to develop other teachers on internal assessment tasks design and moderation reported that the training, among other things, built their individual professional development capacity, provided opportunities for new learning, enhanced their capacities to lead professional development and to respond to individual teachers' professional development needs and national reform priorities.

Theoretically, teacher leadership as practiced in the manner that was described by the participants can be said to fall within the ambit of Spillane *et al.*'s (2001) third idea of social distribution of task enactment. According to Spillane *et al.*, social distribution of task enactment means that the positional or formal leader, being the subject advisor in this case, does not assume to be the only leader within the organisation. Rather he/she recognises and uses others with particular skills and expertise as and when the needs arise. Thus leadership is centred on successful enactment of tasks at hand than on positional or formal titles.

Under this sub-theme, it emerged that informal teacher leadership was a professional development approach that was used by subject advisors to distribute instructional leadership. However, the participants did not provide information to suggest that their teacher leaders influenced their professional development nor did the lead teachers admit to having enhanced their own professional development as a result of being lead teachers. It can therefore be said that the participants were more inclined to recognise or being influenced by positional or formal leaders than informally appointed teacher leaders.

4.2.5 Participants' views on how else subject advisors should render instructional supports

Under this theme, three views emerged. The first was that subject advisors should work more closely with schools. The second was that subject advisors should be articulate in the subjects

that they are supervising. Lastly, some participants were of the opinion that it is crucial that subject advisors should understand the social dynamics of the learners' background. These three dominant views were used to form sub-themes for this theme which are discussed below.

4.2.5.1 Subject advisors should work closely with schools

When asked how else they wish their subject advisors could provide instructional support, the majority of the participants were of the view that they would like to see subject advisors frequently visiting their schools. The following excerpt reveals the thoughts of one of the participants on this issue:

> *Subject advisors shouldn't work far from schools because at the end of the day they are subject advisors and subjects are taught in school classrooms. As a subject advisor when you get a call in the middle of the night and you are asked about a school you are overseeing, you need to be able to give an account of what is happening at school so-and-so, I believe with some subject advisors it's not so* (Miss Venus, HOD for Languages at Planet High School).

Similarly, Mr Moon's comment seemed to suggest that subject advisors were not spending a better time of their working hours in schools. In fact, Mr Moon sounded as if he was convinced that subject advisor appeared to prefer spending more time in the district office than being in the field. The following citation reveals his view:

> *Subject advisors should always be here .....they must not sit in their offices and come once a year or not come at all..... they must have a plan to monitor teachers' work, at least once a month* (Mr Moon, principal of Planet High School).   .

Like Miss Venus and Mr Moon, Mrs Mars also felt that subject advisors would better render support if they would be more in touch with teachers. This is how she expressed her view:

> *Ideally, subject advisors should be there to work closely with us as teachers from the onset, that is, from the beginning of the year (but) that doesn't happen* (Mrs Mars, HOD for Mathematics and Sciences at Cosmic High School).

In the same way, Mr Saturn believed that subject advisors were distant from schools which they supervise. He expressed his opinion in this way:

> *To be honest with you, things would be much better if we had subject advisors being more available and working closely to the schools…. A subject advisor of a subject that has (performance) challenges in my department once came here, and he promised to pay a visit on a monthly basis, he hasn't come back since then. What good is a promise if it is not followed by actions?* (Mr Saturn, HOD for Mathematics and Sciences at Planet High School).

Mr Neptune, Head of Department at Cosmic High School, was also of the view that subject advisors were conspicuous by their distant presence at his school. He expressed his wish by saying "*I'd like to see them coming to our school on a regular basis….* Likewise, Mr Uranus commented that he wished for his subject advisor to visit him at school regularly. He said:

> *I wish my subject advisor could… do school visits regularly so that he can be able to do classroom visits, only then can he be able to understand what is actually happening in the classrooms and the type of learner material we have on that particular year. In that way he can be able to give appropriate and relevant support for that particular situation* (Mr Uranus, Accounting teacher at Cosmic High School).

Miss Jupiter also wished for regular visits from her subject advisors. She believed that frequent visits would enable subject advisors to understand her classroom context better so that focused support could be received. This is how she explained her sentiment:

> *I wish they (subject advisors) could visit us more often at schools and interact more with learners, not only on our request as teachers. I wish they could go to them (learners) so that they know exactly what we're experiencing because sometimes when you explain the problems you have, the subject advisor doesn't seem to understand what you're talking about. So, if they can go there (classroom), then they will experience what we're going through and then it'll be easy for them to help us* (Miss Jupiter, Economics and Mathematical Literacy teacher at Planet High School).

Literature suggests that professional development research of the past twenty years found that it conclusively suggests that teachers are rejecting the traditional one-size-fits-all workshop

model of professional development as ineffective. There is marked preference for professional development opportunities whose content caters to individual needs, expertise and experience. Teachers believe that such professional development models enhance their classroom instruction and learner achievement (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Taylor, Yates, Meyer, & Kinsella, 2011).

Theoretically, the participants' views that subject advisors should work closely with schools addresses itself to the idea of leadership tasks and functions as expressed by Spillane, Halverson and Diamond (2001) in their theory of distributed leadership. Deducing from the above excerpts, it appeared as if the participants did not have a clear understanding on and satisfaction of how subject advisors organise their instructional leadership practice. According to Spillane *et al.,* (2001), instructional leaders organise their leadership practice on macro-functions and micro-tasks. Micro-tasks are tasks that are performed on daily basis for the functioning of the organisation. Micro-tasks are customarily informed, linked and shaped by the macro-functions of the organisation. In educational organisations, examples of macro-functions are building vision, trust, and collaboration, supporting teacher professional development, monitoring instruction and innovation. By inferring from what the participants said, it can be surmised that these participants lacked some understanding of what the other day-to-day instructional leadership practices (micro-tasks) of their subject advisors were and how those unknown micro-tasks were organised. Participants' lack of understanding on what subject advisors' micro tasks were invariably means that they also lacked understanding of subject advisors' macro-functions were. This obvious disparity does not auger well for effective practice of distributed leadership.

Under this sub-theme, seven of the ten participants felt that their subject advisors were not touching base as often as the participants would prefer. They expressed a wish for their subject advisors to pay regular visits to their schools for them to know and understand learners' background so that they provide tailor-made support, be more hands-on in helping teachers deal with instructional challenges and by demonstrating how hard-to-teach topics can be easily presented to learners. The participants seemed to have a yearning for individualised professional development approach which they believe can make a difference in their individual classroom practice so that learner achievement is improved.

4.2.5.2 Subject advisors should be appointed on the strength of subject competency

On how else they wished their subject advisors could offer instructional support, other participants expressed the view that it is of utmost importance for subject advisors to possess a good command of their subjects. Good command of the subject, they explain, puts subject advisors in a position to develop teachers who are under their instructional supervision. One such participant was Mr Earth who then said:

I expect my subject advisor to have deep knowledge of the subject he's leading. Only then can he be able to bring light to us who are under his supervision (Mr Earth, teacher at Planet High School).

Similarly, Mr Sun enunciated that it is imperative for subject advisors to be articulate in their subjects. His view was that lack of subject competency among some subject advisors was sabotaging instructional improvement efforts. The following quotation reveals his thought on this issue:

If our department were to check that the applicant has gone to a level of Honours at least, then he/she can supervise properly because at that level, we can say the individual is well versed in the subject. But what you find is that when you check qualification records of some of our advisors, with due respect, they have only course one of university study in the subject they are supervising. Then the question becomes: How is this person expected to supervise some teachers with Honours and Master's Degrees in the same subject? You see, I've been a principal here for ten years now but that doesn't make me any subject guru. But if I were to go and do some dirty work, I could easily find myself being a subject advisor, irrespective of the fact that I'm not a subject guru, but just by having covert relations with the powers that be. We have such cases. As a result, such subject advisors affect the whole quality of support that is supposed to be provided to teachers under that advisor's supervision (Mr Sun, Principal of Cosmic High School).

Mrs Mercury seemed to concur with Mr Sun. She was of the view for instructional improvement to manifest, due consideration should be paid in the appointment process of subject advisors. This is how she described her thought about her particular subject advisor:

I should think the method that was used for appointment leaves a lot to be desired. I think for a person to be a subject advisor they should look at the performance of that person while he or she was still classroom- based .... But

now we've got these political interferences. So the appointment of advisors is not fair. That's why we're sitting with such problems whereby they just come with an attitude and sometimes it would be a form of not wanting teachers to question them on certain issues pertaining to the subject so that teachers will fear the subject advisor because the subject advisor is not confident at all in the subject he's supposed to supervise (Mrs Mars, HOD for Mathematics and Sciences at Cosmic High School).

Literature supports the participants' claims that school leaders who were politically appointed tended to cause conflict and tension among their subordinates which invariably negatively affected learner performance (Lumadi, 2012; Zengele, 2013). On the other hand, research suggests that there is a positive correlation between high quality instructional leadership and positive learner performance (Hornig & Loeb, 2010; Mawdsley, Bipath & Mawdsley, 2012; Naicker, Chikoko & Mthiyane, 2013). Furthermore, Gunter (2001) also makes an observation which supports the participants' views that previously demonstrated leadership capabilities and /or training and preparation are vital processes. He argues that appointment to a particular post that has special job descriptions does not spontaneously transform the appointee into a leader nor does it confirm that the appointee has a capacity to lead. Therefore, the participants' view, that for teachers to benefit from subject advisory services, incumbents to positions of subject advisors should be appointed solely on the basis of their demonstrated competency in the subject, seems proper and justified.

Similarly, the second domain of Weber's (1996) model of instructional leadership seems to affirm the participants' views. According to Weber, instructional leaders can only successfully manage curriculum and instruction if they have, at the minimum, working knowledge of the subjects they are in charge of, understanding of the basic principles of learning, and being life-long learners. In politically motivated appointments, often these characteristics are absent which then results in decline on learner achievement and tension among subordinates.

Under this sub-theme, the participants expressed the views that subject advisors should demonstrate competency in the subjects which they lead. To ensure that subject are competent, the participants believed that competency can be ascertained when subject advisors were appointed on their previously demonstrated instructional capabilities than on being politically deployed.

4.2.5.3 Subject advisors should have a first-hand understanding of schools' contextual factors

Some participants believed that it is important for subject advisors to understand the social factors that prevail in the community in which their schools were located as well as the social background of the learners in the particular schools they supervise. These participants believed that if subject advisors should have this understanding because it invariably impacts on teaching and learning. These participants believed that only through this understanding would subject advisors be in a position to provide contextualised support.   One of these participants was Miss Venus who expressed her view in this way:

> *Sometimes it's not necessarily because the teacher is struggling (with the subject content) but the struggle is sometimes with the learners and the environment where they come from…. So they (subject advisors) should be there on the ground so that they know what is happening. They should even go to the extent of knowing the problems that these learners have… their lives, the baggage they have…. Some head homes, some are sick. They take all this to the classroom. So, while advisors must give advice on the subject, it's equally important to understand the learners who learn the subject you are supervising so that you remain grounded and relevant in your advice* (Miss Venus, HOD for Languages at Planet High School).

Mrs Mars also expressed the view that subject advisors seem detached from the reality of the social undercurrents in the community where she is teaching. She commented in this way:

> *They (subject advisors) would seem to ignore the kind of learners that we are teaching because in my school we have learners with mixed-mental capabilities. So, there are those when you assess, you find that they actually belong to LSEN schools. But we accommodate such learners because they have nowhere else to go. We are in a deep rural area and most learners we teach are from child-headed home or from homes where no one is working…Our school is where they can come for their education…at the end of the day we have to make all these learners pass. They expect us to give results which would be almost similar to schools that have a privilege of screening when they do admissions* (Mrs Mars, HOD for Mathematics and Sciences at Cosmic High School).

Similarly, Mr Earth felt that subject advisors' understanding of learners' background and their community dynamics is imperative. He said:

> *They (subject advisors) need to have an understanding of the area in which the school is located as well as the kind of learners the teacher is dealing with* (Mr Earth, Physical Sciences teacher at Planet High School).

Concurring with Mr Earth's view was Mr Sun who is the principal of Cosmic High School. Mr Sun was of the view that the random visits by subject advisors did not help to support teachers very much as these were not responsive to specific problems that teachers had. This is how he explained his thought:

> *What is presently happening is that a subject advisor would come to the school without actually understanding what kind of problem the teacher or the school itself needs assistance with. So, the subject advisor will just come and walk around without being of any real assistance because he/she doesn't know what the teacher's concerns are. Mine therefore would be to say, if we could have a situation where we could be able to say to subject advisors, "We have **THIS** (participant emphasis) problem at Cosmic High School, please come and assist on this particular problem. Not just to come for random visits as they do. Actually, their random visits disturb the school teaching and learning programme because mostly they will arrive when the teacher is in the classroom and they will seem to want to make immediate contact with the teacher which is really disruptive* (Mr Sun, Principal of Cosmic High School).

The review of documents did not yield any information to suggest that subject advisors engaged with teachers on contextual background of the learners. It appeared that for most part, support was not contextualised and the visits were random and unannounced, which gives an indication that teachers were not afforded the opportunity to prepare in advance issues they might want to discuss with subject advisors. So, it can be said that subject advisors' visits and supports were largely unresponsive to context-specific challenges and concerns.

In relation to this sub-theme, participants seem to echo research recommendations of pertinent literature. According to Shulman (1987), there are seven essential components of pedagogical content knowledge which instructional leaders should possess for effective teaching and learning to occur. Two of these components of PCK are linked to the views

expressed by the participants. First is that instructional leaders should know and understand the learners and their characteristics. Second is that they should also know and understand the contextual factors that such as the features of the communities and culture which invariably impact on teaching and learning. Similarly, Hallinger and Heck, (2010) emphasise that for effective supervision instructional leaders should understand contextual factors and individual dynamics of school which they supervise. Furthermore, in their study on effective district support McLaughlin and Talbert (2003) concluded that teachers' classroom instructional practices and what principals do in schools was shaped and influenced by responsive supports. Therefore, if subject advisors aim to change teachers' classroom practices, they would be better advised to establish from teachers what their instructional needs are so that their supports can be responsive and thus effective in shaping and influencing classroom instructional practices of teachers and behaviours of principals.

Theoretically, Weber's (1996) fourth domain of his instructional leadership model speaks to observing and improving instruction. According to this domain, in leading the school instructional process, instructional leaders need to understand contextual factors, such as the unique needs of the school and its community. The understanding of contextual factors is important because it should inform the kind of instructional management and support that the instructional leader will bring and/or execute in the attempt to improve or maintain conditions which promote learner achievement.

Under this sub-theme, the collective sentiment that was expressed by the participants was that subject advisors should understand unique school contexts so that they can provide customised support that will respond to the individual needs of teachers and their unique situations.

4.3 Chapter summary

This chapter presented and discussed the data which were generated through semi-structured interviews and the analysis of documents such as log books for the two schools in which the study was conducted, *CAPS Further Education and Training Phase: Grade 10-12, Umlazi District Circular No.1* of 2014, *Policy on the Organisation, Roles and Responsibilities of Education Districts* (2013) and *National Development Plan: Vision 2030: (2012).* Furthermore, the data were interrogated through Weber's (1996) model of instructional leadership as well as Spillane, Halverson and Diamond's (2001) theory of distributed

leadership. The next chapter presents summary, conclusions and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5. 1 Introduction

The preceding chapter presented and analysed data which were generated through semi-structured interviews with the participants and review of documents. The findings from the data analysis were also discussed in terms of the critical questions as presented in Chapter One. This chapter begins by offering the summary of all the chapters of the study. It then presents conclusions drawn from the findings of the study. Finally, recommendations of the study are made. The recommendations are informed by the findings which were discussed in Chapter Four, and the conclusions that are presented in this chapter.

5.2 Study Summary

Chapter One

Chapter One provided the introduction, background, purpose and rationale for undertaking the study on how teachers perceive subject advisors as instructional leaders. It also provided the objectives and critical questions of the study, clarification of key concepts and a tree-top view of the relevant literature and theoretical frameworks which framed the study.

Furthermore, it provided a brief outline of the research design and methodology, issues of trustworthiness, ethical issues, and limitations, delimitations and organisation of the study.

Chapter Two

Chapter Two presented the review of literature which is pertinent to the study. International, continental and national literature on instructional role of district offices in supporting and managing teaching and learning were presented. It also provided a discussion of the Weber's (1996) model of instructional leadership and Spillane, Halverson and Diamond's (2001) theory of distributed leadership which project this study. Both were deemed pertinent to enhancing understanding of the instructional role of subject advisors in supporting and managing teaching and learning.

Chapter Three

Chapter Three presented the discussion of the research design and methodology which framed and informed this study. Accordingly, the following aspects of research design and methodology were presented: research paradigm, research design, methodology, sampling, data generation methods, data analysis, issues of trustworthiness, ethical issues, limitations and delimitations of the study and the organisation of the study.

Chapter Four

Chapter Four presented the discussion and interpretation of the data. The study explored the perceptions of teachers on subject advisors as instructional leaders and found that:

- Subject advisors were important role-players in instructional leadership;
- The participants had varied needs for instructional supports, and thus needed contextualised and differentiated forms of instructional support;
- Positive relations between subject advisors and teachers facilitated conditions for effective teacher development;
- Collaborative practices in their present form did not impact on the participants' classroom practice;
- Participants wished for increased contact with subject advisors and
- Some subject advisors were not adequately prepared for their instructional leadership role.

Chapter Five

This chapter presents the overall study summary, conclusions and recommendations of the study.

5.3 Conclusions

Having carefully considered the findings, six conclusions were drawn. These conclusions were that: participants value the role of subject advisors in supporting teaching and learning, participants need varied and differentiated forms of instructional support, positive relations facilitated conditions for effective teacher development, collaborative in their present form do not address teachers' professional development needs, subject advisors should be closer to schools and that subject advisors should be sufficiently prepared and developed for instructional leadership role.

5.3.1 Participants' value the role of subject advisors in supporting teaching and learning

The first conclusion drawn was that the participants viewed subject advisors as essential role players in instructional leadership. Furthermore, the participants seemed to believe that partnerships between teachers and subject advisors were vital and that such partnerships could be realised through capacity-building and professional development programmes which were specifically targeted to improve instructional practice and thereby improve learner achievement.

Though participants provided diverse descriptions to paint their understanding of what the role of subject advisors were in supporting teaching and learning, in the final analysis all the descriptions suggested that subject advisors were understood to be very important role-players in the instructional improvement process. The diversity of responses further suggested that the participants' had various instructional areas of needs at different stages of the teaching and learning processes.

There were four main four conceptions on the role of subject advisors as instructional leaders. Firstly, it was that subject advisors should provide guidance in the subjects concerned. However, provision of guidance appeared to have varied interpretations. Some of the practices that were understood to constitute support and guidance were: orientation on subject content to be taught, providing the relevant policy documents, ensuring that teachers complied with subject policy requirements, providing guidance on preferred format for lesson plans, offering advice on instructional concerns so that student performance was improved,

and providing subject materials and tools. The conclusion drawn on this sub-theme was that the participants, irrespective of their post levels and level of experience, needed on-going guidance across various instructional areas and they believed that subject advisors are better suited to offer such guidance.

In respect of the participants' conceptualisation of subject advisors as coaches, two conclusions were drawn. First was that, both the principals in this study strongly felt that subject advisors, by virtue of being subject specialists, should coach teachers on pedagogical content knowledge that pertains to making subject content more understandable to learners. It therefore seemed that the principals were acceding to the notion that they were not experts in all the subjects which were offered in their respective schools and therefore, they could not do justice to this particular area of instructional leadership. Similarly, three of the four head of department in the study indicated that they too needed coaching from subject advisors on how to supervise the work of the teachers in their departments. This conclusion is an indictment against the thinking that school management teams inherently know what to do to manage teachers' and learners work and to support teachers. Furthermore, this conclusion affirms Gunter's (2001) assertion that being appointed to leadership does not automatically qualify one for being a competent leader. In other words, there is a need for formal training of incumbents to build their capacity and develop their instructional leadership skills.

Regarding the view that subject advisors should a fulfil a mentoring role, there was some evidence to suggest that there were efforts by some subject advisors that could be attributed to mentoring, though some aspects of the mentoring process were clearly lacking in most instances. For example, review of log books revealed that there were several instances where subject advisors identified weaknesses in some teachers' instructional practices. However, there was no evidence to indicate that they suggested possible remedies to correct those identified weaknesses. Therefore, it appeared as if there was no meaningful teacher development and capacity building that arose out of such mentoring encounters as it appeared that subject advisors were mainly fulfilling a fault-finding role.

5.3.2 Participants need various and differentiated forms of instructional support

While the participants were evidently exposed to certain forms of professional development activities and processes, it was concluded that these often missed the mark in terms of addressing their individual professional development needs. Firstly, by their nature, the current curriculum reforms demanded that teachers upgrade and/or refresh their subject

content knowledge. Secondly, the participants encountered various subject-specific instructional challenges which impacted on classroom practice and the quality of instruction. Among the needs that were identified by the participants were development of subject content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge and designing internal assessment tasks that were of expected standards as per CAPS regulations. Therefore, participants appeared to need varied forms of supports from their subject advisors on matters and concerns which are related to curriculum delivery and implementation practices. Therefore, it was concluded that participants needed individualised and contextualised professional development on various instructional areas to develop and build capacity so that they can effectively deliver on the agenda of effective curriculum implementation and increased learner attainment.

5.3.3 Positive relations facilitate conditions for effective teacher development

Participants offered numerous approaches that were used by their subject advisors to render instructional support. It was concluded that the participants had different experiences of instructional support. Some participants had positive experiences which they appreciated and valued while others had negative experiences which they detested. Some subject advisors were open and welcoming which created trust and collegiality, good working relations and an atmosphere which facilitated learning. For some participants, however, frosty disposition of subject advisors hindered the participants from being open and feeling welcome thus communication did not easily occur, and in some instances it was strained and thus their encounters with their subject advisors were unpleasant and stressful. There seemed to be a strong positive correlation between subject advisors' relationship with the teachers and the nature of experience derived from instructional support interactions. It was then concluded that the nature of experiences derived from instructional supports were consistently influenced by the subject advisor' disposition towards the teachers he/she was working with.

5.3.4 Collaborative practices should be reconfigured to address teachers' professional development needs

The two strategies that were used for teacher involvement and/or collaboration initiatives did not do much to address the participants' professional development needs. For instance, subject clusters were almost exclusively being used for moderation of formal school-based

assessment (SBA). Similarly, lead teachers received one day "drive-by" workshop shortly before the commencement of the intervention programmes which did not do much to build their capacity as lead teachers. For clusters, cluster coordinators did not receive formal training thus they did not receive any preparation for teacher leadership role. Furthermore, the criteria used by subject advisors to select cluster coordinators were not clearly defined. Lack of transparency around how teacher leaders were appointed into leadership positions compromised the legitimacy of cluster coordinators and lead teachers. Cluster coordinators described their role in administrative and monitoring terms and cluster meetings were by all indications exclusively fulfilling policy requirements in terms of SBA (school based assessment) moderation. While clustering and teacher leadership practices seemed collaborative, the practices thereof did not speak to the participants' professional development or concerns that were directly targeted at improving learner achievement. It was thus concluded that clustering and teacher leadership as practiced by the participants did not contribute to their professional development nor impacted on their classroom practice for there were no professional learning opportunities such as sharing of good classroom practices and developing PCK.

5.3.5 Subject advisors should be closest to schools

The majority of the participants felt that subject advisors were disconnected from the schools and thus their effectiveness was not as strong as it could be. Their detachment from schools led to lack of understanding about the social factors that influenced teaching and learning at the schools. Thus, the support provided by subject advisors was decontextualised. The conclusion drawn was that the participants preferred that subject advisors be more school-based than office based so that they can better understand the different contexts teachers work in. Understanding of the contexts could better situate subject advisors in a place to provide differentiated and contextualised support and guidance.

5.3.6 Subject advisors should be sufficiently developed and prepared for instructional leadership role

Participants had reservations about the manner that was used in the appointment and professional development of some subject advisors. Participants felt that certain subject advisors were not sufficiently competent and thus did not assist much in teacher professional development. Participants seemed to prefer that incumbents to subject advisory services be appointed on proven track record during their tenure as classroom-based teachers rather than

on political deployment. The conclusion made was that political appointments to subject advisory positions severely compromised the quality of supports and teacher development as incompetent candidates were appointed into leadership positions for which they were unsuitably qualified.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the conclusions above, the following recommendations are made.

5.4.1 Recommendations to the Department of Basic Education

From the findings of this study on how teachers perceive subject advisors as instructional leaders, it appears that there is a great need to overhaul or at least improve programmes that prepare and/or develop subject advisors for instructional leadership role. While, there is evidence to support that subject advisors provide various instructional supports to teachers, such as workshops, school visits, and clustering, it appears as if these programmes hardly have any positive impact because they fail to influence or change the teachers' daily classroom practices and learner achievement. Furthermore, school visits by subject advisors seem to be mainly centred on performing monitoring role. There was no evidence to suggest that subject advisors provided suggestions for correcting instructional weaknesses which they identified during school visits. Thus, subject advisors lacked capacity to support and develop teachers. It is therefore important to improve capacity-building programs which prepare subject advisors for instructional leadership so that they, in turn, can be able to develop and build teacher capacity.

Furthermore, research has established that teachers learn best when the learning content addresses their work experiences. It would therefore be recommended that professional development programmes be designed based on the principles of adult learning so that teachers can derive maximum benefits that could help change their instructional practice for improved learner achievement.

5.4.2 Recommendations to subject advisors

Adult learners learn best when they find the content relevant and meaningful to their own work experiences. From the findings, it emerged that the participants had varied challenges and instructional support needs. The participants confirmed what research has already established that blanket approach to professional development is ineffective. Though Umlazi District Circular No. 1 stipulated that at the workshops teachers were expected to inform their respective subject advisors about the areas they needed specific supports with, none of the

participants ventured to do that yet, the participants had indicated that they needed supports in various areas. It therefore could be concluded that a workshop, being a very public space, is not an appropriate forum for such disclosures. Thus, it is recommended that subject advisors should deliberately seek to establish other ways of communications that will make teachers more comfortable and ready to share their inadequacies and individual teachers instructional concerns. This will enable subject advisors to help create opportunities for support programmes which speak and address individual and contextualised professional needs of teachers.

Furthermore, subject advisors should actively seek to create trust and collegiality with teachers that they supervise. Trust is one of the factors that are crucial in creating positive and collegial relations. Lack of trust has a ripple effect on other areas of adult learning and this often results in teachers having a defensive posture. Thus, it is recommended subject advisors should embrace teachers that they supervise as equal partners in the journey of professional learning and development. Classroom teachers have invaluable, up-to-date experiences of classroom instructional realities which office-based teachers (like subject advisors) might not be privy to. Teachers' classroom experiences are vital for they should inform and shape professional development programmes. Classroom teachers should therefore be heard so that subject advisors do not hold unrealistic expectations of them. Subject advisors should then patiently listen to teachers' concerns so that they can be able to learn from the people who are where the proverbial tyre meets the road. Listening to teachers' concerns will save subject advisors from making hasty judgments based on little understanding of classroom challenges, and it will provide a meeting point where each party will work towards finding working solutions and support which are context sensitive and which positively impact on the individual teacher's classroom practice.

5.4.3 Recommendations to teachers

By their own saying, the participants admitted that through networking or clustering, teachers can and do learn a great deal from each other's best practices. However, from the findings it emerged that clustering mainly occurred during work hours and it was mainly for SBA monitoring purposes. It is then recommended that teachers should take clustering to a level of being a professional development approach wherein teachers meet to discuss, share and learn from each other so as to improve their teaching practice. Perhaps, the idea used by the cluster of one participant is the recommendation that this study makes as well. According to the participant, his cluster realised that during school days' time is limited and thus they

resolved to meet as a cluster on agreed Saturdays for a stipulated number of hours to exclusively discuss and share ideas on instructional challenges that they face on their subject as they perform their daily work. In this way, teachers realise and maximise their potential as sources of solutions to their own problems rather than heavily relying on outside source for inspiration and ideas.

5.5 Chapter summary

This chapter presented the summary of the study, conclusions and the recommendations. It is believed that the recommendations made will assist in the better understanding of how teachers experience professional support from subject advisors and identifying areas of improvement so that teachers can derive maximum benefit from their engagements with subject advisors.

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APPENDIX A: LETTER TO KZN DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

BB 572

Umlazi

4031

30 May 2014

Attention: The Head of Department (Dr N.S.P. Sishi)

Department of Basic Education

Province of KwaZulu-Natal

Private Bag X9137

Pietermaritzburg

3200

Sir

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

I am Nonhlanhla Dambuza, a Master of Education student in the School of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Edgewood Campus). As part of my degree requirements, I am expected to conduct educational research. I therefore kindly seek permission to conduct research in the following schools in Umbumbulu Central Circuit of Umlazi District: Xxxxxx High School and Xxxxxx High School.

The title of my research project is: **Perspectives of teachers on subject advisors as instructional leaders: a case study of two schools in Umbumbulu Central Circuit.** Policy on the Role and Responsibilities of Education Districts, Notice 300 0f 2013 states the function of subject advisors. It however, does not clearly define the practical actions subject advisors should engage in to provide support to teachers so as to improve teaching and learning. The study seeks to find out what teachers how teachers understand and experience support from subject advisors. The study will use semi-structured interviews and documents review to generate data. Participants will be interviewed for approximately 20 to 35 minutes at a time of their convenience. Each interview will be voice recorded.

Responses will be treated with confidentiality and pseudonyms will be used instead of the actual names. Participants will be contacted well in advance for interviews and they have been purposively selected for this study. Participation will always remain voluntary and participants may withdraw from the study for any reason, anytime if they so wish, without incurring any penalties.

For further information on this research project, please feel free to contact me using the following contact details: Nonhlanhla Dambuza on 072 969 5050 or on e-mail at cndambuza@gmail.com

OR

My supervisor: Dr Siphiwe E. Mthiyane, telephone 031 260 1870 and e-mail at Mthiyanes@ukzn.ac.za, cell phone number 073 377 4672.

OR

The HSSREC Research Office (Ms P. Ximba, telephone 031 260 3587 and e-mail at ximbap@ukzn.ac.za

Research tools are attached herewith for your perusal.

Your positive response in this regard will be highly appreciated.

Thanking you in advance.

Yours sincerely

Mrs N.C. Dambuza

APPENDIX B: LETTER FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

education

Department:
Education
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

Enquiries: Nomangisi Ngubane   Tel: 033 392 1004   Ref.:2/4/8/331

Mrs NC Dambuza
BB 572
UMLAZI
4031

Dear Mrs Dambuza

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: **"PERSPECTIVES OF TEACHERS ON SUBJECT ADVISORS AS INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERS: A CASE STUDY OF TWO SCHOOLS IN UMBUMBULU CENTRAL CIRCUIT"**, in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

1. The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2. The researcher must ensure that Educator and learning programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, Educators, Schools and Institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Heads of Institutions where the intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6. The period of investigation is limited to the period from 01 February 2014 to 31 December 2014.
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 Connie Kehologile 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:

Umbumbulu Central Circuit

Nkosinathi S.P. Sishi, PhD
Head of Department: Education
Date: 30 May 2014

KWAZULU-NATAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

APPENDIX C: LETTER TO PRINCIPAL TO REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT THE SCHOOL

BB 572
Umlazi
4031
23 April 2014

Attention: The Principal
N   High School
P.O. Box
Ntokozweni
4066

Dear Sir

REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT YOUR SCHOOL

I am Nonhlanhla Dambuza and I am presently reading for Master of Education degree at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Edgewood Campus). As part of the degree requirement, I am required to conduct a research project on a topic related to Educational Leadership, Management and Policy. In this regard, I hereby request permission to conduct research at your school with two grade 12 teachers, two head of departments and yourself as the principal. Please be informed that I have already sought and await the necessary permission from the Research Office of the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Basic Education to conduct this research (see copy of letter attached).

The title of my research topic is: **Perspectives of teachers on subject advisors as instructional leaders: A case study of two schools in Umbumbulu Central Circuit.** My research study aims to examine how teachers understand and experience support from subject advisors. The interest of this research study is generated by Policy on the Role and Responsibilities of Education Districts, Notice 300 of 2013 which, among others, states the function of subject advisors. However, the Policy does not clearly define the practical actions that subject advisors should engage in to provide support to teachers so as to improve teaching and learning. The study will use semi-structured interviews. Participants will be interviewed for approximately 20-35 minutes at the time and place convenient to them.

Please take note that:

- There will be no financial benefits that participants may accrue as a result of their participation in this study.
- Your identity will not be divulged under any circumstance/s, during and after the reporting process.

- Fictitious names will be used to represent your names.
- Participation in the study will in no way harm your employment circumstance/s and/or professional relationships and you will not suffer any prejudice because of participation or non-participation in the study.
- Participation is voluntary, therefore you are free to withdraw at any time you so wish, and you will not incur any negative or undesirable consequences for so doing.
- Interviews shall be voice- recorded to assist the researcher to concentrate on the actual interview instead of focusing on taking interview notes.
- You will be contacted in time about the interview.

For further information on this research project, you are welcome to contact either me on 072 969 50 and e-mail at cndambuza@gmaill.com

OR

my supervisor, Dr S. Mthiyane on 031 260 1870 and e-mail at Mthiyanes@ukzn.ac.za

OR

Ms P. Ximba of the Human and Social Sciences Ethical Clearance Research Office on 031 260 3587 and e-mail @ ximbap@ukzn.ac.za

The interview and document analysis schedules are attached for your perusal.

Your anticipated positive response in this regard is highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully,

Mrs N.C. Dambuza

APPENDIX C: LETTER TO PRINCIPAL TO REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT THE SCHOOL

<div align="right">
BB 572

Umlazi

4031

23 April 2014
</div>

Attention: The Principal

a High School

P.O. Box

Isipingo

4110

Dear Sir

REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT YOUR SCHOOL

I am Nonhlanhla Dambuza and I am presently reading for Master of Education degree at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Edgewood Campus). As part of the degree requirement, I am required to conduct a research project on a topic related to Educational Leadership, Management and Policy. In this regard, I hereby request permission to conduct research at your school with two grade 12 teachers, two head of departments and yourself as the principal. Please be informed that I have already sought and await the necessary permission from the Research Office of the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Basic Education to conduct this research (see copy of letter attached).

The title of my research topic is: **Perspectives of teachers on subject advisors as instructional leaders: A case study of two schools in Umbumbulu Central Circuit.** My research study aims to examine how teachers understand and experience support from subject advisors. The interest of this research study is generated by Policy on the Role and Responsibilities of Education Districts, Notice 300 of 2013 which, among others, states the function of subject advisors. However, the Policy does not clearly define the practical actions that subject advisors should engage in to provide support to teachers so as to improve teaching and learning. The study will use semi-structured interviews. Participants will be interviewed for approximately 20-35 minutes at the time and place convenient to them.

Please take note that:

- There will be no financial benefits that participants may accrue as a result of their participation in this study.
- Your identity will not be divulged under any circumstance/s, during and after the reporting process.
- All the information that you provide will be treated with confidentiality.

- Fictitious names will be used to represent your names.
- Participation in the study will in no way harm your employment circumstance/s and/or professional relationships and you will not suffer any prejudice because of participation or non-participation in the study.
- Participation is voluntary, therefore you are free to withdraw at any time you so wish, and you will not incur any negative or undesirable consequences for so doing.
- Interviews shall be voice- recorded to assist the researcher to concentrate on the actual interview instead of focusing on taking interview notes.
- You will be contacted in time about the interview.

For further information on this research project, you are welcome to contact either me on 072 969 50 and e-mail at cndambuza@gmaill.com

OR

my supervisor, Dr S. Mthiyane on 031 260 1870 and e-mail at Mthiyanes@ukzn.ac.za

OR

Ms P. Ximba of the Human and Social Sciences Ethical Clearance Research Office on 031 260 3587 and e-mail @ ximbap@ukzn.ac.za

The interview and document analysis schedules are attached for your perusal.

Your anticipated positive response in this regard is highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully,

Mrs N.C. Dambuza

APPENDIX D: LETTERS FROM PRINCIPALS

High School

P.O. Box

Isipingo

4110

26 May 2013

Dear Madam,

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT ⸺ HIGH SCHOOL

Your letter dated 04 March has reference. This letter serves to inform you that permission is here granted for you to conduct research at the above-mentioned school.

Yours faithfully

Mr ⸺ (Principal).

PROVINCE OF KWA-ZULU NATAL
HIGH SCHOOL
Principal
3 0 MAY 2014
P.O. BOX   ISIPINGO 4110
CELL: 083
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

High School

P.O. Box 36759

Ntokozweni

4066

27 May 2014

Dear Mrs Dambuza

RE: Permission to conduct research at   **High School**

Your letter dated 04 March refers.

This is to inform you that permission is hereby granted for you to conduct research at the above-mentioned school.

Thank you

_____

Mr

(Principal)

HIGH SCHOOL
BOX
NTOKOZWENI
4066

APPENDIX E: DECLARATION FORM

APPENDIX E: DECLARATION

I (full name and surname of participant) --- hereby confirm that I have been fully informed about the nature, purpose and procedures for the study: **Perspectives of teachers on subject advisors as instructional leaders: a case study of two schools in Umbumbulu Central Circuit.**

I have also received, read and understood the written information about the research project. I understand everything that has been explained to me and I consent voluntarily to take part in this research project.

I also understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the research project anytime, should I so desire.

Finally, please put an X in the appropriate column to indicate if you **agree/ do not agree** to the following:

	I agree	I do not agree
• to participate in this research project		
• to the interview being voice-recorded		

Signature of participant: ---   Date: -----------------------------

Signature of witness: ---   Date: -----------------------------

Thanking you in advance.

Yours faithfully
Mrs N.C.Dambuza

APPENDIX F: LETTER TO HEAD OF DEPARTMENTS

BB 572

Umlazi

4031

23 April 2014

Sir/ Madam

I am Nonhlanhla Dambuza and I am currently reading for Master of Education degree at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Edgewood Campus). As part of my degree requirements, I am required to conduct a research study on a topic related to Educational Leadership, Management and Policy. The topic of my research study is: **Perspectives of teachers on subject advisors as instructional leaders: a case study of two schools in Umbumbulu Central Circuit.** Please be advised that I have already sought and await the necessary permission to conduct the research study with the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education.

The Policy on the Role and Responsibilities of Education Districts, Notice 300 of 2013 states that the function of the subject advisor. However, the policy does not clearly detail the actions that subject advisors should perform in order to provide support to teachers. Some educational researchers are calling for a more clearly defined role of subject advisors. In this study, I am interested in finding out more about how teachers understand and experience support from subject advisors.

I am also conducting this research at another school. After combining all people's answers, I hope to learn more about how teachers understand the role of subject advisors in supporting teaching and learning. Findings from this study may possibly make useful recommendations to policy makers when they re-define the role of subject advisors in supporting teaching and learning. You have been selected for participation in this research study because of your teaching experience.

Please understand that your participation is voluntary and you are not being forced to take part in this research. The choice whether you participate or not is yours alone. However, I would really appreciate if you shared your thoughts with me. If you choose not to participate in the study, you will not be affected in any way whatsoever. If you agree, you may withdraw/stop participation at any time, and you will not be prejudiced or penalised in any way.

Be assured that your participation in this research will in no way harm your employment circumstance and/or professional relationships. I will not be recording your name anywhere, and no one will be able to link you to the answers you give. All individual information will remain confidential and no reference will be made to your name or school in the research report. The interview, wherein I will request that you are as honest as possible, will last between 20 and 35 minutes. For transcription purposes, the interview will be recorded. I have also attached a copy of interview questions for your perusal.

Should you wish to communicate further about this research project, you are welcome to contact me on 072 969 5050 or e-mail at cndambuza@gmail.com.

OR

 you can contact my supervisor, Dr S. Mthiyane on 031 260 1870 or e-mail at Mthiyanes@ukzn.ac.za

OR

Ms P. Ximba of the Human and Social Sciences Research Ethical Clearance Office on 031 260 3587 or e-mail at ximbap@ukzn.ac.za

Kindly complete the attached consent form to indicate whether you **CONSENT/ DO NOT CONSENT** the request to participate in this research project and if you agree or disagree to the interview being voice recorded. Please return the consent form once you have completed it.

Thanking you in advance

Yours faithfully,

Mrs N.C. Dambuza

APPENDIX G: LETTER TO TEACHERS

BB 572

Umlazi

4031

23 April 2014

Sir/ Madam

I am Nonhlanhla Dambuza and I am currently reading for Master of Education degree at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Edgewood Campus). As part of my degree requirements, I am required to conduct a research study on a topic related to Educational Leadership, Management and Policy. The topic of my research study is: **Perspectives of teachers on subject advisors as instructional leaders: a case study of two schools in Umbumbulu Central Circuit.** Please be advised that I have already sought and await the necessary permission to conduct the research study with the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education.

The Policy on the Role and Responsibilities of Education Districts, Notice 300 of 2013 states that the function of the subject advisor. However, the policy does not clearly detail the actions that subject advisors should perform in order to provide support to teachers. Some educational researchers are calling for a more clearly defined role of subject advisors. In this study, I am interested in finding out more about how teachers understand and experience support from subject advisors.

I am also conducting this research at another school. After combining all people's answers, I hope to learn more about how teachers understand the role of subject advisors in supporting teaching and learning. Findings from this study may possibly make useful recommendations to policy makers when they re-define the role of subject advisors in supporting teaching and learning. You have been selected for participation in this research study because of your teaching experience.

Please understand that your participation is voluntary and you are not being forced to take part in this research. The choice whether you participate or not is yours alone. However, I would really appreciate if you shared your thoughts with me. If you choose not to participate in the study, you will not be affected in any way whatsoever. If

you agree, you may withdraw/stop participation at any time, and you will not be prejudiced or penalised in any way.

Be assured that your participation in this research will in no way harm your employment circumstance and/or professional relationships. I will not be recording your name anywhere, and no one will be able to link you to the answers you give. All individual information will remain confidential and no reference will be made to your name or school in the research report. The interview, wherein I will request that you are as honest as possible, will last between 20 and 35 minutes. For transcription purposes, the interview will be recorded. I have also attached a copy of interview questions for your perusal.

Should you wish to communicate further about this research project, you are welcome to contact me on 072 969 5050 or e-mail at cndambuza@gmail.com.

OR

you can contact my supervisor, Dr S. Mthiyane on 031 260 1870 or e-mail at Mthiyanes@ukzn.ac.za

OR

Ms P. Ximba of the Human and Social Sciences Research Ethical Clearance Office on 031 260 3587 or e-mail at ximbap@ukzn.ac.za

Kindly complete the attached consent form to indicate whether you **CONSENT/ DO NOT CONSENT** the request to participate in this research project and if you agree or disagree to the interview being voice recorded. Please return the consent form once you have completed it.

Thanking you in advance

Yours faithfully,

Mrs N.C. Dambuza

APPENDIX H: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR PRINCIPALS

1. As a principal, what do you understand the role of subject advisor to be in supporting teaching and learning in your school? Please elaborate.

2. What do subject advisors do to support teaching and learning? Please explain.

3. Do you think that the support provided by subject advisors address your school developmental needs? Please elaborate.

4. How else would you like subject advisors to help so that teaching and learning is improved in your school? Please elaborate.

5. As a principal, what is your view about the quality of support that is provided by subject advisors? Please explain.

6. Is there any information you would like to share with me? Please explain.

APPENDIX I: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR HEAD OF DEPARTMENTS

1. As a head of department, what do you understand the role of subject advisor to be in supporting teaching and learning in your department? Please elaborate.

2. What do subject advisors actually do to support and manage teaching and learning in your department? Please elaborate.

3. How do subject advisors involve others/ collaborate with others to support and manage teaching and learning in your department? Please explain.

4. How else would you like subject advisors to help so that teaching and learning is improved in your department? Please elaborate.

5. Tell me about the quality of support that teachers in your department receive from subject advisors? Please elaborate.

6. Is there any information you would like to share with me? Please elaborate.
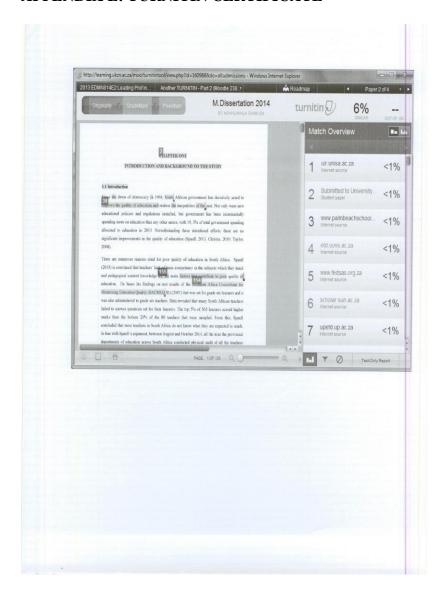
APPENDIX J: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR TEACHERS

1. As a teacher, what do you understand to be the role of subject advisors in supporting teaching and learning in your subject? Please elaborate.
2. What do subject advisors actually do to support and manage teaching and learning in your subject? Please elaborate.
3. How does your subject advisor involve others/ collaborate with others to support and manage teaching and learning in your subject? Please elaborate.
4. How else would you wish your subject advisor can help you to improve teaching and learning in your subject? Please elaborate.
5. What is the quality of support that you receive from your subject advisor? Please explain.
6. Is there any other information you would like to add? Please elaborate.

APPENDIX K: DOCUMENTS REVIEW SCHEDULE

The written documents that will be reviewed are official documents in the form of log books at the schools where the study will be conducted. Log book entries recorded by subject advisors reporting on the nature and content of discussions as well as forms of instructional supports rendered to teachers will be intensively studied.

Documents are suitable for this study because they can provide rich data relating to daily activities surrounding the cases being studied (Olson, 2010). Moreover, documents may potentially offer a different perspective of what the participants will state (Olson, 2010) and thus reveal some information that will not be found in the interviews. Log book entries will be used to corroborate information that will be provided by the teachers in the interviews thus improving trustworthiness of the study.

APPENDIX L: TURNITIN CERTIFICATE

APPENDIX M: LANGUAGE CERTIFICATE