

**EXPLORING BUSINESS STUDIES TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES OF  
LEARNING THROUGH PROFESSIONAL LEARNING  
COMMUNITIES IN THE CONTEXT OF CURRICULUM CHANGES: A  
CASE OF FIVE SCHOOLS IN THE PINETOWN DISTRICT**

**BY**

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**Submitted in fulfilment of the Master of Education degree in the discipline  
of Commerce Education, Social Sciences, School of Education,  
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## DECLARATION

I, Duduzile Sipehelele Khoza declare that this is my own work submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of master of education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and that the dissertation has never been submitted at any university besides UKZN.

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Signature \_\_\_\_\_

As the candidate's supervisor, I agree to the submission of the thesis/dissertation:

Dr Jabulisile Ngwenya

Signature: 

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this dissertation to my lovely kids Nqobile, Lubanzi and Zenhlanhla.

Your love and admiration have inspired me to continuously strive for success.

## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study was to explore Business Studies teachers' experiences of learning through Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) in the context of curriculum changes. In addition it sought to explore the experiences of teachers' professional learning in a PLC. Literature on PLCs has proliferated in the last decade, signifying the importance of collaborative learning practices. This study investigated the level of development given to teachers during the time of transition, the purpose was to find how professional learning communities can help in developing teachers. This was a qualitative study, located within the interpretive paradigm. A case of five schools in the Pinetown district about teacher learning in PLCs. Data generation methods included semi-structured interviews with five teachers. The findings of the research revealed that learning occurred predominantly in a collaborative capacity both formally and informally. Various modes of teacher learning were expressed: individual learning, collaborative learning, networking and mentoring. In terms of teachers' experiences of learning in a PLC, occurrences were mostly positive. One of the most challenging factors of teacher learning in a PLC was the lack of support that was afforded to teachers. In addition the lack of time, and work intensification, hindered successful teacher learning in a PLC. These findings prompted the need for more involvement from leaders to support teacher learning in PLCs which was expressed as one of the recommendations. Furthermore, it was recommended that leaders play an integral role in establishing virtual PLCs for teachers to collaborate with members within and outside their organisation, allowing for networking and learning from external social agents.

## **LIST OF ACRONYMS**

ACE- Advanced certificate in Education

CAPS- Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement

DBE- Department of Basic Education

DoE- Department of Education

FET- Further Education and Training

NCS- National curriculum statement

PLC- Professional learning communities

SMT- School management team

TLC- Teacher learning communities

## **LIST OF APPENDICES**

<b>APPENDIX A</b>	Ethical clearance
<b>APPENDIX B</b>	Letter to the principal: Permission to conduct research.
<b>APPENDIX C</b>	Informed consent of the teacher
<b>APPENDIX D</b>	Audio recording consent
<b>APPENDIX E</b>	Interview Schedule
<b>APPENDIX F</b>	Turnitin report
<b>APPENDIX G</b>	Editors report

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION .....	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	ii
DEDICATION .....	iii
ABSTRACT.....	iv
LIST OF ACRONYMS .....	v
LIST OF APPENDICES .....	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vii
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY.....	1
1.1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY .....	1
1.3 RATIONALE.....	3
1.4 PROBLEM STATEMENT .....	4
1.5 SIGNIFICANCE .....	4
1.6 PURPOSE AND FOCUS OF THE STUDY .....	5
1.7 OBJECTIVE.....	5
1.8 RESEARCH QUESTION .....	5
1.9 RESEARCH CONTEXT .....	5
1.10 OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH DESIGNS AND METHODS.....	5
1.10.1 Research Paradigm.....	6
1.10.2 Research Approach .....	6

1.10.3	Research Strategy.....	6
1.10.4	Sampling .....	7
1.10.5	Site Selection of Research .....	8
1.10.6	Selection of Participants .....	8
1.11	DATA GENERATION METHOD.....	8
1.12	DATA ANALYSIS METHOD.....	9
1.13	ETHICAL CONSIDERATION .....	9
1.13.1	Trustworthiness.....	10
1.13.2	Transferability.....	10
1.13.3	Conformability.....	10
1.13.4	Dependability.....	11
1.13.5	Credibility .....	11
1.14	TRIANGULATION.....	11
1.15	OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS .....	12
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK.....		14
2.1	INTRODUCTION.....	14
2.2	CURRICULUM CHANGES .....	14
2.2.1	Curriculum Defined by Different Scholars.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
2.2.2	Curriculum Changes in the South African Education System.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
2.3	TEACHING OF BUSINESS STUDIES AS A SUBJECT .....	19
2.4	PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHERS .....	22

2.4.1	Teacher Learning .....	25
2.5	TEACHERS EXPERIENCES OF LEARNING THROUGH PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY .....	28
2.5.1	Teachers' Implementation of Innovative Strategies .....	30
2.5.2	Accountability Versus Professional Development .....	31
2.5.3	Effective Classroom Management.....	33
2.6	PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES (PLCs) .....	34
2.6.1	Principles of Professional Learning Communities .....	37
2.6.2	Reflective Professional Inquiry.....	38
2.6.3	Group Promotion and Individual Learning.....	39
2.7	PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY BENEFITS .....	41
2.7.1	Collaboration on Learning Techniques.....	42
2.7.2	Brainstorming Strategy .....	43
2.8	CHALLENGES FACED BY BUSINESS STUDIES TEACHERS ON IMPLEMENTING STRATEGIES .....	44
2.9	THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK .....	45
2.9.1	Constructivism Theory.....	46
2.9.2	Piaget's Cognitive Constructivism Theory.....	47
2.9.3	Social Constructivism .....	48
2.10	CONCLUSION .....	49
CHAPTER 3	RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY.....	50
3.1	INTRODUCTION.....	50

3.2	RESEARCH PARADIGM.....	51
3.3	RESEARCH APPROACH.....	52
3.4	RESEARCH STRATEGY .....	53
3.5	SELECTION OF THE RESEARCH SITE.....	54
3.6	POPULATION.....	54
3.7	SAMPLING .....	54
3.8	SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS.....	56
3.9	DATA GENERATION METHOD.....	56
3.9.1	Interviews.....	56
3.9.2	Purpose of the Interview .....	58
3.10	DATA ANALYSIS .....	59
3.11	TRUSTWORTHINESS .....	60
3.11.1	Transferability.....	61
3.11.2	Conformability.....	62
3.11.3	Dependability.....	63
3.11.4	Credibility.....	63
3.12	TRIANGULATION.....	63
3.13	ETHICAL CONSIDERATION .....	64
3.13.1	Permission.....	64
3.13.2	Anonimity.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b> 62
3.13.3	Confidentiality .....	65

3.14	LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY .....	65
3.15	CONCLUDING REMARKS .....	66
CHAPTER 4 DATA PRESENTATION .....		67
4.1	INTRODUCTION.....	67
4.2	LEARNING WITHIN A PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY .....	67
4.3	COLLABORATIVE LEARNING .....	68
4.3.1	Learning from DBE Workshop.....	69
4.3.2	Learning Through Mentoring .....	70
4.3.3	Learning Within the School .....	71
4.3.4	Networking .....	73
4.3.5	Learning Through Cluster.....	74
4.4	LEARNING INDIVIDUALLY .....	76
4.4.1	Reading Policy Documents.....	77
4.4.2	Use of Internet.....	77
4.4.3	Utilization of Resources From Higher Education Institutions.....	78
4.5	CHALLENGES WITHIN PROFESSIONAL LEARNING .....	79
4.5.1	Lack of Collaborative and Teamwork .....	80
4.5.2	Lack of Support From Leadership .....	81
4.5.3	Lack of Knowledge of Curriculum Change and Content Knowledge.....	82
4.5.4	Time as a Barrier.....	83
4.5.5	Direction to the Teachers to Execute Efficiency .....	84

4.5.6	Lack of Resources.....	86
4.5.7	Workloads and Personal Commitment .....	86
4.6	CONCLUSION .....	88
CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSIONS AND ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS .....		89
5.1	INTRODUCTION.....	89
5.2	LEARNING WITHIN A PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY .....	89
5.2.1	Reflections of Teachers’ Professional Learning Community .....	90
5.3	CHALLENGES WITHIN A PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY .....	94
5.3.1	Teachers’ Experiences Teaching of Business Studies as Curriculum Changes	95
5.3.2	Meetings for the Business Studies and Teachers’ Development .....	97
5.3.3	Activities Related to Learning .....	99
5.3.4	The Effect of The Old, and The New Curriculum on Business Studies Teachers and Learners .....	101
5.4	BENEFITS DERIVED FROM PARTICIPATING IN THE PLC .....	103
5.4.1	Teachers’ Experiences Regarding Training for Curriculum Development .....	103
5.4.2	Pedagogical Changes of Teaching Business Studies .....	107
5.4.3	Syllabus Considerations as Changes on Curriculum .....	108
5.5	CONCLUSION .....	109
CHAPTER 6 SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECCOMENDATIONS .....		110
6.1	INTRODUCTION.....	110
6.2	OVERVIEW OF THE CHAPTERS .....	110
6.3	SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS.....	112

6.3.1	Challenges Within Professional Learning Community .....	113
6.4	LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY .....	114
6.5	RECOMMENDATIONS .....	114
6.6	RECOMENDATIONS FOR FUTHER STUDIES .....	115
6.7	CONCLUSION .....	115
	REFERENCES .....	117

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY**

### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter serves as an introduction to this study, and therefore sets the scene for the discussion of key issues relevant to the study. The purpose of the study was to explore Business Studies teachers' experiences of learning through professional learning communities in the context of curriculum changes. The chapter provides the background and overview of the study. The rationale for embarking on the study, the statement of purpose and the key research question guiding the study is defined. It also provides an overview of literature and conceptual framework. The chapter further goes on to provide a detailed overview of the research design and the methodology adopted in the study. It highlights the ethical considerations and limitations of the study. The chapter concludes with an outline of the chapters for the dissertation as a whole.

### **1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

Curriculum change came as an idea of addressing an education system which was characterized by racism, discrimination and inequalities. However, the implementation of the National Curriculum Statement (NCS, 2006) in the Further Education and Training (FET) band resulted in a conceptualization and redesign of all subjects offered in the FET phase. School curriculum subjects were also changed to foster the skills needed for a democratic society and the globalized world. Even the names of some school subjects were changed to reflect international trends and new subject content. These changes were also evident in Business Studies as a school subject. Business Studies was phased in to replace Business Economics in the Further Education and Training (FET) phase in secondary schools. These changes were aimed at enabling learners to acquire entrepreneurial skills and to ensure that learners apply knowledge and skills in a way that is meaningful to their own lives (Motsekga, 2012).

Business Studies is a subject that emphasizes with knowledge, skill, attitude and values, critically informal, productive, ethical and responsible participation in the Business Economic sector (Umalusi, 2012). The subject encompasses business practices that underpin the development of entrepreneurial initiatives suitable for the enterprise and growth. The role of

Business Studies as a subject is to develop the learner's insight into South African schools and global businesses; so that they can understand the role of different role players in various issues and challenges that influence or impact the business.

In Business Studies there has also been a movement of topics within the themes and across the grades; the content is more extensive in the CAPS compared to the previous curricula. CAPS is inclined to cognitive levels which require descriptive details and understanding relationships between concepts in Business Studies, since more topics require complex reasoning. The conceptual approach used in the teaching of Business Studies requires higher understanding and relationships between concepts and as a result more topics require complex reasoning in order to deal with impact and investigate possible business solutions, investigation and application of graphs. The learner has to devise and critically develop strategies as well as make recommendations (Umalusi, 2012).

Business Studies teachers are expected to equip learners with problem-solving and investigative skills. Studies have shown that these changes were not easily welcomed by teachers as the new curriculum placed demands on teachers, who are required to make changes in their classroom as well as teach new content (Mokhele, 2014). The seasoned teachers had not been previously trained in the requirements of the new curricula but were expected to change their classroom practices in similar ways.

Furthermore, the new curriculum included a new number of topics which teachers had never taught before, some of which they themselves have never been taught (Stears, 2006). In addition to requiring teachers to change the way of doing things Bantwini, (2009) argues that in order for a curriculum reform to have long term effect it has to be accompanied by other changes within the educational system. He points out that in order for training to be relevant for teachers their needs should be identified and taken into account when designing professional development programs. Research has also shown that the follow up after the workshop was also inadequate, according to teachers (Mhlanga, 2014).

According to Thaanyane (2010), when a new curriculum is introduced in schools one it should not fail to notice the needs of teachers, because they are the agents of change. Rogan (2007) explains that the issue with curriculum reform is that they often focus on the new content and not on how the implementation should be undertaken. He maintains that a curriculum implementation process thus has to carefully consider the content of teaching the

streams of new policies which might cause a problem where teachers do not have enough time to implement new policies before another one is put into place. As a result, teachers felt that they were not comfortable with the workshops received for CAPS and felt less prepared for the implementation (Singh and Singh, 2012).

### **1.3 RATIONALE**

The desire to pursue this study emanates from my reflections on various experiences I have had as a student and a Business Studies teacher. In my experience as a Business Studies teacher over the past 10 years, I have struggled to teach Business Studies efficiently. This has been a concern of many teachers, particularly those who are teaching Grade 12. All these challenges led to a conclusion that teachers were not well equipped for the new curriculum changes. For teachers to fulfil their role effectively, they require skills, knowledge and methodology whenever these changes are mandatory.

During cluster meetings most of the Grade 12 teachers complained that the Grade 12 results were fluctuating. The learners who were high flyers score very high marks and the slow learners failed dismally. This was an indication of a poor foundation in the content which is supposed to be laid in Grade 10. Some of the challenges experienced by teachers were having inadequate resources, financial constraints and lack of training. It was also noted that with the advent of clusters in South African education, there has been confusion and uncertainty. This was because of drastic changes in curriculum without proper consultation with all education stakeholders, teachers and unions (Graven, 2002).

This has been aggravated by the continuous changes in curriculum from Curriculum 2005, National Curriculum Statement to Revised National Curriculum Statement policy, and currently, Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements. Transformations always come with severe challenges. The district managers (subject advisors) experienced severe challenges with the conceptualization of new jargon for each curriculum. As a result, the purpose of clusters has been misconceptualised and viewed narrowly as script moderation of learner portfolios (Mphahlele, 2014).

Through examining literature, it was revealed that there was a high challenge for teachers who were teaching Business Studies in South Africa in particular. The cause of these challenges was lack of teacher development during the curriculum changes. This study will

contribute towards enhancing the understanding of teacher development through teacher learning communities. The research study will enlighten and empower the curriculum planners on the potential of teacher learning communities.

#### **1.4 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

This discussion provides the platform on which my study was grounded. The literature shows that there has been some work that has been done on the areas of curriculum changes and on professional development, but my study sought to learn more from teachers about their understanding and experiences of professional development in relation to Curriculum changes, and further learn more about teachers' experiences regarding the efficacy of professional development initiatives.

Given this background the study sought to explore teachers' experiences of learning through professional learning communities. What has been found in the literature suggests that the attempts that have been made in providing professional development seemed not to have matched the demand that has been placed on teachers. It looked like there was still some work that needed to be done regarding professional development and information from teachers themselves on how they understood and have experienced professional development related to curriculum changes.

#### **1.5 SIGNIFICANCE**

The crux of the research was to find out more and add to the existing body of knowledge on how teachers respond to curriculum change (Woodwall, 2012). Cryer (2000) noted various ways in which research can contribute to knowledge which includes formulation of a new theory, insightful knowledge, new methodology, and by means of improving practice. The study seeks to extend the frontier of knowledge by providing insightful knowledge and to supplement to existing literature, particularly on teachers' experiences of learning through professional learning communities, in the context of curriculum changes. In addition, the research will contribute to knowledge through the research outcomes which will invariably and significantly emerge on how teachers can learn from one another. It is hoped that this study will be of value to educators teaching Business Studies and to other stakeholders who are interested in promoting the subject and are committed to its improvement.

## **1.6 PURPOSE AND FOCUS OF THE STUDY**

The main purpose of the study was to explore teachers' experiences of learning through professional learning communities in the context of curriculum changes. The study focused on how teachers could learn through learning communities. Whilst the subject is taught from Grades 10 – 12 it focused on Grade 12 in particular, since Grade 12 is the exit point and the capability of teacher is assessed there.

## **1.7 OBJECTIVE**

The objective of the study was:

- To explore Business Studies teachers' experiences of learning through professional learning communities in the context of curriculum changes.

## **1.8 RESEARCH QUESTION**

In line with the objective, the following research question guided this study:

- What are Business Studies teachers' experiences of learning through professional learning communities in the context of curriculum changes?

## **1.9 RESEARCH CONTEXT**

The location of this study was within a peri-urban area (township), in some of the high schools in Mandela ward under Pinetown district in KwaZulu-Natal. It explored Business Studies teachers' experiences of learning Business Studies through learning communities with regard to curriculum changes.

## **1.10 OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH DESIGNS AND METHODS**

This section provides a preliminary overview of the research design and methodology. A more detailed discussion and the rationale for the choice of methodology are presented in Chapter 3.

### **1.10.1 Research Paradigm**

The Research Paradigm that was employed in this study was Interpretivism. This is an approach to social science that emphasises the importance of insiders' viewpoint to understand the social reality. As defined by Mertens (2015), a research paradigm is a way of looking at the world based on philosophical assumptions that guide, or direct thinking and action. This study was located within the interpretive paradigm, which maintains that there are multiple, socially-constructed realities in which the researcher's judgments and perspective are considered in the interpretation of data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Within the interpretive paradigm, researchers make interpretations with the purpose of understanding human behaviours, attitudes, beliefs and perceptions (Bertram and Christiansen, 2014). The interpretive paradigm was therefore, relevant for this study since the purpose of the study was to explore Business Studies teachers' experiences of learning through professional learning communities in the context of curriculum changes.

### **1.10.2 Research Approach**

This study was located within the qualitative research approach. Qualitative research describes an understanding of actual human interactions, meanings, and the processes which constitute real-life settings (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison 2011). In this study, I intended to understand teachers' experiences of learning through learning communities. Qualitative research "*provides an in-depth and detailed understanding of meanings, actions, non-observable as well as observable phenomenon, attitudes, intentions and behaviors*" (Cohen *et al.*, 2011, p.47). The qualitative methodology was considered appropriate for this research study since it allowed for the phenomenon of teachers' professional learning by data gathering that consisted of an in-depth description of experiences of teachers.

### **1.10.3 Research Strategy**

The study used a case study approach. A case study approach is described by Rule and John (2011, p.4) "as a systematic and in-depth investigation of a particular instance in its context in order to generate knowledge". Baxter and Jack (2008) assert that a case study is an in-depth study of one case. This could have been an individual or a group of people, like students or teachers. This study focused on five schools in Malandela. The study intended to explore teachers' experiences of learning through learning communities, and how teachers can learn from each other.

Yin (2009) views the case study approach as empirical inquiry. Rule and John (2015) state that the case study approach is often used in the human social science field of research. Yin (2003) notes that a case study design needs to be used in the case when: the focus of the research, is or studies attempts to answer the ‘How’ question, and it is not clear how to differentiate between the phenomenon and the context of the study.

Therefore, this was a case of five teachers who are teaching Business Studies in Grade 12, the only critical question of the study focus on the “How” part of the study. As a researcher, I was not the participant in this case study, which allowed me not to interfere with the behaviour of the participants. As the researcher, I opted to use a case study design because I wanted to gain a deep and comprehensive understanding of teachers’ experiences with curriculum changes. Being a case study, I visited the teachers at the nearest schools in their natural setting and used interpretative enquiries through semi- structured interviews and field notes to collect of data. This design allowed researchers to be absorbed in the study. Drawing on this discussion on case study, it is considered an appropriate style to conduct a study focused on teacher learning in teacher learning communities.

#### **1.10.4 Sampling**

De Vos, Delpont, Fouche and Strydom (2005) state that sampling means, taking a part of a population and seeing it as representative of that population. According to Remler and Ryzin (2014), convenience sampling is a sampling method in which people are sampled, simply because they are convenient sources of data for researchers. Brink, Bodart, Stibing, Mayaux (2014) note that non-probability sampling is the sampling method in which the sample was selected, based on the judgment of the researcher and it does not involve the use of random selection. Non-probability sampling includes the following: convenience sampling and purposive sampling, snowball sampling, homogeneous sampling, heterogeneous, quota sampling and structured sampling (Cohen *et al-* 2011). Purposive and convenience sampling was used to select the research site and the participants. According to Burns and Grove (2011), the purposive technique is based on the judgment of the researcher relating to participants that are representative of the study phenomenon or who are especially knowledgeable about the question at hand.

### **1.10.5 Site Selection of Research**

Since I wanted to go for depth rather than range, I selected only five schools offering Business Studies as a school major subject in the Further Education and Training (FET) phase in the Pinetown district. The choice of the schools was based on accessibility to me as a researcher. Ease of access to the schools was a consideration because I am a part-time student doing a full thesis as a full-time teacher. This required confining my study to neighbouring schools from where I work. Therefore, I used convenience sampling which, according to Plano Clarke and Creswell (2008), involves including in the samples respondents who are easily accessible and willing to participate.

### **1.10.6 Selection of Participants**

In this study, I purposively sampled five Business Studies teachers who are currently teaching Business Studies in Grade 12 from five secondary schools in the Pinetown district. The selection of Grade 12 is based on the fact that while the NCS and lately the CAPS was implemented Grade 12 was affected by the major changes. The selection of five schools was based on an in-depth information required from pedagogies of the subject

## **1.11 DATA GENERATION METHOD**

According to Bertram & Christiansen (2014), some of the methods to collect data involves questionnaires, interviews, documents, secondary data and observation. This study used face to face interviews to collect data from Business Studies teachers to understand their experiences of teaching Business Studies Grade 12 in the context of the curriculum changes. Bertram & Christiansen (2014) defined interviews as a conversation between the researcher and the respondent. The interview consists of pre-prepared questions that are asked by the interviewer verbally (Lauer, 2006).

In qualitative research, interviews are very good to get in-depth data from participants, (Bertram & Christiansen 2014). Mbatha (2016) stated that qualitative interviews are very effective for a researcher who wants to explore experiences that have been ignored. In this study the researcher used semi-structured interviews. Participants (teachers) were audiotaped during the interviews and notes were taken to make sure the information they provided is kept safely. Each participant was interviewed twice, to verify any information given.

Interviews took place in the participant's institution and each interview lasted approximately 50 minutes. Participants signed consent forms before being interviewed.

### **1.12 DATA ANALYSIS METHOD**

It is important for the researcher to analyse the data gathered according to different themes in the study. Data analysis is a method of arranging findings of the study to answer the research questions (Mbatha, 2016; Letshwene, 2014). In this study, the researcher used a tape recorder to keep participants' interviews, and then transcribed and analysed them. To analyse data for this study, the researcher read transcripts of interviews, and developed headings which were in line with words of participants.

Thematic analysis was adopted to analyse the interviews in the current study. Braun and Clark (2006) describe thematic analysis as a qualitative analytic method for identifying, analysing and identifying patterns (within) the data. Thematic analysis also helps in analysing some aspects of the data collected. Thematic analysis suits my study as it was qualitative in nature. Interviews were transcribed and interview transcripts were read several times, to establish recurring codes and themes. A process of open coding was initially used followed by clustering of specific themes.

### **1.13 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION**

Research ethical clearance was sought from the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Head of Department. It was sought from the University's research office. Consent letters were written to each of the five school Principals to seek permission to go to their schools. Each of the five Grade 12 Business Studies teachers were provided with consent letters asking them to take part in the current research study. Thus, consent forms were provided for all participants. The consent forms were distributed, signed, and collected from all parties involved.

The autonomy of the participants and of their contexts was protected. The participants' names were not used in the current study. Instead pen-names were used. The names of the teachers were not used either, again using Pen-names. Thereby, anonymity was ensured. No harm was done to the participating teachers. Additionally, no degrading and embarrassing questions were asked from the teachers. All the data collected will be used for the current study only

and will be kept confidentially and safe in the University's safe for five years by the Supervisor of this research. Thereafter documents will be shredded, and the compact discs will be incinerated.

I discussed with the selected participants, the schedule of dates, times and venues for the interviews. Collecting data from different participants gave me an opportunity to analyse data from different participants. Therefore, data was triangulated to ensure validity. Validity is defined as "the degree to which all of the evidence points to the intended interpretation" (Creswell, 2012, p. 159).

If any participants withdraw from the current study as per their rights, it was understood that I would have to find other participants. Establishing a rapport with the participants and ensuring them confidentiality, anonymity, and no harm might help the researcher not lose the participants. There might be disturbances whilst the researcher collects data. Therefore, more time was provided for data collection than anticipated.

### **1.13.1 Trustworthiness**

Christiansen *et al.* (2014) state that in qualitative research, effective trustworthiness needs to be considered. Trustworthiness is a concern in all research. Validity is a traditional concept that has been used to critique the quality of the study, but trustworthiness is more useful for quantitative research (Holloway & Wheeler, 2002). Christiansen *et al.* (2014) argue that four issues need to be considered to guarantee the trustworthiness of the research. In this study, the researcher used transferability, credibility, dependability and conformability.

### **1.13.2 Transferability**

Transferability is the extent to which the findings of the study can be conveyed beyond the limits of the project (Christiansen *et al.*, 2014). In qualitative, research the findings do not generalize, because generalizing can influence the transferability of the study. Proper data needs to be generated to support the investigated phenomena (Petty, Oliver, Thomson, Graham, 2012).

### **1.13.3 Conformability**

Conformability is "the potential for congruence between two or more independent people about the data's accuracy" (Elo *et al.*, 2014. p. 2). The data was interpreted explicitly without

the subjective influence of the researcher. The researcher was aware of subjectivity, since he is also teaching Business Studies on the same circuit. The researcher used substantial evidence to support the findings from the research.

#### **1.13.4 Dependability**

This refers to the consistency of data over a period (Elo *et al.*, 2014). To achieve dependability in a qualitative study is not always easy however, it is not impossible. I explained the whole process and features of the research to participants. This ensured that data from similar participants from the same context can replicate the data. All participants were informed about the study process, design and method of data collection. This ensured the credibility and trustworthiness of the study. The findings were also to be discussed and interpreted accurately to validate the research.

#### **1.13.5 Credibility**

Credibility means that the findings show the reality and experiences of the participants (Christiansen *et al.*, 2014). Petty, Thomson & Stew (2012) also define credibility as the process where the findings from the study can be trusted by the participants. I used different approaches to investigate and explore the phenomenon. The main aim is to collect reliable data that portrays a true reflection about the researched phenomenon, which is teacher learning. Different data collection methods were used: triangulation, interviews to allow the participant expression, and for the researcher to experience the context of the phenomenon. Therefore, all this strengthened the credibility of the research.

### **1.14 TRIANGULATION**

The data collection techniques used together for triangulation purposes. Triangulation is qualitative cross validation of data using multiple data sources or multiple data collection procedures (Wiersma, 2000). Literature shows that triangulation can be done on different parts of qualitative research (Patton, 2002). Data triangulation enables the researcher to combine data collecting instruments. For this study, data triangulation used was from interviews and fields note. This enabled me to make a comparison of data from the data collection instruments, being the interviews and fields notes to discover which inferences are valid, as well as improve the credibility of the study.

## **1.15 OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS**

The chapter is organised into six chapters which bring together the different parts of the research.

This chapter has introduced the study, offering some detail on the background, rationale and focus which guided it.

Chapter one thus presents an overview of the study. The Significance, purpose and focus of the study, objectives, research questions, research context, overview of research design and methodology, data generation methods, data analysis method, ethical consideration, triangulation. Lastly, the chapter concludes by presenting overview of chapters.

Chapter Two presents the review of literature on teacher's experiences of learning through professional learning communities in the context of curriculum changes. Under the following headings Curriculum, curriculum changes, teaching Business Studies as a subject, professional development, and teachers' experiences of learning, professional learning community, professional learning community benefits, challenges faced by Business Studies teachers on implementing strategies, the theoretical framework of the study is also discussed in this chapter.

Chapter Three describes the research design and methodology I used to seek answers to my research questions. The chapter provides a detailed discussion of research design, research approach, paradigm and strategy. It further discusses selection of research site , population, sampling, selection of participants, data generation method, data analysis, trustworthiness, triangulation and Ethical considerations were outlined.

Chapter Four deals with the presentation of data based on the research questions. The data was presented in the form of themes that emerged from the process of analysing the data which are learning within learning community, collaborative learning, learning individually, and challenges within professional learning community.

Chapter Five discusses the research findings of the study presented in Chapter Four which are learning within a professional learning community, challenges within professional learning community, benefits derived from participating in a professional learning community.

Chapter Six presents the summary, overview of chapters, summary findings, limitations of the study, recommendations, recommendations for future research and the conclusion.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter presented a background and the introduction of the study. This chapter presents literature review, in the following headings: Curriculum, Curriculum changes in the South African education system, and the nature of Business Studies as a subject. It further discusses professional development of teachers. This study further investigated teacher learning, teacher's experiences of learning through professional learning communities. Finally, I concluded this chapter with a conceptual framework.

The evidence from discourse suggests that the educational reform progress depends on teachers' individual and collective capacity and its link with school-wide capacity for promoting pupils' learning, hence, building capacity is therefore critical. Capacity is a complex blend of motivation, skill, positive learning, organizational conditions, culture, and support infrastructure. Placed together, this gives individuals, groups, whole school communities, and school systems the power to get involved and enhance learning over time. Developing (PLCs) appears to hold considerable promise for capacity building for sustainable improvement and has become a 'hot topic' in many countries (Stoll, Bolang & Thomas, 2006). Developing teachers professionally is important in this study, but the way in which they are developed is even more important because it helps teachers to become more confident when teaching, since they are empowered to do so through development (Hord, 2009).

#### **2.2 CURRICULUM CHANGES**

This section seeks to explore the meaning beyond the concept 'curriculum' in terms of what it constitutes. It also seeks to draw from existing literature on the nature and implications of curriculum change.

##### **2.2.1 Curriculum defined by different scholars**

Curriculum is a national document designed by the Government in collaboration with the Department of Education/Ministry to design activities within the field of education to serve as guidelines on the content, for learners and teachers (Connelly, 2008). Curriculum,

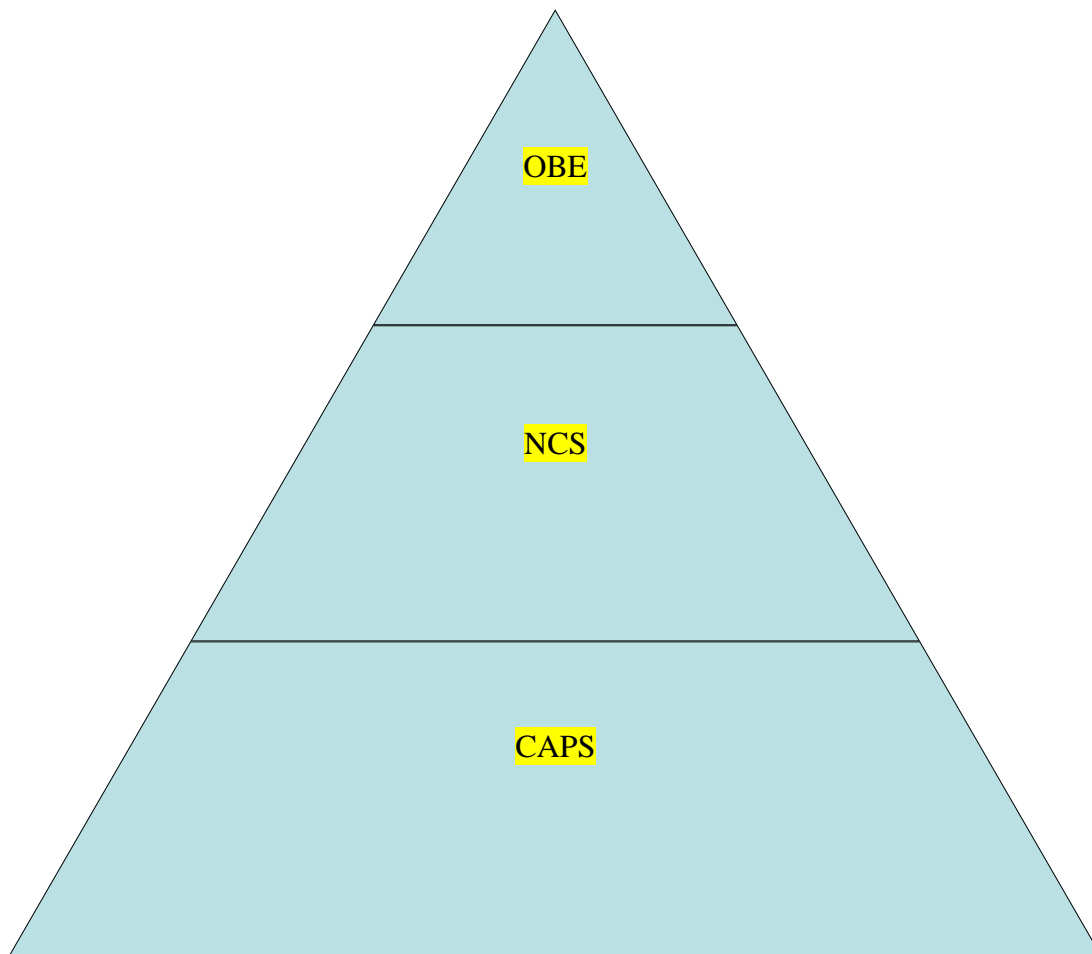
according to Sharma (2011, p.1), is defined “curriculum as an instructional programme which directs the learners to achieve their goals, ideas and inspiration of life”. Based on definition, curriculum is inclusive of all aspects of the learning/teaching situation, and recognizes the formal curriculum (the syllabus and the planned experiences and activities that students undertake) as well as the informal curriculum and the hidden curriculum.

Rose and Marge (2012) maintain that a curriculum is like a course which has to run as planned and prescribed to achieve the intended learning outcomes for the learners. This supports that a curriculum should officially, be nationally developed by teachers, to be functional in their respective classrooms. As Jansen (1998) posits, difficulties to apply a curriculum effectively, occurs from their assertion that education is generally more difficult to implement without quality incentives. Meanwhile, Goodlad and Sue (1992) confirm, that despite teachers and learners misunderstanding the curriculum, the plan intends to build on learning opportunities for a specific time frame and place. A curriculum provides a tool aimed at behavioural changes in learners through structured activities (Goodlad & Sue, 1992).

Despite that a curriculum is a creation of networks around content areas, learners and teachers found the connection to subject delivery to be very demanding in the real world, with subject material and practice becoming passive (Michie, 1999). The demand to articulate a curriculum for business studies, seems not to have addressed the current technological changes that would make the subject highly competitive among other subjects. The subject of Curriculum variations looks at how the school programme was altered since 1994, which has varied from Outcomes-Based Education (OBE), which was Curriculum 2005 (Jansen, 1998).

### **2.2.2 Curriculum changes in the South African Education System**

This hierarchy discuss the changes that occurred within our education system



After 1994 elections, the education system has adopted the new system, which was curriculum 2005 (C2005). The central reason for the curriculum change, was to end apartheid and give an equal opportunity to the previously disadvantaged categories of people, such as blacks, Coloureds and Indians. The political party then voted for the curriculum that envisaged breaking the racial differences and assumptions of apartheid (Christie, 2006).

Therefore, the following utterances were made on intentions to change some of the old apartheid curriculum thus; its content was controlled, content was abstract and theoretical, an assessment which focused on the ability of the learner to recall content. The curriculum tended to be developed by experts and imposed on teachers and learners from above.

This new curriculum was intended to clean up the education system, by giving all learners equal quality education, which would give learners pertinent skills, so that they can contribute towards the South Africa's ability to generate economic growth. In efforts to make those variations, OBE turned out to be a failure, because, first of all, the setting where it would be implemented was never considered, and secondly, the language was too complex and confusing, and at times inconsistent, which damaged the already delicate learning setting in schools and classrooms of the new the South Africa (Jansen, 1998). Jansen (1998) further states that most teachers did not have access to material on OBE, or comprehend where information may be obtainable, and most prominently, official support was rough, split and for some teachers it was missing. The subject of curriculum changes looks at how school programmes have altered since 1994. The curriculum has been modified since the inception of the Outcome Based Education (OBE) curriculum, commonly known as Curriculum 2005 (Jansen, 1998). Curriculum 2005 was planned in a way that teaching was to be learner centred, allowing space for learners to be proactive and active participants in their own learning. It was supposed to be a guide that allows teachers to shape their learning programme. Teachers and learners were very confused by the interpretation of the curriculum, and its difficulties of application. Vandeyar's (2003) findings on curriculum changes revealed that the new assessment practices in the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) (2003) posed challenges to educators because it (NCS) provides high standards of assessment, which educators do not understand. This becomes a challenge because it results in educators having difficulty in adapting to the new assessment practices. Instead of addressing the issue of equity, it started demanding more attention from the department on the non-compliances of the written curriculum. Therefore, the failure of C2005 suggested further changes within the curriculum are needed.

The Review Committee suggested that the curriculum should be supported by rationalizing design landscapes, simplifying its language, aligning curriculum and assessment, refining teacher orientation and training, learner sustenance materials and provincial support (DoE, 2000). Based on the team's recommendations, C2005 was revised, leading to the launch of the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) in 2002. Based on Revised National Curriculum Statement (2002, p.4), "it retains the values, purposes and thrust of C2005 and confirms the commitment to OBE". Nakabugo and Sieboger (2001) noted that curriculum

changes reflect over the entire assessment planning throughout the South African schools, colleges and universities which offers familiarization and clear terms to both educators and students. Considering new documentation, Motshekga (2009), the Minister of Basic Education on National Curriculum, gave assurance in the Assessment Policy Statement, that comprehensive and concise policy documents will replace the current Subject and Learning Area Statements, Learning Programmed Guidelines and Subject Assessment Guidelines for all the subjects listed in the National Curriculum Statement for Grades R -12. It is important to note that the development of National Curriculum and Assessment Statements must not be seen as a new curriculum but only as a refined and repackaged National Curriculum Statement Grades R – 12. Professional’s amendments to the curriculum in South Africa have entailed major changes in pedagogy, content and assessment which ensure that the main beneficiaries of the reformation of the system will be the learners. However the teachers are the “key contributors to the transformation of education in South Africa” (DoE, 2003) since they are responsible for implementing the curriculum in the classroom.

The Revised National curriculum (RNCS) was then developed to solve all the problems caused by (C2005). It was imagined to be a more rationalized curriculum which would be easy to introduce. Instead it turned out to be an addition to the education system, which the Department of Education is still trying to solve. The review found that there was too much integration and too little specification of the content to be learnt. After the department of education failed to recover the RNCS, they tossed out the curriculum Assessment and Policy Statement (CAPS) in January 2012. CAPS entails how teaching and valuation should be done and also help as a strong example of the official education system (Maree & Fraser, 2003). CAPS indicates exactly when certain topics need to be taught and learnt. It does not purport to be used as an outcome organizer, but rather sets of content or concepts and skills.

Linn and Miller (2005), point out, that in all subjects, the evaluation teams deemed the CAPS documents to be more user friendly than the NCS equivalents, mainly due to the number of subject-specific policy documents that had to be consulted in NCS (a minimum of four). Kelly (2004) concurs with Hoadley and Jansen (2002) that results at this level of documentation meant that lesson preparation became complicated and unwieldy for teachers using the NCS. Even the language used, is generally believed to be acceptable for both curricula. Some of the evaluation teams commented on the difficulty of the educational

‘jargon ‘used in the NCS when describing OBE. This has been reduced in the CAPS, where much simpler language is used to label the teaching and learning procedures (Umalusi, 2014).

Ultimately, on the curriculum changes in South Africa’s transition from an apartheid regime into a democratic society and its inclusion in the global economy, required a curriculum that was in line with these political and social innovations. The next section of the literature review, discusses the Business Studies curriculum in South Africa and the professional development needs of Business Studies teachers.

### **2.3 TEACHING OF BUSINESS STUDIES AS A SUBJECT**

The teaching and learning experience varies from the mode of subjects at a particular time, which involves different methods of teaching to achieve the lesson objectives for the subject to be taught. The primary purpose of teaching at any level of education is to inculcate fundamental change on the student (Tebabal & Kahsay, 2011). To facilitate the process of knowledge transmission, teachers should apply appropriate teaching methods that best suit given objectives and students’ exit profiles. Teachers require effective and motivating teaching strategies which make students want to learn more, and be interested in learning (Ayeni, 2011). This, therefore, suggests that Business Studies teachers should be vigilant and select effective teaching strategies during instructional delivery. Thus, various scholars have mentioned that effective Business Studies teaching strategies encompass case studies, computer aided learning, collaborative learning, brainstorming and many others (Warui, 2014).

Business Studies is a subject that addresses knowledge, skills, attitude and values critically required for informed, productive, ethical and responsible participation in the formal and informal economic sectors. The subject encompasses business principles, theory and practice that underpin the development of entrepreneurial initiatives, sustainable enterprise and economic growth (Umalusi, 2012). Mhlanga (2012) asserts that teaching business studies has always seemed easy to others but proven a challenge to most teachers, who still use the traditional way of teaching.

Business Studies is broadly recognized as an effective pivot for the development of professional or skilled manpower in all facets of commercial, industrial and managerial fields (Ahmed, 2015). Business Studies is a dynamic subject which prepares students for the challenges of the 21st century by acquainting them with the world of business (Emeasoba &

Igwe, 2016). Amoor (2010) confirms that business studies plays a noteworthy role in economic development by providing knowledge and skills to the students, thereby, empowering them to effectively impart knowledge into others, and be in a position to deal with sophisticated information, communication, and technology systems. Thus, the advent of Business Studies in the school curriculum exposes students to skills and competencies which are essential in their day to day lives, and the nation at large (Shizha & Kariwo, 2012). Considering the crucial role played by Business Studies in preparing the students to be active participants in economic development of a country, it is essential to investigate whether the strategies used by teachers at Advanced Levels enhances the teaching and learning of Business Studies.

Sithole (2012) states that many countries, the world over have restructured their secondary school curricula in the light of existing economic and social factors with a view to provide students with an education that will adequately prepare them for the world of work. In New Zealand, the Ministry of Education recommends the use of experiential learning approaches to enable students to construct knowledge on their own (New Zealand, Ministry of Education, 2008). Lauglo (2005) highlights, that the issue that drives the business studies curriculum in secondary education in Africa is an attempt to provide an economically relevant education that prepares students for the world of work. The Education Strategic Plan (2015) states that teachers should use teaching strategies, which are student-centred, to support the curriculum implementation on subject specifications in the classrooms. Linn and Miller (2005) contend that the urgency of implementation failed to confirm the technological abilities of the operatives (teachers) to the application of these incentives, and thus deprive full delivery of desired knowledge. The research acknowledged that imbalance from both sides occurs to disengage circular flow of teaching and learning, and as such short circuits fundamental change learning expectation. However, Tebabal and Kahsay (2011) avert that the primary purpose of teaching at any level of education subscribes to inculcate fundamental changes into the students. To facilitate the process of knowledge transmission, teachers should apply appropriate teaching methods that best suit given objectives and students' exit profiles. Teachers require effective and motivating teaching strategies which make students want to learn more and be interested in learning (Ayeni, 2011). This, therefore, suggests that Business Studies teachers should be vigilant and select effective teaching strategies during instructional delivery. Various scholars have mentioned that effective Business Studies

teaching strategies should include case studies, computer aided learning, collaborative learning, brainstorming and many others (Warui, 2014).

Previous studies confirm that case studies are widely used in the teaching and learning of Business Studies (Azuama, 2014). Case studies are active learning methods which present the scenarios that apply the concepts learned in the classroom to the real life situation (Beckisheva, Gasparyan & Kovalenko, 2015). Research has revealed that the use of case studies improves students' ability to synthesize complex analytical questions about the real-world issues which has resulted in students' motivation to participate in class activities, thereby, promoting learning and increasing performance on assessments (Bonney, 2015).

According to DBE (2011, p. 7) Business Studies is meant to be taught in a way that learners;

- Acquire and apply essential Business knowledge, skills and principles to productively and profitably conduct business in a changing business environment.
- Create business opportunities; creatively solve problems and take risk.
- Apply basic leadership and management skills and principles while working with others to accomplish business goals (DBE, 2011, p.7) at the expense of curriculum changes.

The teaching and learning for Business Studies guidelines are located in the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), introduced for Grade 10 in 2012, Grade 11 in 2013 and Grade 12 in 2014. The skills and knowledge acquired from Business Studies were provided by recent developments in the business environment and changed legislation and market activities. Furthermore, the NCS placed more importance on skills and the mixing between related content areas, whereas the CAPS is content-driven with additional detail given in reports of sub topics and its request in the broader South African context. In terms of the extent of content, the NCS covers a greater breadth compared to the CAPS, but CAPS necessitates far more intensive teaching than the NCS, since there is a higher level of specification of exactly what content should be allocated, and a higher intensity is required. In CAPS there is extra focus on contextualization and the content indicates elevated cognitive challenges (since more detail and depth is required) (Umalusi, 2012).

Considering changes in curriculum, and teaching of Business Studies in South Africa requires provision of its capability to assist learners becoming entrepreneurs, or being able to start their own businesses. This involves craftsmanship by a teacher to apply the new teaching

methods of Business Economics, which emphasized memory learning which was about remembering the facts, while Business Studies methods promotes creative thinking and problem solving. However, strategies are needed for maximum delivery of potential entrepreneurs in future markets, who should possess critical understanding and learning of Business Studies through creative thinking and problem solving (Kallaway, 2012, p. 27). Hamp-Lyons (2007) supports that critical thinking in Business Studies teaching necessitates a deep and clear understanding of the business world. Yet, Chika (2012) confirms that learners need to acquire meaningful learning experiences through quality mentorship to advance their knowledge to further enable them to understand meanings throughout the world. This means that learners become independent thinkers.

Dube and Moffat (2009) argue that the primary intention of business studies purpose was to prepare learners for a business type career, or simply to understand how organizations work in the real world. Learner's rigorous preparation serves to equip them to readily withstand different businesses/markets conflicts and to be able to apply their intellectual ability to analyse the realities thus emphasizing the importance of critical thinking (Mc Farlane, 1997). However, Pihie and Sani (2009) found that observation has shown that teachers have not been able to adapt to all these changes that occurred within the subject since they are still using the traditional method of teaching, where a teacher is regarded as the only source of information, and the learners as the vessels that need to be filled with knowledge or learning material. Within these changes, teachers must be willing to apply the new approach and must be able to articulate their ideas to make a meaningful contribution to the new curriculum implementation. That is why this study seeks to explore the Business Studies teachers' experiences of learning through PLCs in the context of curriculum changes.

## **2.4 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHERS**

Curriculum changes have confirmed the significance of requirements for professional development of teachers, since they are at the vanguard of the application of the Curriculum. This suggests that teachers need to be reinforced and developed in order to remain well-informed of these variations. However, the research conducted by Maistry (2008) and Moletsane (2004) showed that there is displeasure in the level of development which has been given to the teachers, based on one-day workshops, it has confirmed to be a determined process for the same people to be the agents of change, as they were bombarded with loads of

information without assimilation. Like Kelly (2004), Shepard (2001) maintains that the main requirement for change and implementation is ‘transformation of assessment practices’. According to Kelly (2004), assessment plays a major role in the innovations because assessment can be used as change agents towards implementation activities.

The evaluation of teaching practice tools for teachers’ professional development, Vandeyar et al. (2003) contended, that factors which accelerated educators’ ignorance to policy was the new and difficult jargon that accompanies the new curriculum. However, Vandeyar et al (2003) gave an example of “Specific Outcome”, “Range Statements” as some of the terminologies that educators were battling with. They did not understand the relationship between the terms, the impact and the role they have in assessment. These findings confirm Hoadley & Jansen’s (2002) argument that when prescribing a curriculum, the curriculum practice and plan do not always correspond due to fragmented workshops appearing, which hamper teachers’ professional development in South Africa. However, as mentioned above, not all workshops accomplish the tasks they are plan to, which remains detrimental to delivering teacher learning. Teacher learning; “states to the process by which teachers change toward know-how” (Kelly, 2006, p. 506). The attendance of teachers in professional development workshops should be with the aim of empowering teachers and therefore, increase their knowledge of their work. It is however a hostile state when teachers would join a once off workshop and hope that they have improved in terms of their professional development. (Kelly, 2006).

As Thomas and Guskey (2002) allure, that professional development makes the effort to bring change to the classroom practices of teachers, in their attitudes and beliefs, and in the learning outcomes of learners. Joshua and Bibiano (2015) challenged the efficiency of teaching business studies with modern computer instruments to ease difficulties which occur without proper education of learners to understand computer literacy usage as a futile adventure. Meanwhile, Kwok (2014) unveils that professional development is important to improve the competency of teachers facing various challenges. The researcher believes, that if teachers were developed professionally, with knowledge and skills they would be able to adapt to curriculum changes. It will also make an enormous difference in how they perceive and experience these Curriculum changes.

Professional development is the skill, knowledge and ongoing learning undertaken to improve one’s ability to do the job, and grow as a professional, be on top of the game and

stay abreast professionally. Professional development determines how teachers have experienced this and to what extent they have understood them. The level of professional development given to teachers at school level in order to implement these changes is still in question, judging by the quality of results obtained by learners (Kelly, 2006).

Initially, the nature and purpose of professional development workshops was designed to inform the teachers about what is to be taught throughout the year. The teacher is further developed on matters pertaining to how some subject topics could be made accessible in the classroom, how assessments are conducted, how to tackle some subject topics and how they are taught to learners, as well as how teachers can work with other teachers within and outside their schools (Moletsane, 2004). Concurring with statement above, Flores (2005) asserts that professional development does not modify the way things have been, but modifies the method by which things are done in the arena of any profession. This is typically enforced by the alteration that has taken place, in this regard, the education organization, which has encouraged people to keep up the pace and abreast with their counterparts. Change can be positive once the people who experience it understand the need for change. I believe it is safe to say that the research that has been conducted on professional development has shown that professional development closely relates to change, in a sense that change is often experienced by the very same people who undergo development of any kind (Flores, 2005).

On this note, teachers' professional learning and development tries to correlate the more important morals and principles, as well as contributory purposes. Kelly (2006) affirms that teachers are on the right track if they work with other teachers to meet their professional development necessities. Sithole (2012) argues, that how the teachers choose to get information on their subject is related to another principle of professional development. Joshua and Bibiano (2015) disagree that professional development propels business studies teachers to reflect on their own practice to maximize the core objectives to advance students' capacity to economic stability. Another study entails that subject advisors strongly believe that teachers need to attend professional development workshops to satisfy their professional development needs on teaching their subject effectively (Msomi, 2016). Nonetheless, Pihie, and Sani (2009) state, that awareness of these challenges does not only affect novice teachers, but the experienced teachers equally, as they face the same challenges with Curriculum interpretation that leads to professional development.

It is noteworthy that engagement should be made available to focus on relevance to their core duties of conveying content and subject, by pedagogical approach to work. This promotes high acquisition of subject information and insights which could emanate from professional development workshops, where teachers are given tasks comprised of activities in relation to their teaching subjects (Gounder, 2014). Nevertheless, Tang, GU and Whinston (2012) confirmed that motivational drive like love, commitment or passion is a stimulant to make teachers consciously appropriate possible expertise designed for them as part of their relevant job descriptions on professional development.

Maistry (2008) asserts that there was argument about the Department of Education trying to develop teachers through Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) at a school level, which has been criticized, with a view that IQMS does not evaluate competency sufficiently, to assist teachers to identify their needs (Maistry, 2008). Mokoena (2005) states, that through the IQMS evaluation, most teachers were willing to be appraised in their professional and developmental status. Maistry (2008) further noted that when development and performance appraisal are combined, it often makes it difficult to transparently and accurately identify teacher development needs, to teach business studies related lessons. Teachers perhaps undergo fewer processes because of salary progressions being attached, and not for substantive teacher learning and development ever taking place.

The continuous monitoring process of teachers' capacity to deliver in a difficult environment was intriguing, intimidating undemocratic and it was not developing teachers professionally (Mokoena, 2005). This point indicates that the issue of; that either teacher knows what has to be done, or not in terms of professional development should be addressed accordingly. Therefore, Kate (2010) believes teachers' professional development with knowledge and skills would help them to adapt to any curriculum changes through transformative application of ideas, to train resourceful students who are problem solvers to build a strong nation.

#### **2.4.1 Teacher Learning**

Teacher learning maintains a notion that lacks defined accuracy in literature, nonetheless, Fraser, Kennedy, Reid and McKinney (2007, p. 157) postulated that "teachers' professional learning can also be taken to represent the processes that are instinctive, deliberate, individual and social, result on specific changes in the professional knowledge, skills, attitudes, beliefs on teachers' actions". Meanwhile, by definition in line with the Borko's (2004) opinion, who

declares that the core of teacher learning can only be satisfied through exploration of different backgrounds and taking into account, professional learning which engages teachers on an individual capability, as learners themselves and more appropriately, as part of a communal organization such as a learning community.

Given various meanings, teacher learning can be understood by engaging with theories of teacher's learning. Kelly (2006) defines teacher learning as a process that involves both, a cognitive and social approach within the context. The cognitivist approach to learning asserts that 'teacher expertise resides entirely on the individual mind' (Kelly, 2006, p. 506). Individual minds that culminate reasoning faculty to associate with the environment, this approach often underpins teacher development workshops, which entails that teachers were expected to acquire knowledge which they should apply to their classroom context. Bandura (2008) posits that learning is a cognitive process, which occurs continuously in a social context with people of an ecosystem. According to Kelly (2006), the cognitive learning approach ignores teacher identity and assumes that knowledge is transferable and teaching can take place anywhere at any time.

Dube and Moffat (2009), argue on premise that social participation occurs in the learning process of each quadrant, and members construct meaning through their active participation and negotiation which consequently impacts on the development of a member's identity. Kamla (2012) maintains that teachers learn faster from students, as classroom participation takes on collaborative exploration of the subject. As such, business studies insights empower teamwork activities that allows new knowledge discovery, especially when handling difficult subject tasks. Each social interaction is therefore considered to be a community of practice since these interactions are defined by the common goal of learning to improve practice and contribute to quality teaching and learning. Gay, Mills and Airasian (2006), and Henson (2004) reaffirmed that alternative solutions emerge at questioning, brainstorming and presentation periods where students were given the privilege to explore answers to given problems, which requires modern solving methods. The Business studies subject goes with statistical instruments leading to creativity. Fraser et al. (2007) defined teacher learning as a process of self-development, acceptance of change and individual growth in the knowledge, skills and teachers' beliefs. Teacher learning communities acknowledge the importance of moving away from the traditional way of teaching and learning to adapt socially, with new innovations. At this juncture, Dufour and Eaker (2008. p. 27) suggest that teachers' learning

encourages transition from a tradition of isolation to a culture of collaboration in teaching modality. The collaboration in teaching plays vital role in improving teachers' competency to face various challenges (Kwok, 2014). In contrast, Schmoker (2005, p. 141), claims that teachers learn best from other teachers, whereby they literally support themselves by teaching the art of teaching. This necessitates an active contribution of individuals' ranges beyond mere engaging in activities rather than a sense of professionalism in learning practices. This shared mentioned engagement of individuals is branded to share activity with relative consequences in a community of practice.

Borko (2004) recognizes that positions of collaborative interactions amongst teachers, to substitute teacher learning in their development which constitutes experiences. Meanwhile, Desimone (2009) clarifies that the collaborative connections between teachers of similar school grades serves as an influential tool for teacher learning. Fraser *et al.*, (2007) concurred that teacher learning undergoes a rounded process of individual and collaborative procedures aimed at recovering the professional information, skills, arrogances, politics, and actions of the teachers. This meaning consequently is best suited to drive this study since it was summarized as the essential component of collaboration which is allied to PLCs. According to Evans (2002), who asserts that a process, which neither is on-going nor may have been completed. However, Heinonen and Poikkijoki (2006) avert that professional development activities always lead to teacher learning through seminars and workshops which seem effective in supporting teacher learning, thus improving experiences to development.

These views concur with the results of a qualitative study conducted by Free and Olivier (2010), who found that teachers believed that the workshops held by the Department of Education in the Eastern Cape by trained specialists were beneficial to them in terms of being connected, providing sustenance and preparing the teachers with fruitful training. The qualities of a beneficial workshop are additionally highlighted in a diverse method. In contrast, a Boston (2013) study explored that secondary mathematics teachers' learning and instructional alterations after participating in a professional development workshop revealed that teachers' learning was better while contributing to solving mathematical tasks; the same approach could be applied to business studies problems. Furthermore it was noted that through attending these workshops teachers were helped to improve their knowledge and their instructional practices during reflexive interactions, which have positive impacts on student's education.

Jita and Mokhele (2014) support that to understand teachers on constructive availability to deliver professional development packages, and to understand the decentralized curriculum leadership system, might appear and work effectively with teachers. This ensures that, by playing a central role in their own professional development, and guiding others on how to advance classroom practice, signifies fairly important findings that have not been explored in the literature for accountability.

## **2.5 TEACHERS EXPERIENCES OF LEARNING THROUGH PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY**

PLCs is a work of professionals who adopts professional attitude, this implies that it focus on the interest of learners and support them in their learning this is a group of professionals that discuss how to translate educational innovations into their practice. This is a group of teachers that increase the capacity of the school to achieve sustainable improvement in the learning that takes place in the school. ( DBE, 2015)

The teachers' experiences of learning from a professional community, ensures skills acquisition from micro and macro system of education sector. Schoemaker (2005, p.141) concurs that teachers learn best from other teachers, in settings where they literally reflect by evaluating their methods through each other on the art of teaching. Based on learning through collegial routes, some current literature contributes to teachers' experiences of learning, strengthens insights and advocates provision for teacher learning as a cooperative practice (Jurasaitė-Harbison 2009; Lieberman & Pointer Mace, 2009; Harris & Jones, 2010; Wong, 2010). To build on the explanatory paradigm, Mothilal (2011) focuses on teacher learning through clustering, provoking the thoughts of five participants' experiences within a cluster. This exposed that cluster learning was instrumental towards inspiring collegiality and collaboration between teachers and was also helpful in providing chances for teachers to involve themselves in self-initiated learning. Furthermore, it was found that teachers in the cluster engaged in informal replication, performed as a result of the distribution of content knowledge about lessons. In the same vein, Vandeyar (2005), and Hamp-Lyons (2007) concurred that feedback assists the educator to model and shape appropriate performance of learners and at the same time give guidance to learners on how to self- assess. This kind of feedback clearly depicts the manner in which assessment strategies and classroom practices have to be changed. Moreover, it is evidence that the educator no longer associates errors

with lack of intellectual ability, but rather diagnoses the cause of the learners' errors in order to give appropriate feedback.

Before the end of each year, the Teacher Learning Services in the District issues a circular to all circuits that fall under its jurisdiction. The circular contains the plan of development workshops which are to take place the following year. Such workshops prepare teachers for the following year. The management of the school is thus able to plan for the absence of a teacher due to the workshops. In (CAPS for history DBE-2011) it is stated that these workshops are meant to enable teachers to align their teaching in classrooms as per Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS). The National Curriculum Statement (NCS) Grades R-12 of CAPS states that the purpose of learning and teaching is to "create an interest in and enjoyment of the study of the past; knowledge understanding and appreciation of the past and the forces that shaped it; the ability to undertake a process of historical enquiry based on skills and an understanding of basic concepts in the subject" (DBE, 2011 p. 8). These purposes require that the teachers have a clear understanding of the new policy CAPS. The scholars contributed; Shepard, 2001; Hoadley & Jansen, 2002; Vandeyar & Killen, 2003; Maree & Fraser, 2003; Hamp-Lyons, 2007) believe that transformation occurrences on assessment practices can affect a particular curriculum for change of system as an indication of the power and the influence that assessment has on the implementation process. The maximum precautions of the curriculum content, input, outcomes and competence based that need to redefine the learners' simplicity (Kelly, 2004). Factors that could disturb the plan and the practice of curriculum include; teacher interpretation, teacher misunderstanding, resource constraints, learner background knowledge, teaching methods used, classroom shapes, class size, and teaching style.

During the course of familiarization, the above generally transpires during departmental workshops. Msomi, (2016) acknowledges that activities given, from which there was supposed to be feedback in the form of presentations within the following hours fell short. The activities comprised how to teach certain topics and how to tackle essay questions in the classroom. The teachers were divided into groups and each group would provide a presenter during the presentation session. After the presentations, the subject advisor summed up the whole activity for the day (Msomi, 2016).

In enunciating the skills to sustain teacher learning, Hord and Sommers (2008, p. 97) explain that the principal position is to develop staff members' meaningful discussion services related to "dialogue as used to create infinite conversations to promote learning for the adults." The

idea of speaking with meaning in a PLC, proposed by Clark, Moore & Carlson (2008) would benefit teachers' dialogic engagement in a PLC by enhancing their communication skills in a PLC. According to Clark *et al.*, (2008) this form of expression and conceptually based report of communicating with peers is a distinguishing factor between a successful and unsuccessful PLC. Additionally principals should evaluate the nature of dialogue communication that takes place in a PLC. Hord and Sommers (2008) add that thoughtful practice should be entrenched in day-to-day work. This results in reflective dialogue between teachers.

Moreover, the Umalusi document that described the CAPS package: Social Sciences (2014), states clearly what is required of teachers in order to be regarded competent. The document addresses a number of topics and/or sub-topics represented in the curricula and the complexity and extent of cognitive challenge associated with the topics. Therefore, the pedagogy used in Business Studies should support learning as envisaged in the CAPS document. Teachers should understand the curriculum objectives that pertain to Business Studies teaching. Then teachers will be directed to implement relevant assessments.

Therefore, the subject teachers have an obligation to equip themselves with content knowledge of the subject. This content knowledge is the kind of knowledge which pertains to the actual subject matter to be learned or taught. On this point, Shulman (1987, p. 128) explains that "the knowledge, understanding, skill and dispositions that are to be learned by school children" by the efficiency of professional teachers for internalized acquisition of a subject.

### **2.5.1 Teachers' Implementation of Innovative Strategies**

Le Donné, Fraser and Bousquet (2016), maintained that basic implementation of innovative strategies are paramount to simplify the social science subject, which involves actualizing practical instructional materials to transform a system. This implies that by teaching those core scientific principles, one could improve the economy which could thrive beyond imagination. Opfer (2016) maintains that professionalism needs to be attached to all teaching practices that influence the outcomes of methods applied as a teacher within the space of education. As such, Wayne and Youngs (2003) emphasize the personal qualities of teachers that might successfully overcome the barriers to teaching and learning, particularly business studies at a school. On this note, Woolfolk (2010) agrees that engagement of subject management promotes efficiency, whereby both teachers and learners enjoy mutual

relationships through continuous feedbacks on assigned lesson activities. According to Ayeni (2011), teaching is a process that involves bringing about desirable changes in learners that could help to achieve specific outcomes on the subject.

Ganyaupfu (2013) asserts that a possible explanation for teacher-directed instruction being so common across participating countries, is that this type of strategy is less time-consuming than active learning and cognitive activation strategies, and requires less commitment from disengaged students. Both active learning and cognitive activation instruction strategies necessitate more planning and student dedication than teacher-directed instruction for business studies. Teachers who need to cover a lengthy curriculum or focus on preparing for standardised tests may not have sufficient time to prepare for these lessons (Boardman and Woodruff, 2004). However, Hattie (2009), states that likely, not many teachers have been adequately trained to manage and implement the practices related to both of these strategies to teach business studies, unlike related subjects. At this juncture, Woolfolk (2010) concurs that an increase of the number of planning hours for business studies teachers can provide them with more time to develop more complex teaching strategies to disseminate adequately to the learners. Adunola (2011) maintains that teachers need to be conversant with numerous teaching strategies that recognize the magnitude of complexities of the concepts to be covered within the curriculum, to realize standardization.

### **2.5.2 Accountability versus Professional Development**

Darling-Hammond (1990, p. 61), strongly believes that “professional accountability improves the level of knowledge in the profession and promotes continual refinement and improvement of overall practice as effectiveness, rather than compliance”. This means that educators could perform better in teaching tasks, without having to comply with the dictates of policy makers and bureaucrats, which erodes their professional competence. Fuhrman (1999) states that assessments have progressively changed from their original, and traditional form, into a modern, regulated curriculum plan. Darling-Hammond (1990) gives a generic description of the forms of accountability; Fuhrman (1999) provides evidence of how accountability is currently linked to assessment. Meanwhile assessment results are increasingly used as tools used to hold schools accountable. Accountability takes a physical summative assessment of results direction. Fuhrman (1999) shows that assessment results of are used as evidence of quality of the system. This means that educators’ professional abilities are judged according to the performance of their learners. Summative assessment, in this instance serves as a

measuring tool of learners' performance. This impacts on the teaching because educators put more emphasis on assessment, rather than focusing on teaching and learning because they will be accountable for the outcomes. The knowledge that learners need to internalize their learning during teaching for future usage is no longer a matter of concern; educators rather put more emphasis on preparing learners for standardized tests, thus satisfying the needs of policy makers.

Observation of the direction that summative assessment is taking recently, according to the two theorists, Darling-Hammond (1990) and Fuhrman (1999) clearly indicated that bureaucrats' demands impact negatively on the professionalism of educators. As such, professional accountability of educators to train learners by ensuring learners' progress is nowadays shifted to educating for assessment purposes. At this juncture, the researcher found that bureaucratic accountability is closely related to the examination culture (Hamp-Lyons, 2007), since both practices are dominated by assessment. The researcher maintains from literature, that the learning culture of (HampLyons; 2007) corresponds with professional accountability because, formative assessment is a part of learning culture and an element of professional accountability is not given much attention in classroom practice. It was evident by literature that little attention has been given to either practices; learning culture (Hamp-Lyons; 2007) and professional accountability (Darling-Hammond; 1990 & Fuhrman; 1999). The above literature argued that the twin components to build teacher's development are very crucial.

Stoll (2006) further argues that when teachers share ideas about how they actually teach in their classrooms, they get equipped with new teaching methods that are easy to transfer to their own classrooms. When teachers collaborate with the aim of professionally developing themselves, they become part of a professional learning community (Brodie, 2013). In professional learning communities, teacher learning occurs because of the interaction that characterizes these communities (De Clercq, 2014). Such learning is valued because one's knowledge gets transformed when combined with that of others, in the generation of new understandings (Kennedy, 2005). Brodie (2013, p. 6) applauds collaboration of professional learning communities because, "individual teacher's learning from conventional teacher development programs does not necessarily make for coherent or sustained changes for learners".

The study of PLC is evidence substantiating the claims by Riveros et al. (2012) who argued that the most important aspect of PLCs is teacher learning; however they point to the absence of research on this phenomenon in literature? This claim contributes to the justification behind this research study on teacher learning in PLCs. Although South African literature suggests that there is currently an increasing awareness of the need for teacher learning (Uddin, 2010; Mothilal, 2011; Prammoney, 2011; Thaver, 2011; Sing, 2012) the studies conducted are confined to the context of educational reform and are not conducted within the context of PLCs. Professional learning communities, as illustrated in the discussion on teacher learning and PLCs, show evidence that the significance of PLCs has multiplied in international literature. However, teacher learning in PLCs in South African literature is under-researched.

### **2.5.3 Effective Classroom Management**

Additionally, a professional development activity ensures focus on the implementation of active learning or cognitive activation, which can be helpful when introducing these strategies to teachers. Bharadwaj and Pal (2011) affirm that teaching methods work effectively, mainly once they suit learners' needs, since every learner interprets and responds to questions in a unique way (Chang, 2010). Meanwhile, Ayeni (2011), asserts that providing support and advice on dealing with disruptive classrooms would lead to fewer interruptions, better time management and potential innovation in business studies during the lessons. At this stage, teachers should exercise their experiences to address such shortfalls. Zakaria, Chin and Daud (2010) specified that teaching should not merely focus on dispensing rules, definitions and procedures for students to memorize, but should also actively engage students as primary participants. At the expense of curriculum changes in technological topics, Hesson and Shad (2007) disagree that teachers should be conscious through the application of complex instructional tools, especially when related to statistics, which seems difficult to understand, and attracts repeated explanation for clarification for maximum results in teaching and learning in a business studies classroom.

Curriculum changes have shifted methods of teaching, to empower learners through the operatives of an innovation driven paradigm from traditional methods to a modern system that contextualizes learner centred approaches, requiring less teacher dominance in teaching activities (Kouwenhoven, 2010). It is noteworthy that teachers who are deficient in professional practice are not likely to help the students meet their challenges of learning

adequately (Ayeni, 2010, p. 145). The teachers are expected to have sound knowledge of their subject areas to be able to select appropriate and adequate facts for planning lesson notes, effective delivery of lessons, proper monitoring and evaluation of students' performance, providing regular feed-back on students' performance, improvisation of instructional materials, adequate keeping of records and appropriate discipline of students (Ayeni, 2010, p. 144).

Cognitive science and cognitive psychology confirms that the process of constructing knowledge is dependent on existing knowledge, the context or situation, and internalisation of information in an organised cognitive structure (Bruce, Klopper, & Mellish, 2011). On the basis of these viewpoints of learning it is clear that the focus of learning outcomes has shifted from content to competence (Braband, 2008; Brandon & All, 2010). It is the responsibility of the educator to ensure that all teaching and learning activities are aligned with the outcome, reality, and assessment tasks while it is students' responsibility to actively engage with the learning material in order to internalise the theory and skills and in this way construct new knowledge (Reaburn & Strategy, 2009). Interaction amongst members of the learning community may occur face to face or through the use of electronic media (Reaburn & Strategy, 2009; Kala, Isaramalai, & Pohthong, 2010) and helps to build cognitive bridges (Brandon & All, 2010). The quality and quantity of engagement and interaction are among other factors dependent on the degree of the presence of the facilitator (Raeburn, Muldoon, & Bookallil, 2009). Another important factor in teacher's developments is professional accountability which shows the reflexivity and transparency of teaching and learning.

## **2.6 PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES (PLCs)**

The professional learning communities entail relationships that constitute knowledge exploration for expertise development. Therefore, communities rely on a skill that defines who is professional in a particular community. Dufour and Eaker (2008) affirm that a professional is someone embodied with expertise in a particular vocational subject(s) or a specialized field. This intestates an individual who has not only pursued further training, but one who remains current in its evolving knowledge base.

The examination on teacher growth points to the importance of teacher professional Learning communities in indorsing teacher development. Therefore, is the formation of Professional

Learning Communities (PLCs) to reinforce teacher professionalism to promote collective contribution in professional movements for professional growth. Challenges facing teacher professional development in South Africa are considerable. They comprise incomplete access to quality continuous professional development (CPD) opportunities for teachers and a softness in the system to Attain dramatic development in the quality of education and learning in schools. Much professional development is unmoving organized as isolated and one-time trainings, missing a intelligible strategy, monitoring and follow-up. Research has designated that these one-off initiatives often fail to have tough effects on teaching and learning. Research also stresses the importance of working together as a cornerstone of effective professional development. (DBE, 2015).

In the mid-90s, researchers recognized that educational reform efforts are of collaborative importance and a possibility that may improve teaching and learning (Darling-Hammond, 1996; DuFour, 2004; DuFour et al., 2008; Goddard, Goddard, & Tschannen-Moran, 2007; Louis et al., 1996; Stoll et al., 2006). Professional learning communities provide a structure which guides procedures that allow teachers unite to work in partnership, teaching and learning for the attainment of increased student achievements and school improvements. Stoll and Colleagues (2006) contended that varying definitions are internationally accepted, based on commonalities which suggest that a professional learning community is “a group of people sharing, and critically cross-examining their practice in an ongoing, reflective, collaborative, inclusive, learning-oriented and growth promoting-way” ( Stoll & Colleagues, p. 223).

In other countries, the term learning is presented by two characters: the first means ‘to study’ and the second means to practice constantly. Many schools operate as through their personnel knows everything they will ever need to know, the day they enter the profession. The school that operates as a professional learning community recognizes that its members must engage in ongoing study and constant practice that characterizes an organizational commitment to continuous improvement (DuFour & Eaker, 2008). A community may be interpreted differently, due different perspectives of things to different people. Some may liken community to a safe haven where survival is assured through mutual cooperation with others or a place of emotional support with deep sharing and bonding with close friends. Some see a community as an intense crucible for professional growth.

According to Jita and Mokhele (2014), affirm that teachers' concepts of a learning community and professional learning have been interchangeably used to align teacher learning forms of collaboration and collegiality. Mnyende (2016) suggests that a professional learning community comprises a teachers' collaborative, working together on similar objectives as a team or a group of teams working interdependently to achieve a common goal for which members hold themselves mutually responsible. Siguroardottir (2010) disagrees that professional learning community shares a common purpose through interactive medium to enhance their practices. The researcher maintains that collaborative learning for teachers improves learner outcome.

DuFour et al. (2008, p. 14) concurred that a professional learning community enforces educators' commitment to an ongoing working collaborative process, through collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for their students Professional learning communities ensure an appropriate structure, thereby enabling a collaborative focus on shared goals, classroom practice and reflective professional inquiry (Barber & Mourshed, 2009; Bolam et al., 2005; Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; King, 2011). The professional learning community model is a grand design and a powerful new way of working together that profoundly affects the practices of schooling. But introducing and sustaining the concept requires hard work. It requires the school staff to focus on learning rather than teaching, working collaboratively on matters related to learning, and holding itself accountable for the kind of results that fuel repeated development (Hord, 1997).

Comparable results were derived from a desktop study conducted by Steyn (2013) who explored how PLCs in schools can be implemented successfully to improve the continuing professional development of South African teachers. Cantrell (2014) asserts that Steyn's desktop study is a summation of various research studies that have already been conducted. Although it highlights significant findings from those studies, it fails to acknowledge the actual experiences of participants. Analysis of literature in this study revealed that significant factors need to be ensured for the development of professional learning communities in schools (Chika, 2012). This included: creating a clear understanding of PLCs, identifying suitable facilitators for PLCs, creating a supporting environment for PLCs, principals' involvement in PLCs and networking with other schools.

Given and Santagata (2011) recommend that professional teacher development provides opportunities for teachers to collaborate with colleagues and other experts to improve their

practice. Cantrell (2014) found that participating teachers had little experience in collaborating to improve practice, but after engagement in collaboration, it was observed that “they knew that each of their colleagues would be faced with the same task (providing significant possibility for collaboration) and each would be video-taped while teaching the problem in a lesson (providing significant motivation to teach it well) and yet teachers prepared in isolation. Continuous learning among teachers was not a school norm”, (Given & Santagata, 2011, p. 446). This means that collaboration contributes to life-long learning and thus, must be treated as a norm in all schools.

Conducted research has shown that when teachers do the hard work necessary to implement these principles, their collective ability to help all students learn will rise (Given & Santana, 2011). If they fail to demonstrate the discipline to initiate and sustain this work, then their school is unlikely to become more effective, even if those within it claim to be a professional learning community. The rise or fall of the professional learning community concept depends not on the merits of the concept itself, but on the most important element in the improvement of any school, the commitment and persistence of the educators within it. This is how the concept is further explained (Given & Santana, 2011).

### **2.6.1 Principles of Professional Learning Communities**

According to Hord (2004) the role of the leadership in providing support to teachers is of paramount importance for the development of a PLC. The necessity of supportive conditions offered by leadership is reiterated by Sargent and Hannum (2009), who investigated the nature and forms of PLCs in rural Gansu, one of China’s poorest provinces, by conducting a qualitative study viewed through an interpretive lens. These schools are characterised by principal leadership, teachers own initiative and institutional support. It was also evident that strong leadership was linked with the engagement of PLCs. Furthermore, results revealed that notions of collective lesson planning, peer observation, demonstration lessons and teacher research were familiar ideas to all. Subsequently Hord (1997) proposes five basic dimensions of a PLC which includes; shared values and vision focusing on learners learning, collective responsibility, collaboration, and reflective inquiry and promotion of group as well as individual learning practice. In a holistic view, the idea is that if these principles are applied, interaction and learning among teachers is promoted (Gounder, 2014).

There is broad agreement in the literature that members of a PLC consistently take collective responsibility for student learning (King & Newmann, 2001; Kruse, Louis & Bryk, 1995; Leithwood & Louis, 1998). This assumed that such collective responsibility helps to sustain commitment that avoids peer pressure and prescribes accountability to enjoy acceptability with others (Newmann & Wehlage, 1995). The perceived information and safety guides encourage personal and confidential information for development. Many studies affirm concepts of collective or collaboration learning focus mostly on deeper continually, collaborative, teacher directed learning which is required for teachers effective growth (Chappius & Stiggins, 2009). Katz and Earl (2010) concur that professional learning through collaboration is regarded as an intensive interaction that engages educators in opening up their beliefs and practices to investigation and debate. It also provides exposure to new ideas and opportunities to learn together and enhance their professional development.

The powerful collaboration that characterizes professional learning communities is a systematic process in which teachers work together to analyze and improve their classroom practice. Teachers work in teams, engaging in an ongoing cycle of questions that promote deep team learning. This process, in turn, leads to higher levels of student achievement. This concerns the involvement of staff in development activities with consequences for more than one person, and goes beyond superficial exchanges of help and support, or assistance, for example, joint review and feedback (Hord, 2004).

### **2.6.2 Reflective Professional Inquiry**

The principle of Reflection stresses that professional as well as personal growth is enhanced if the learner or student is able to reflect on action/s administered. These principles of collaboration promote working relationships and reflective dialogue (Louis et al., 1995), about serious educational topics, towards solving issues/problems, which require the application of new knowledge to caution about privatization of practice (Louis et al., 1995). Frequent examining of teachers' practice, through mutual observation, case analysis, joint planning and curriculum development (Newmann & Wehlage, 1995) is seeking new knowledge (Hord, 2004), and tacit knowledge is constantly converted into shared knowledge through interaction (Fullan, 2001), and applying new ideas and information to problem solving and solutions, addressing pupils' needs (Hord, 1997).

Smyth (1992, p. 34) describes reflection as placing an emphasis on learning through questioning and investigation to lead to a development of understanding. This implies looking back at what has been done and checking the weaknesses and strengths. Professional, as well as personal growth, is enhanced if the learner or a student, in this case the teacher, is able to reflect from actions administered. Positive analysis of self would enable one to identify points in which to make corrections or to maintain good work. This therefore implies that work well-done requires that one checks his or her ability and performance. Shulman (1997, p. 514) concurs that schools must create occasions for teachers to become reflective about their work, whether through journal writing, case conferences, video clubs, or support teacher portfolios. In all such endeavours, teachers need a great deal of support from the school and authorities.

### **2.6.3 Group Promotion and Individual Learning.**

The professional learning community model flows from the assumption that the core mission of formal education is not simply to ensure that students are taught, but to ensure that they learn. Dufour (2004) states, that to function as a professional learning community, teachers become aware of the differences between their commitment to ensure learning for all students and their lack of a coordinated strategy to respond, when some students do not learn. The staff addresses this discrepancy by designing strategies to ensure that struggling students receive additional time and support, no matter who their teacher is (Emeasoba & Igwe, 2016). As the school moves forward, every professional in the building must engage with colleagues in the ongoing exploration of three crucial questions that drive the work of those within a professional learning community: All teachers are learners with their colleagues (Louse, 1995). Collective learning is also obvious, through collective knowledge creation.

A Stoll (2006) study showed that developing professional learning communities (PLCs) appears to hold considerable promise for capacity building for sustainable improvement (Stoll, 2006). As such, this has become a 'hot topic' in many countries. While we have learnt a tremendous amount about how to improve individual schools over the last 25 years, educators internationally face major challenges in trying to sustain improvement over time, and spread improvements throughout whole systems. To deal with the impact of globalization and rapid change, new ways of approaching learning seem to be required. Learning can no longer be left to individuals (Stoll, 2006).

This notion, therefore, draws attention to the possibility that a range of people based inside and outside a school can mutually enhance each other's teaching and contributions to the school improvement. The community focus emphasizes mutually supportive relationships and developing shared norms and values, whereas the focus on professionals and professionalism is on the acquisition of knowledge and skills, orientation to clients and professional autonomy. This can lead to tensions, not least in matters concerned with the regulation of teacher behaviour (Louis et al., 1995; McMahon, 2001) and operation of any performance-related pay systems. Fullan (2001) concludes that effective schools establish professionally collaborative cultures and argues that attention should shift from focusing on individuals (e.g. merit pay, career ladders etc.) to developing schools as PLCs.

In schools, colleges and universities it is a topic of discussion about the increasingly interdependent nature of all stakeholders in the educational process, and it is supported by research, how teaching and learning are best facilitated. It is an international movement which appreciates inclusivity and diversity while valuing the role of teachers in different settings (Hord, 1997). Professional learning communities consist of a group of teachers committed to participating in collaborative, reflective inquiry to increase their skills and elevate them to achieve the shared goals (DuFour et al., 2008; King, 2011; Stoll et al., 2006). In addition to the popularity of PLCs as a form of teacher learning and the numerous benefits it yields for improved teaching and learning, literature also suggests that PLCs have the potential to transform teaching practices (Levine & Lomos, 2011) and increase student achievement (Vescio *et al.*, 2008). This is confirmed by Vescio et al. (2008), who investigated the impact of PLCs on learner's achievement through a desktop study reviewing studies. Therefore, analysed literature revealed that eight of the studies linked participation in a PLC to student achievement. A Louis and Marks (1998) study reviewed by Vescio et al. (2008) proved that schools which had strongest PLCs had achieved much higher learner achievement levels than those with weaker PLCs.

Vescio et al. (2008) recognized that learner achievement is proportional to PLCs which have a strong focus on learners learning. Harris and Jones (2010) assert that PLCs have the potential to change teachers' behaviour and improve learning outcomes of learners affirmatively. Both Vescio et al (2008), Harris and Jones (2010) further aluded, that "where PLCs work best, there is evidence of more satisfaction, higher morale and lower rates of absenteeism among teachers" (Harris & Jones, 2010, p. 175). This could be the result of

interacting with other members of the team, participating in decision making and improving teaching practice.

## **2.7 PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY BENEFITS**

Effective professional development is development that has a maintainable, optimistic impact on the excellence of teaching and learning. Research has shown that professional growth activities are more operative when they:

- Shape on prior information and experiences;
- include educators in active learning;
- Are pertinent and context related;
- stimulate collaboration and teamwork;
- are teacher-driven and promote ownership in learning;
- promote critical and systematic reflection. (DBE, 2015)

To learn profession in a community provides an added value incentive and benefit which perhaps enhances the intent of learning for adaptation and reception of a new environment. Hord and Hirsh (2008) state the list of benefits points out that teachers involved in a PLC contribute to school reform and improvement. Harris and Jones (2010) concur and maintain that PLCs cannot be seen as a solution for school reform, however they argue that transforming the collaborative and communication practices of people can consequently result in system-level improvement. The benefits of collaborative learning have been clearly articulated in literature on the beneficial influence that it has on student achievement, and the impact it has on teachers (Stoll *et al.*, 2006; Hord & Sommers, 2008; Vescio *et al.*, 2008). The collaborative nature of teacher learning is a contemporary approach to teachers' professional learning practices since it yields many benefits for the quality of teaching and learning. According to Hord and Sommers (2008, p. 19), support that teachers' teamwork provides access to dialogue practices on efficient teaching and learning, thus consequently leads to prompt demonstration of "higher commitment to the goals, mission and vision of the school". In addition, this accrues to teachers' knowledge base and technical skills by their engagement in professional learning which contributes to an increased effectiveness (Wong, 2010). Nonetheless, the benefits of teacher collaboration could be further articulated. Schoemaker (2005) disagrees with the statement, that teacher collaboration results in enhancement of teaching quality or the improvement of professional morale and increase of learners' learning.

Stoll et al. (2006, p. 3) contended that an effective professional learning community enables the capacity to promote and sustain learning of respective professionals in the school community, on a collective purpose of enhancing pupil learning. The idea of 'learning community' was featured prominently in many educational contexts. On this note, Collaborative learning is viewed as a learning process emphasizing group or co-operative efforts among students, stressing active participation and interaction on the part of both students and instructors (Harper, 2002).

### **2.7.1 Collaboration on Learning Techniques**

According to Kalpana (2014), collaborative learning is an arrangement which explains that students working in mixed ability groups are rewarded on the basis of the success of the group. The underlying assertion for collaborative learning is founded in social constructivist philosophy and is closely associated with theorists such as Vygotsky (Gordon, 2009). The major benefits of collaborative learning to individual students is that it increases motivation amongst group members, improves students' achievement and enhances the retention of acquired knowledge, encourages critical thinking, and the learning process itself benefits from the diversity of knowledge and experience existing within the group (Rafael & Jose, 2013). Harper (2002) adds that collaborative learning can also be effectively used for research projects and simulations. However, Slavin (2004) suggests that if one or more group members discover an answer and share it among peers, or perform an intellectual part of the group assignment while others only observe, collaborative learning has not been achieved.

Mohammadjani and Tonkaboni (2015) argue that collaborative learning leads to a higher degree of satisfaction with the learning process, greater motivation to learn, and better performance. In contrast, Ganyaupfu (2013) found that collaborative learning stimulates more active thinking than the lecture method, hence, facilitates effective teaching and learning of business Studies. This indicates that teaching of business studies needs more proving strategies to actualize the curriculum changes as the technological skills are more inclusive. Nevertheless, Wanza (2012) supports that collaborative learning techniques are a more effective teaching strategy than lecture methods in developing concepts and problem solving skills. The researcher identified the importance of changes of curriculum, which involves the cultivating of professional teachers equipped to take on business studies more effectively. The use of instructional strategies forms a major subject of discourse in educational studies. Filgona, Sababa and Iyasco (2016) maintained that educators have been calling for a

paradigm shift from traditional talk and chalk approach of teaching to an all engagement of students in the teaching and learning process (Filgona, Sababa & Iyasco, 2016). Hence, the instructional strategies like brainstorming become one of the central points of the teaching and learning process, especially in business studies.

### **2.7.2 Brainstorming Strategy**

Kimotho (2016) alludes that brainstorming is one of the most important strategies to provoke creativity and problem solving, during instructional delivery of teaching business studies. Mateen (2013) disagrees that brainstorming not only arouses students' attention but also incites them to participate in class in an interactive and fun-active manner while motivating them towards the topic in focus. It was evident that most teachers use brainstorming during lesson introduction to ascertain what their students know about a particular topic (Warui, 2014). The researcher realizes that students were familiarized with subject that goes with graphical notation, as Kimotho (2016) found that teachers used brainstorming frequently to attract the attention of the learners and make them active participants in the class. Furthermore, studies by Wanza (2012) and AlMutairi (2015) showed that brainstorming was more effective and stimulated more active thinking when compared to traditional methods of teaching. McLaughlin and Talbert (2006) state three benefits of learning communities stated below;

#### **To build and manage knowledge to improve practice**

According to McLaughlin and Talbet (2006) any teacher development model is aimed at developing different types of knowledge. Therefore, teacher learning communities offer the opportunity for teachers to reflect on different kinds of knowledge and daily problems. Through reflection, they share different types of knowledge, content knowledge and content pedagogical knowledge.

#### **To create shared language, vision and standards for practice;**

The main objective for most of the learning communities is to work together to improve the results of learners. Van Driel and Berry (2012) emphasize that professional development for teachers needs to be created through collaboration and collegiality. Collegiality and

collaboration allow community members to share knowledge and language. Sharing of vision and knowledge encourages a collective responsibility for the success of learners (McLaughlin and Talbert, 2006). Learning communities enhance learner results and improve classroom practice (Blanton & Perez, 2011).

### **To sustain school culture;**

Different schools are built on different cultures or ways of implementing things. Working as a community can create a sustainable unity among the members, with shared vision and values. This refers to a learning community created within the school.

Opfer, Pedder and Lavocza (2011) claimed that if teachers can be offered an opportunity to network with other teachers in different schools, there is a potential to widen the scope for teachers to engage and have access to diverse teaching practices. It also enhances the opportunities for teachers to be involved in the problem- solving and creates the transfer of knowledge. In addition to the above claim, Ainscow (2010) maintains that as teachers interact with other teachers through PLCs, teachers can develop new relationships and thinking at school level. The relationship allows staff to work together in a way that exceeds individual accomplishment (Katz & Earl, 2010).

## **2.8 CHALLENGES FACED BY BUSINESS STUDIES TEACHERS ON IMPLEMENTING STRATEGIES**

Challenges apply in different contexts, and categories of the classes offering business studies vary, and distinct strategies apply. Numerous educational researchers have made significant efforts to unveil the various problems encountered in their classrooms during instructional delivery. Azuama (2014) in Nigeria revealed that, business studies lack basic instructional tools for effective teaching and learning relies on simplified subject graphics for learners/students to grasp. Similarly, as noted by Tikly (2010), who points out that a lack of infrastructural resources is a problem which has negative effects on teaching and learning. This suggests that unavailability of materials and tools to execute the task stated on the curriculum adjustment were scarce, since government is not responsible for the provision of such resources. Ncube and Tshabalala (2016) study opines that, in Zimbabwe there is a lack of financial resources, equipment and specialist rooms for the practical activities in schools. Yet, the unresolved challenge remains constant, as schools limit service delivery of business

studies teachers as a result. The obvious challenge that could compound other problems restraining the performance in business studies in high schools is inadequate textbooks, workbooks and other teaching aids (Cantrell, 2014). Azuama (2014) study reveals that there is a serious dearth of textbooks and other instructional materials for Business Studies. The researcher sustains that inadequate supplies of textbooks and suitable classrooms are detrimental to the execution of current curriculum changes. Cantrell (2014) also confirms that business studies as a subject, suffers from a lack of books in libraries and badly equipped classrooms make it difficult to conduct effective lessons. Thus, a lack of resources in high schools might negatively influence the use of strategies that enhance the teaching and learning of business studies at an advanced stage. The next section discussed the theoretical framework.

## **2.9 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

In this section, theoretical frameworks will be discussed because they are the guiding principle of any research study. A Theory of choice will ensure that topics of discussion are appropriated when exploring teacher's experiences on learning through professional learning communities, in the context of curriculum changes. This research was informed by how different scholars observe professional development, as well as professional learning community models. Shulman (2004) notes that teacher learning is not an easy task. He emphasises that "conditions are created for teacher learning, from every single reform initiated, no matter which working activity it began with, and will eventually erode and disappear" (Shulman 2004, p. 519). Furthermore, in identifying teachers' challenges in sustaining professional learning communities, it was discovered that "some professional learning groups found it a challenge to link with other teachers in other schools and found that paperwork, classroom management tasks and lesson preparation, often reduced the time available for enquiry and collaborative activity" (Harris & Jones, 2010, p. 178).

Some theories have provided one or two philosophical insights and ideological precepts which could be followed, for incoming research studies. In this aspect, this study envisaged exploring and drawing knowledge through pedagogical theories which emphasise cognitive theory of teacher's learning (Kimotheo, 2016). The study comes from behavioural understanding of phenomena. Therefore, social and cognitive constructivism theories of Vygotsky, Piaget and Bandura shall be explored to arrive at either, or substitute the two theories mentioned. The consideration of theories describes a choice of suitable theoretical

frameworks used in the study, the modification between cognitive constructivism and social constructivism. Constructing propositions and aims for professional learning communities by defining the concept, explaining the main principles of PLCs and lastly the benefits of being in a learning community are explored.

### **2.9.1 Constructivism Theory**

Constructivism is a theory of knowledge rooted in psychology and philosophy (Von Glasersfeld, 1989). Von Glasersfeld (1989) states that its principles assert that, knowledge, received is actively constructed by the perceiving subject. Additionally, the other principle within Constructivism states that the function of cognition is adaptive and does not serve the discovery of ontological reality (Von Glasersfeld, 1989).

This study was based on Vygotsky's (1978) Social Constructivist Theory. The core principle of Vygotsky's theory asserts that social interaction plays a fundamental role in the cognitive development and that knowledge acquisition is mutually built and socially constructed. Vygotsky emphasizes collaboration, assisted performance, social interaction and socio-cultural activity. By interaction with others, students get an opportunity to share their views and thus generate a shared understanding related to the concepts (Kalpana, 2014). The second principle is the concept of, more knowledgeable other (MKO), which refers to anyone who has a better understanding or a higher ability level than the student, in respect to a particular task, process, or concept. The MKO is normally thought of as being a teacher, coach, older adult, peers, a younger person, or even computers (Vygotsky, 1978). The third principle of Vygotsky's theory is the idea that the potential for cognitive development depends on the zone of proximal development (ZPD), which is the distance between a student's ability to perform a task under adult guidance and/or with peer collaboration and the student's ability to solve the problem independently. According to Vygotsky, learning occurred in this zone (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky (1978; 1982), developed the sociocultural theory of cognitive development and tried to compliment Bandura's social theory, which addressed the link between social-cultural context, which emphasized a child's zonal proximal development (ZPD). An individual child is capable, with the environment as influence to express their thoughts and experiences, the way it occurred, based on their reasoning skills to constructively give meanings. This supports the art of imagination to forecast solutions in individual domains

According to Watson (2001), constructivism is the social atmosphere, which is the foundation of information, where people construct information through interrelationship with others, which explains human involvement. The Piaget and Vygotsky theories are a combined foundation of constructivism. Llewellyn (2005) defines constructivism as a philosophy on how an individual learns constructively by active engagement and continually making and rebuilding information through environmental connections. There are diverse varieties of constructivism which have individual opinions of how the learning happens by the learning activities' influence. This study combined both cognitive constructivism and social constructivism. Combination of both would benefit the researcher, as the researcher perceived that constructivism theories would be able to address primary concerns of knowledge and since it seeks to explore information from teachers with an in-depth knowledge of the subject at hand.

### **2.9.2 Piaget's Cognitive Constructivism Theory**

Piaget (1967) believed that individuals construct new knowledge from their experiences through processes of accommodation and assimilation. Accommodation and assimilation result in new knowledge being constructed from an individual's experience (Piaget, 1970). In assimilation teachers are able to match new ideas to those they already have, by seeing and matching similarities (Llewellyn, 2005). Integration refers to the use of existing schemas to give meaning to new experiences (Llewellyn, 2005). Teachers may encounter experiences which contradict what they already know in their internal structures, so they have to change their thinking in order to fit the new information in a process of accommodation (Watson, 2011). When individuals integrate, they incorporate the new experience into an already existing framework without changing the framework. This occurs when individuals' experiences are aligned with their internal representation of the world. Accommodation is the process of reframing one's mental representation of the external world to fit new experiences. Vygotsky (1982) unveils mechanisms by which failure leads to learning, Cognitive constructivism is based on Bandura's theory which encompasses attention, memory and motivation. Business in our days faces many challenges which teachers must teach learners to overcome. This theory suggests that teacher expertise resides entirely in the individual mind (Kelly, 2006). Using this theory in my study has helped to acquire knowledge which they should apply in their classes.

Cognitive science and cognitive psychology confirms that the process of constructing knowledge is dependent on existing knowledge, the context or situation, and internalization of information in an organized cognitive structure (Bruce, Klopper, & Mellish, 2011). On the basis of these viewpoints of learning it is clear that the focus of learning outcomes has shifted from content to competence (Braband, 2008; Brandon & All, 2010). It is the responsibility of the educator to ensure that all teaching and learning activities are aligned with the outcome, reality, and assessment tasks while it is the students' responsibility to actively engage with the learning material in order to internalize the theory and skills and in this way construct new knowledge (Reaburn & Strategy, 2009).

### **2.9.3 Social Constructivism**

Social constructivism is a sociological theory of knowledge according to which human development is socially situated and knowledge is constructed through interaction with others. Vygotsky (1978) suggests that social constructivism encourages the learner to arrive at his/her own version of the truth based on the importance of the learner's social interaction with knowledgeable members of society. Wertsch (1997) explains that without interacting with the more well-informed in society, it is not possible to acquire the meaning of vital symbol systems and how to use them. Von Glasersfeld (1989) mentions that Social Constructivism takes into consideration, the environment and culture of the learners, throughout the learning process because the responsibility of learning rests more progressively with the teacher. Furthermore, teachers must look for meaning and consistency in the order of events.

In social constructivism, Vygotsky (1978) maintains that the classroom be structured in a collaborative learning environment through peer interaction. Teachers assign tasks to be done in groups to promote learner centred learning, whereby they can assist themselves towards problem solving creativity, learners rely on their taught knowledge to tackle any challenge (Batzle, 1992; Black, 2003). The knowledge and experience that the teachers bring to the classroom is of paramount importance. Boud and Falchikov (2006) confirm that the teacher in a social constructivist classroom should design learning programs that are sufficiently flexible to permit development in line with learners learning style. As learners are exposed to different activities and emphasize creative thinking, the teacher should allow learners to express themselves, asking confusing questions which prompts them to reflect on their learning process.

Social constructivism theory contributes to both learners and teachers in education, by allowing individual learners to construct his/her world socially and prepare for eventualities on their life experiences. Bandura (1986) opines that the social cognitive theory allows for a better understanding of various factors that motivate learners to learn. It goes further to say that the theory proposed a model of human nature and causality. The basic objective is to investigate and analyze human motivation and to explain factors that can bring about the leaning outcome. The researcher found that constructivism theory could help the situation of the current study to explain the importance of teachers learning together through professional learning communities. Additionally, teachers were made to understand the importance of development regardless of qualification possessed. Constructivists rely on active and interactive learning in their chosen environment where learners could discover and construct their own knowledge (Gagnon & Collay, 1999).

## **2.10 CONCLUSION**

This chapter has presented literature reviews and theoretical frameworks for the study pertaining to studies conducted around teacher learning and professional learning communities. Then it was followed by my theoretical framework which provided the foundation for understanding teacher learning in professional learning communities. The next chapter focuses on research methodology and design of the study.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter looked at the literature review and conceptual framework that underpinned the study. In this chapter, the research methodology is discussed. This chapter also explains various research approaches that were adopted to answer the research questions under investigation. It also explains the design of the study, the data collection methods, and sampling techniques, methods of data analysis and ethical consideration.

According to Kerlinger (1986), a research design is a plan, structure and strategy of investigation in order to secure answers to research questions. Kumar (2011) notes that a research design has two functions, which include the identification and development of procedures and at the same time, logistical arrangements which are required to undertake a study. Kumar (2011) argues that for any academic research, the selection of an appropriate research design is very important in enabling the researcher to arrive at valid findings, comparisons and conclusions. This indicates that a faulty research design may result in misleading findings, which can be tantamount to wasting human and financial resources (Kumar, 2011).

Cohen, Mannion and Morrison (2011) define methodology as the systematic, theoretical analysis of the practical methods employed to a field of study. Methodology offers complete and detailed information of the body of methods and principles related with a branch of knowledge. Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011) maintain that the account of methodology differs in the sense that methodology does not promise to give solutions but it offers the theoretical approach for understanding which methods and practices are suitable in applying a certain case.

However, Brink, Van Der Walt and Van Rensburg (2013) note that the research methodology deals with information concerning the methods of conducting a study. On the other hand Mackenzie and Knipe (2006) define the term 'methodology' as the operational framework within which data is placed in order for the meaning to be clearly perceived.

### **3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM**

Bertram & Christiansen (2014) acknowledge that different principles and morals signify any research study. Denzin and Lincoln (2000:157) describe a paradigm as a basic set of moulds and politics about important structures of legitimacy that lead the action. These principles give rise to a particular world view and comprises of ethics, epistemology, ontology and methodology (Polit and Beck, 2008). In educational research, a paradigm is a plan or set of rules that guide a research study and how the information will be interpreted (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006).

The interpretive approach to educational research emphasizes the importance of the insider's viewpoint to understand reality in education (Brink, van Winterdorff, van der Donk, PeetersBeisser and Stobberingh, 2014). According to the interpretive paradigm many social realities exist due to the differences in human experience which include people's knowledge, views, interpretations and experience (Zheng, 2017). Gephart (1999) notes that the interpretive paradigm has the tenet that research knowledge and meaning are totally based on interpretations. The implication of this is that interpretive paradigm provides adequate meaning to study under investigation by involving the people. Interpretive paradigm examines and at the same time put research under investigation and analysis in context. Interpretivism is an approach to social science that emphasizes the importance of the insiders' viewpoint to understanding social reality. Hennink, Hutter and Bailey (2011) maintain that the interpretive paradigm has various characteristics which include: the ability to seek and understand peoples' experience concerning the subject under investigation. Gall, Snape and Spencer (2007) argue that the interpretive paradigm lays more emphasis on the importance of interpretation and observation in investigating a subject matter.

This study embraced interpretation which is grounded by the world of experiences. It adopted the interpretive paradigm to explore teacher's experiences of learning through professional learning communities. As defined by Mertens (2015), research paradigm is a way of looking at the world, based on philosophical assumptions that guide or direct thinking and action. Interpretive paradigm, also maintains that there are multiple, socially-constructed realities in which the researcher's judgments and perspective are considered in the interpretation of data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Within the interpretative paradigm,

researchers make interpretations with the purpose of understanding human behaviours, attitudes, beliefs and perceptions (Bertram and Christiansen, 2014).

According to Moody (1990), a paradigm helps the researcher to be organized in his/her thinking, observations and interpretation processes. The type of paradigm employed determines the direction of the research (Mackenzie and Knipe, 2006). Maree and Maree (2011) state three categories of research paradigms which include positivism, critical theory and interpretive paradigm.

In summary, this study employed the use of interpretive paradigm because it trusted heavily on the realistic approaches which comprised interviewing and observation which provided relevant information about the research at hand. Using interpretive paradigm in this research ensured an adequate dialogue between the participants and me, which brought about good interaction which yielded effective results. Furthermore, using interpretivism conveyed general meanings to the research process under investigation.

### **3.3 RESEARCH APPROACH**

According to Brink et al (2014), who emphasise that qualitative research increases the ability of the research to grasp and understand the phenomenon entirely rather than focusing on specific concepts. There are a few preconceived ideas, and stresses the importance of people's interpretation. It allows for collection of information without formal structured instruments.

This type of research also encourages both inductive and dialectic reasoning which are predominant in educational research (Burns & Grove 2011; Polit & Beck, 2008). Qualitative research is effective in obtaining culturally specific information about the values, opinions, behaviours and social contexts of particular populations. It is more concerned with social phenomena from the perspective of participants (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delpont, 2005). This study employed the qualitative approach to explore the ways in which Business Studies teachers learn through professional learning communities. The relevance of such an approach becomes appropriate, based on Kumar (2011, p. 127), when he states that “when an area where little is known, or you want to have a holistic understanding of the situation, phenomenon, episode, site, group or community”.

On the other hand, qualitative research “provides an in-depth and detailed understanding of meanings, actions, non-observable as well as observable phenomena, attitudes, intentions and behaviours” (Cohen et al., 2011, p.47). This study was a qualitative research because it was carried out in real life context where methods like observations, interviews and fields notes were used to gather information (Maree, 2007; Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). Not only that, it also allowed for the information to be analysed in conjunction in order to bring credible results. Using a qualitative method allowed me to have access to relevant information from the participants. The qualitative methodology was considered appropriate for this research study.

### **3.4 RESEARCH STRATEGY**

The study employed the use of case studies as a research strategy since it was exploring a particular instance in its context in order to generate knowledge (Rule & John, 2011). Baxter and Jack (2008) assert that a case study is an in-depth study of one case. The current study was an in-depth study of Business Studies teachers’ experiences which pursued to deeply understand teachers’ experiences. This could be an individual or a group of people, like learners or teachers. The current study focused on three Grade 12 Business Studies teachers. The study intended to explore teachers’ experiences of learning through learning communities and on how teachers can learn from each other.

Yin (2009) views the case study approach as an empirical inquiry that explores a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context. In the current study phenomenon explored was teachers’ experiences in Business Studies. The human social science field of research used in this case study was Basic Commerce Management, specifically Business Studies. Rule and John (2015) state that the case study approach is often used in the human social science field of research. Yin (2003) notes that a case study design needs to be used in the case when: (a) the focus of the research or study attempts to answer ‘What’ question.

Henceforth this study was a case of five teachers who are teaching Business Studies in Grade 12. Its critical question focused only on the ‘what’, part of the study. In this study as the researcher I used a case study design because I wanted to gain a deep and comprehensive understanding of teachers’ experiences with curriculum changes.

### **3.5 SELECTION OF THE RESEARCH SITE**

Purposive sampling was used to select the schools at which the research was conducted. According to Cohen et al, (2011, p.156), in purposive sampling, “researchers hand-pick the cases to be included in the sample, on the basis of their judgment of the particular characteristics which are being sought being present”.

Since I wanted to go for depth rather than range, I selected only five schools offering Business Studies as a school major subject in the Further Education and Training (FET) phase in Pinetown district. The choice of the schools was based on their accessibility to me as a researcher. Ease of access to the schools was also a consideration seeing that I am a part-time student doing a full thesis as a full-time teacher. This required confining my study to neighbouring schools from where I work. Therefore, I used convenience sampling which, according to Plano Clarke and Creswell (2008), involves including the samples of participants who are easily accessible and willing to participate.

### **3.6 POPULATION**

The population is the total group from which certain information is required (Banerjee & Chaudhury, 2010). This indicates that population in academic research consists of elements with similar characteristics. Fraenkel & Wallen (2009) argue that the population of a study consists of all members of a group that are interested in a study.

On the other hand, the accessible population is the fraction of the entire research population which, the researcher can access due to reasons of convenience or availability, and the population to which the conclusions for generalization are applied (Owolabi, 2016). Based on this, the accessible populations for this study were Business Studies teachers who are currently teaching Grade 12.

### **3.7 SAMPLING**

De Vos, Delpont, Fouché and Strydom (2005) state that sampling means taking a part of a population and seeing it as representative of that population. According to Remler and Ryzin (2014), convenience sampling, is a sampling method in which people are sampled simply because they are convenient sources of data for researchers. Brink et al (2014) note that non-

probability sampling, is the sampling method in which the sample was selected based on the judgment of the researcher and it does not involve the use of random selection.

Non-probability sampling includes the following: Convenience sampling, quotas sampling, purposive sampling, snowball sampling, homogeneous sampling, heterogeneous and structured sampling (Cohen et al, 2011). Purposive and convenient sampling was used to select the research site and the participants. Purposive sampling is non-probability which provides a diverse range of case relevance to a particular phenomenon. It is always used to provide much insight into the phenomenon under examination (Cole, 2014). I used purposive and convenient because I wanted data from a primary source, someone who has been there and experienced the transition time and is currently teaching Business Studies in Grade 12. According to Burns and Grove (2011:313) the purposive technique is based on the judgment of the researcher relating to participants which are representative of the study phenomenon or who are especially knowledgeable about the question at hand. Remler and Ryzin (2014) posit that convenience sampling is a sampling method in which subjects are sampled because they are convenient sources of data. Since I wanted to get all possible information available, using these sampling methods had a positive effect on my study.

Additionally the sampling process is the step involved in taking a relatively small number of a subject from a population (Yunus & Tambi, 2013). Sampling is the process of selecting a number from a population that will be representative of the total population (Polit & Hungler, 1999). Adequate sampling allows the researcher to draw valid and reasonable conclusions about the entire population of the study. Kumar (2005) notes that adequate sampling assists the researcher to achieve a greater precision in determining sample size and it also prevent bias in academic research.

Based on the above, purposive and convenient sampling was used to select the school. This sampling method was relevant for the study since I wanted explore teachers' experiences of learning through PLCs in the context of curriculum changes. In addition, purposive sampling was used to select the Grade 12 Business Studies teachers. The reason for the selection of Grade 12 teachers was that a researcher will get in depth knowledge and views from these teachers who have taught the subject for many years. The use of purposive sampling was based on the submission of Neuman and Robson (2014) that purposive sampling permits the researchers to have easy access to the target participants and at the same time have quick

access to the needed information for the purpose of the study. While there were many high schools in the ward, I chose to conduct research in on three schools which offered Business Studies.

### **3.8 SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS**

In this study I purposively sampled five Business Studies teachers with in-depth knowledge based of the topic, and their potential of answering my research question. All participants were selected under the following criteria: they are qualified teachers, currently teaching Business Studies in Grade 12 and are from three secondary schools in the Mandela ward in the district. In purposive sampling, researchers hand-pick the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of their judgment and their typicality or possession of the particular characteristics being sought (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2009, p.156). The selection of only three Grade 12 teachers influenced by the fact that while the NCS and lately the CAPS was implemented Grade 12, they were affected by the major changes, and purposive sampling has proven to be effective only when a limited number of people can serve as a primary data source of research designs, aims and objectives.

### **3.9 DATA GENERATION METHOD**

Data collection methods are tools that are used for data collection while conducting research. There are many ways in which research data can be collected in educational research. According to Bertram & Christiansen (2014) some of the methods to collect data involve questionnaires, interviews, documents, secondary data and observation.

#### **3.9.1 Interviews**

One of the data generation methods used in this qualitative study was semi-structured interviews. Bertram & Christiansen (2014) describe an interview as a conversation between the researcher and the respondent. It is not similar to any general conversation that could happen between people, as the researcher leads the process. Interviews may be structured or unstructured. In a structured interview, “the researcher uses an interview schedule, which is a set of questions in a predetermined order” (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014, p. 80). In such an interview, the respondent may be required to render answers that are in the form of ‘yes or no’ or just one word answers (Brenner, p. 377). Alternatively, structured interviews may require open-ended responses. The unstructured interview means that the researcher may

simply introduce the topic or main research question, and then let the respondent answer in the way that he or she would like. In this type of the interview, the researcher as an interviewer listens attentively.

The researcher, as the interviewer listens actively to respondents as he/she responds the researcher probes more information required. This type of interview is also called a qualitative interview. In the words of Brenner (2006) it “gives an informant the space to express the meaning in his or her own words and to give direction to the interview process” (Brenner, P. 357). The semi-structured interview often asks open ended questions and probes the responses. Semi-structured interviews permit the researcher to query and ask further questions. Semi structured interviews provide a more relaxed and friendly environment in which to collect data (Robinson, 2009). This allows the participants flexibility to provide alternative and detailed responses to the question (Opie, 2004). The interviewees may feel more contented, having a conversation with the researcher as responses to filling out papers in a survey. Therefore semi structured interviews are viewed as valuable, because they allow richer responses during the interviews. Semi-structured qualitative interviews are often conducted once per individual and take from 30 minutes to quite a few hours to be completed. The merit of the semi-structured qualitative interview is that it allows for dialogue between the interviewer and interviewee (Opie, 2004). Therefore, it allows the researcher to delve into the researched issue and rich data can be generated. The researcher can communicate directly with the participants, gaining ‘rapport’ (Leech, 2002). Rapport means assuring people that you are listening. According to Leech (2002), this can be done through showing feeling and sincerity towards their responses.

The interview protocol includes a brief summary of the interview’s intention and was written and addressed verbally to the participants. The interview questions were assembled to assist in answering the main critical questions outlined in Chapter 1. The interview questions were significantly scrutinized and approved by the university supervisor. I conducted all interviews in a one-on-one situation. Some interviews were conducted in school after school hours. Interviews were carried out to explore teacher’s experiences of learning through professional learning communities. In these interviews the teachers were asked about their professional qualifications and Business Studies experience (Burton, 2011).

My study employed the semi-structured interview as it allowed teachers as respondents to articulate themselves clearly, regarding what they learn from professional learning communities. People of different origin can speak to each other on the same level without judgment of each other. Creswell (1998, p. 124) highlights that for individual interviews, the researcher must find participants who are willing to speak and share ideas. This makes the researcher's work easier as his/her respondents are willing to share whatever they perceive about the study. In this regard, the interviewer must make it a point that he/she values and appreciate the input of the respondent. This reciprocally encouraged a positive attitude by the respondents.

### **3.9.2 Purpose of the Interview**

#### ***To find knowledge and information***

An Interview is more than a conversational interaction between two people and requires considerable knowledge and skill on behalf of the interviewer. It provides depth and detail, and looks deeper than analysing ranks and counts by recording attitudes, feelings and behaviours. It simulates people's individual experiences, and a detailed picture can be built up about why people act in certain ways and their feelings about these actions. Its main purpose is to find reliable and comparable information from the participant. Interviews are useful to obtain detailed information about personal feelings, perceptions and opinions. They allow more detailed questions to be asked. They usually achieve a high response rate. Respondents' own words are recorded. It's also provides valuable information from the context of participants experience. (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014)

#### ***To find what a person thinks***

These are interviews that strictly adhere to an interview protocol to guide the researcher. It is a more rigid interview style, in that only the questions on the interview protocol are asked. As a result, there are not a lot of opportunities to probe and further explore topics that participants bring up when answering the interview questions. This method can be advantageous when researchers have a comprehensive list of interview questions, since it helps target the specific phenomenon or experience that the researcher is investigating. It makes for convenient interviewing and will gather the correct information that you need, so there should not be much need for you to do in follow-up interviews for missed or forgotten questions. (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014)

Since my study used semi-structured interviews it required that I prepare questions to facilitate a guided conversation. The endeavour was collected data regarding teachers' knowledge and beliefs about their learning. In this regard, Kang, Orgil & Crippen (2008) emphasise that identifying teachers' knowledge and beliefs was obtained through qualitative methods such as interviews. I probed to encourage the participants to express their views and took field notes to back up the audio tape recording. I displayed good communications and listening skills, mutual respect, neutrality and non-judgemental attitude (Burns & Grove 2009). Towards the end of interview I ensured that the participants were clear and that all questions that were asked and that no one was hesitant with regards to the questions asked. At the end of each interview, I expressed my gratitude to the participants for being actively involved during the study. However, semi-structured interviews have limitations. This form of interview allows for spontaneous questioning. Spontaneous questions sometimes make it difficult to give an answer because they require deeper explanations. Wood (2011) suggests that spontaneous questions are seen as unfair to the participants and can mislead the interviews. Consequently, the results of the study are less reliable. The semi-structured interview seldom asks very long questions. Long questions can lead to confusion for the respondent. The interviewer can sometimes unconsciously give clues to the interviewee; this can lead to getting unreliable responses from the respondent.

### **3.10 DATA ANALYSIS**

The collection of data was done through audio recording and the information was then transcribed on paper, followed by reading through, with the view to check whether it was complete, accurate, consistent or relevant. The data were then assembled to create what could be well meaningful to the reader. The interview transcriptions and the field were then organized and analysed. This was done by arranging the data in a manageable form. This meant therefore that the researcher should always be observant as to how many informants agree on a certain point posed by the research question. This meant that there was a good comparison of responses generated during data collection. It is important for the researcher to analyse data gathered according to different themes in the study.

Braun and Clark (2006) describe thematic analysis as a qualitative analytic method for identifying, analysing and identifying patterns (within) the data. The thematic analysis also helps in analysing some aspects of the data collected. Thematic analysis outfits this study as it

is qualitative in nature, and that's why it was employed in this study. Thematic analysis is characteristics of most qualitative research. Themes are groups of codes that recur through being similar or connected to each other in an original way, codes of high importance are the ones that advance understanding or are useful in addressing real world problems, or both. This can expose what is non-recurrent but potentially important to the aims of the study.

Afterwards, Coding practice was employed as it is active to transform data and assign meaningful, descriptive data. Merriam (2009) sees coding as the process of carefully reading through the transcribed data, line by line and dividing it into meaningful units. The coding process involved recognizing (seeing) an important moment and encoding it (seeing it as something) prior to a process of interpretation (Boyatzis, 1998). A "good code" is one that captures the qualitative richness of the phenomenon (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 1). Encoding the information organizes the data to identify and develop themes. Boyatzis defined a theme as "a pattern in the information that at minimum describes and organises the possible observations and at maximum interprets aspects of the phenomenon" (p. 161). In order to fully comprehend the underlying meaning of some data, as the researcher I read the transcripts a number of times in an attempt to make sense of them. Coding was done manually according to the findings of the three participants.

### **3.11 TRUSTWORTHINESS**

Christiansen *et al.* (2014) maintain that in qualitative research, trustworthiness needs to be considered diligently. Trustworthiness is a concern for all research. Validity is a traditional concept that has been used to critique the quality of the study, but trustworthiness is more useful for quantitative research (Holloway & Wheeler, 2002). Shenton (2004) asserts that trustworthiness in qualitative research is an idea or a way of proving that the evidence for the research reported is sound and when an argument made, based on the findings, it is strong. Suggestions show that all research must respond to procedures or standards that can be used to assess trustworthiness of the project in mind (Maree, 2007). Christiansen *et al.* (2014) argue that four issues need to be considered to guarantee the trustworthiness of the research.

In order to increase the trustworthiness of this study, I opted to use two data collection instruments, which are semi-structured interviews and fields notes. The information collected using these instruments was thoroughly checked to weigh its relevancy against the study. Teachers who were participants in the study were allowed a chance to check the interview

transcripts to verify and confirm their interview inputs. I further ensured that collected data is stored in a safe place and that it is readily available for verification upon request by any interested party. In this study, the researcher used transferability, credibility, dependability and conformability.

### **3.11.1 Transferability**

Transferability is the extent to which the findings of the study can be conveyed beyond the limits of the project (Christiansen *et al.*, 2014). In qualitative research the findings do not generalize, because generalizing can influence the transferability of the study. Proper data needs to be generated to support the investigated phenomena (Petty, Oliver, Thomson, Graham, 2012). Shenton (2004) contends that there are five documented ways that can be used, to attain transferability and they are as follows:

1. Stating any restrictions in the type of people who contributed data.
2. Stating the number of participants involved in the research study.
3. Stating the data collection methods that were employed.
4. The length and number of the data collection session.
5. The time period over which the data was collected.

It is easy for researchers to develop a preoccupation with transferability. Ultimately, the results of a qualitative study must be understood within the context of the particular characteristics of the organisation or organisations and, perhaps, geographical area in which the fieldwork was carried out. In order to assess the extent to which findings may be true of people in other settings, similar projects employing the same methods but conducted in different environments could well be of great value. Hammersley recognises, however, it is rare for such complementary work to be undertaken (Shenton, 2004).

Even when different investigations offer results that is not entirely consistent with one another, this does not, of course, necessarily imply that one or more is untrustworthy. It may be that they simply reflect multiple realities, and, if an appreciation can be gained of the reasons behind the variations, this understanding may prove useful to the reader as the results actually reported (Shenton, 2004).

Transferability concerns the aspect of applicability. As a researcher I provided a ‘thick description’ of the participants and the research process, to enable the reader to assess whether my findings are transferable to their own setting. This is the so-called transferability judgment. This implies that the reader, which is not me, makes the transferability judgment because I do not know their specific settings. As the researcher I provided a rich account of descriptive data, such as the context in which the research was carried out, its sample, sites selection, participants, interview procedure and topics, changes in interview questions based.

### **3.11.2 Conformability**

Conformability is “the potential for congruence between two or more independent people about the data’s accuracy” (Elo et al., 2014. p. 2). Lincoln and Guba (1990) affirm that there are four recognised ways that can be followed to achieve conformability and they are as follows:

1. Having someone to critically question one’s interpretation.
2. Developing themes and to search for negative instances and alternative instances.
3. Developing a second set of ‘judgment-free’ notes before developing categories.
4. Conducting an audit of data collection and analysis strategies.

The researcher was aware of subjectivity, since she is also teaching Business Studies on the same circuit. The researcher used substantial evidence to support the findings from the research. I ensured that the presentation and the discussion of the findings represent and reflect exactly the participants’ description of the phenomenon explored in the study. Data was interpreted explicitly without the subjective influence of the researcher. Conformability is known as an audit trail. It providing a complete set of notes on decisions made during the research process, research team meetings, reflective thoughts, sampling, research materials adopted, emergence of the findings and information about the data management. This enables the auditor to study the transparency of the research path (Elo, 2014).

### **3.11.3 Dependability**

Dependability refers to the consistency of data over a period (Elo et al., 2014). Dependability is an assessment of the quality of the integrated process of data collection, data analysis, and theory generation (Lincoln & Guba, 1990). To achieve dependability in a qualitative study is not always easy, however, not impossible. I explained the whole process and features of the research to participants. I used clear research questions and clear explanations of research design. This ensured that data from similar participants from the same context can replicate the data. All participants were informed about the study process, design and method of data collection. This ensured the credibility and trustworthiness of the study. The findings were also discussed and interpreted accurately to validate the research. Dependability includes the aspect of consistency and checks the analysis process is in line with the accepted standards for a particular design (Elo et al., 2014).

### **3.11.4 Credibility**

Credibility means that the findings show the reality and experiences of the participants (Christiansen et al., 2014). Petty, Thomson & Stew (2012) also define credibility as the process where the findings from the study can be trusted by the participants. I used different approaches to investigate and explore the phenomenon. The main aim is to collect reliable data that portrays a true reflection about the researched phenomenon, which is teacher learning. Different data collection methods were used, such as triangulation interviews to allow the participants expression, and for the researcher to experience the context of the phenomenon. I used different methods to improve the validity and also to create more in-depth understanding and to see to what extent differences would emerge from the data (Cohen et al., 2011). This suggests that to ensure credibility researchers attempt to produce findings that are acceptable and resounding (Maree, 2007). In order to ensure credibility and to promote confidence, I have accurately recorded the phenomenon. All this strengthened the credibility of the research.

## **3.12 TRIANGULATION**

Triangulation is qualitative cross validation of data using multiple data sources or multiple data collection procedures (Wiersma, 2000). Literature shows that triangulation can be done on different parts of qualitative research sources which included the interviews, observations

and reflective journals (Patton, 2002). Data triangulation enables the researcher to combine data collecting instruments. For this study, data triangulation used data from interviews and field notes. This enabled me to make a comparison of data from the data collection instruments, which are the interviews and field notes to discover which inferences are valid as well as improve the credibility of the study. Methodological triangulation was used to gather data by means of different data collection methods such as interviews, and field notes. Data was then analysed. After which the interpretations were compared. Data triangulation was secured by using the various data analysis process.

### **3.13 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION**

According to Hesse-Biber & Leavy (2011), moral integrity of the researcher is a critical feature of ensuring that the research process and findings of the researcher are trustworthy and valid, also make sure that correct measures are taken and used to consider trustworthiness. In a qualitative research, there are some ethical considerations that should be retained. The following ethical consideration was employed for this study.

#### **3.13.1 Permission**

Research ethical clearance was sought from University of Kwazulu Natal research office who issued ethical clearance. Consent was requested from the principal of the school. In order to gain access to the participants, I approached the principal of the school and informed him/her about my research project. This was originally done personally and I also visited the schools to discuss my project. Once I was awarded the right to conduct my study, the participants (The Grade 12 Business Studies teachers) were briefed on the particulars of my study.

#### **3.13.2 Anonymity**

The anonymity of the participants and of their contexts was protected. The participants' names were not used in the current study. Instead pennames were used. The names of the teachers' contexts were not used either. Pennames were used instead. Therefore, anonymity was ensured. No harm was done to the teachers who are the participants. Additionally, no humiliating and embarrassing questions were asked from the teachers. All the data collected was used for the current study only and kept confidentially and safe in the university's safe

for five years through my Supervisor. Thereafter documents will be shredded, and the compact discs will be incinerated.

I discussed the schedule dates, times and venues for the interviews with the selected participants. Collecting data from different participants, it gave me an opportunity to analyse data from different participants. Therefore, data was triangulated to ensure validity. Validity is defined as “the degree to which all of the evidence points to the intended interpretation” (Creswell, 2012, p. 159).

If it happened that one of participants withdraws from the current study as per their rights, other participants can be found. Establishing a rapport with the participants and ensuring them confidentiality, anonymity, and no harm, might help the researcher not lose the participants again. There were disturbances whilst collecting data. Therefore, more time was provided for data collection, than anticipated.

### **3.13.3 Confidentiality**

Burns and Grove (2005) describe the rights of participants as informed consent, anonymity, privacy and confidentiality. Data obtained from this study was only accessed by me, and was only used for the purpose of this research project. I ensured that my transcripts and tape recordings were accessed by only me.

## **3.14 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

Many challenges occurred during the study, one of them was participants’ withdrawal as per their rights, in which case I had to find other participants. Establishing a rapport with the participants and ensuring them confidentiality, anonymity, and no harm might help the researcher not lose the participants again. The other problem whilst I was collecting data, my participants (grade 12 teachers) were busy with School Based Assessment (SBA) moderation of marks or workshops. These teachers have a pressure of covering the curriculum for the external examination. Since the study was only conducted in only five schools, the findings of the study cannot be generalized to all secondary schools in the province of KwaZulu-Natal.

### **3.15 CONCLUDING REMARKS**

Chapter three focused on the research methodology and design of the study. In this chapter, I discussed the form of explaining the research paradigm, employed in the study. Also, it has been clearly stated that the study is a qualitative approach. The data collection techniques including the justification of my choice are also explained. The manner in which participants were selected is explained. Lastly, the chapter discussed the ethical issues, challenges, dependability and limitations of the study. The next chapter presents the data analysis of this study.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **DATA PRESENTATION**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter presented the research design and methodology used to generate data for this study. This chapter focuses on the presentation of the data in terms of my research questions:

- What are Business Studies teachers' experiences of learning through Professional Learning Community in the context of curriculum change?

To answer the research question, data was generated from semi-structured interviews with three Business Studies teachers. Three themes emerged from data. The first theme discusses Business Studies teachers learning within a professional learning community. Challenges within professional learning communities will be discussed in theme two. While Benefits derived from participating in the TLC will be discussed in theme three.

The analysis of data in this chapter is presented with direct quotations from face to face interview of the study.

- Learning within a professional learning community.
- Challenges within a professional learning community.
- Benefits derived from participating in the TLC.

The researcher's findings from interviews will be presented according to the above themes. The first presentation will be learning within a professional learning community.

#### **4.2 LEARNING WITHIN A PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY**

The data collected revealed that teachers learn through numerous modes of teacher learning, which was expressed by the participants. Two distinct modes of learning emerged from the data. Findings revealed that some Business Studies teachers were learning in an individual capacity and others learning collaboratively with other teachers.

Developing teachers professionally is important in this study, but the way in which they are developed is even more important because it helps teachers to become more confident when teaching, since they are empowered to do so through development (Hord, 2009).

*I certainly have to concur, because professional learning communities have had a positive impact on me, personally, as a teacher and also with helping me in passing the content to my learners properly, even though there is still much that needs to be done with professional development but I can proudly say the little time we have had them within our schools has helped us a lot as Business Studies teachers. (Nelly)*

*They have helped me to grow in the subject and meeting with different peers within the subject has developed me academically since there is a lot that one learns from others. (Thandi)*

*Business Studies cognitive level is more consistent and relevant to benefit learners as there are three cognitive levels which ensure comfort during the assessment activities, like higher order for high flyer learners, and middle to lower order questioning for those learners who are struggling. (Sbonga)*

### **4.3 COLLABORATIVE LEARNING**

The collaborative nature of learning characterises the core of a PLC (Fullan, 2009; DuFour, 2004; Schmoker, 2005; Hord & Sommers, 2008). In addition, Wenger (1998, p.7) maintains that community learning is, “an issue of refining their practice and ensuring a new generation of members. “Additionally Schmoker (2005, p.141) states that “teachers learn best from other teachers, in settings where they literally teach each other the art of teaching.”

*Professional development seems static within my school, as teachers around here do not know really what is supposed to happen within learning communities so within my school. I can just say that most teachers just remain static in their jobs until they retire or move onto other opportunities. (Kuhle)*

*This becomes a huge problem since Business Studies needs a higher cognitive level. Business Economics was just divided into two categories, which are higher and standard Grade. There was nothing challenging, as Business Studies requires a broader scope and requires learners*

*to be able to critically examine the questions being asked of them. So basically the questions are not as straightforward as it was with Business Economics. (Snakho)*

*It is recommended, that teachers of the subject of a particular school first plan a broad subject outline (subject framework) for three levels. To arrive at an understanding of the subject content, and progress required in the classroom, the subject framework has to be completed, and teachers should develop work schedules and lesson plans which serve as a guideline, is what I believe necessary to be informative and helpful to us as teachers. (Sbonga)*

#### **4.3.1 Learning from DBE Workshop**

It has emerged from data, that teachers have different views in the manner in which they were developed professionally. One of the teachers feels that the training provided by DBE was enough for their level of development, while others feel that it was insufficient. When Sbonga asked about their engagement to learning with others he said:

*Ever since these changes, a lot took place with regards to the training that was provided by the Department of Education. There have been content workshops where teachers were trained on how to handle and implement the new curriculum and how to maintain it in class. The intention of the department of education was to improve and maintain quality results for the learners. (Sbonga)*

*We were also trained on the scope of the subject from Grade 10-12, and how to handle different topics within the subject and curriculum. (Thandi)*

*The nature of learning activities in the subject is to develop subject related learning materials, resources including handbook, reference book and study guides. To organise workshops to facilitate capacity building and professional development amongst Business Studies teachers when referring to task clusters is helpful. (Kuhle)*

However, the other teachers disagree with the above statement saying that training did not match the change. They believe that change was bigger than the training provided to them. This is what the other participants said:

*When it was introduced, we were given a 5 day training period which was not enough. Being given a short period of time, the training felt rushed and we were not given a meaningful*

*picture of the new curriculum. The facilitators did not understand what was going on with regard to changes in the Curriculum. (Nelly)*

*It was as if the Department took teachers who were as confused as we were, train them and then they would be brought back to train us. With some of them you could see that they themselves did not have clarity on those changes in the Curriculum. It is known that transformation comes with challenges, most of the time. It was difficult because training was inappropriate. (Snakho)*

From the above discussion it is evident that teachers can teach the same subjects, and attend the same developmental workshops but have different understanding on certain issues. This is what the other participant said:

*I feel that if this type of learning should be made formal, and continuously. (Sbonga)*

Seemingly all of the participants feel that these workshops would be helpful to them only if they would be continuous and be conducted by teachers in the subject.

#### **4.3.2 Learning through Mentoring**

Mentoring has been articulated as a mode of learning which teachers engage in, but the dynamics of the mentoring process and teacher's opinions of who is involved in the mentoring process, differs amongst the different schools. For one to be a mentor, requires one to have informative knowledge of that particular subject, mentoring is seen as a way or process whereby trainee teachers are mentored by experienced teachers, during a specific time of the school year. This is what they said:

*These gatherings are very helpful and I think mentoring occurs through them since they are conducted by the specialists in the subject. But I think it would have been better if they are done by different people so that if one fails to deliver, another fills the gap. (Thandi)*

*It is recommended that teachers of the subject of a particular school first plan a broad subject outline (subject framework) for three levels, to arrive at an understanding of the subject content and progression, which is needed in the classroom. (Snakho)*

*When the subject framework has been completed, the teachers should develop work schedules and lesson plans which serve as a guideline, is why I believe that it was informative and helpful to us as teachers. (Sbonga)*

By analysing views, participants seem to understand the mainstream of changes that occurred; however concerns were noted, including that the level of information given through mentoring is not enough to undertake the task effectively.

*Since meeting with other teachers, the style of my teaching and assessing has changed. Before, I used to do just one test per term, excluding formal tasks, but I am now doing things differently. I now apply strategic ways of assessment, through the material obtained from the cluster. (Snakho)*

Looking at these responses, it is from practical teaching experiences that the concept and process of peer mentoring is more beneficial in terms of transmission of a mutual process of learning. But the other participants did not share the same feeling. Participant's statement read as follows:

*Meeting with other teachers had the hope of finding new ways to deliver the content to learners confidently, but it is as if we were lack the teachers who are more knowledgeable on the subject since most teachers just teach what they think is right. (Sbonga)*

It was evident from above discussion that teachers, or people fail to understand who is a mentor. It is not someone who has taught the subject for many years but someone who can deliver the content accurately and effectively. Sato (2006) broadens the terms given to these shared relationships between peers, which extend far beyond the mere mentor and mentee conceptualisation commonly associated with mentoring. These include critical friends, community of learners, support networks and study groups.

### **4.3.3 Learning within the school**

It appears from research that for a school to be able to promote teaching and learning, it needs to have certain characteristics, such as teamwork, a focus on student learning and uninterrupted learning. Therefore it has emerged that the majority participants are of the view that it is the responsibility of the principal, teachers, parents as well as learners, to promote

teaching and learning in the school. In this case their responses still differed. This is what they said:

*When interacting with other teachers, even within the school, trust me, you always gain something new. It's not like you always have to go outside to find information, one can learn or get information from colleagues. (Sbonga)*

*Teamwork within my school looks good and there are a lot opportunities that are created, as teachers arrange to meet and share experiences. More than anything, it lies with me to honour my periods and encourage my learners to always be in class. (Snakho)*

*I believed that Business Studies has changed a lot because they discuss the current issues, such as business laws; creative thinking and business ethics to name a few. Learners who have studied Business Studies have a better understanding of the than the the Business Economics learner, and as a teacher who was trained in an old system, which I am used to, when the Department came up with these changes, it was difficult for me to adapt to them. Most of us use the traditional way of teaching, while Business Studies requires learner centred way of teaching. (Sbonga)*

*Only if these meetings are consistent can one can be able to acquire the expected skills and if they would have relevant teacher materials available and distributed, especially for newly appointed or inexperienced teachers, these workshops come with new abundant information on the subject as well as knowledge which helps to keep up with all the changes in the subject. (Nelly)*

In these expressions, it was evident that through rapport some valuable information would be accessed by different teachers as the statement unfolds;

*I would to agree, because professional learning communities have had a positive impact on me as a teacher and also with helping me in passing the content on to my learners properly, even though there is still much that needs to be done with professional development, I can proudly say the little time we have had them within our schools has helped us a lot as Business Studies teachers. They have helped us to grow in the subject and meeting with different peers within the subject has developed me academically, since there's a lot that one learn from others. (Kuhle)*

*I do believe these were huge changes within our subject because when I started teaching this subject, it was known as Business Economics and now the differences between Business Economics and Business Studies are very large. The biggest change is the scope of Business Economics, is that it focuses on understanding the concepts the advantages and disadvantages. Learners previously were taught in a way that they could just memorize facts for exam purposes. (Snakho)*

It appears that Snakho believes that everything begins with you as a teacher you need to first do justice by attending your classes and he believes that opportunities were created for them since teamwork is promoted. But the other participants have a different feeling this is what they said:

*I feel that professional development within my school is lacking, our seniors could do more with regards to our development, and room for improvement is recommended. All I'm saying is that there is no form of learning in my school because everyone does their own things in their own way. (Thandi)*

*Professional development seems static within my school, it is like the teachers around here do not know really what is supposed to happen within learning communities, so within my school I can just say that most teachers just remain static their jobs until they retire or move onto other opportunities. (Sbonga)*

Observations have shown that teaching and learning within schools cannot be promoted only by honouring your periods but also by encouraging teachers to interact with others, in order to develop professionally. With these challenges teachers have no choice but to turn to other teachers in order to have a clearer understanding of the content.

#### **4.3.4 Networking**

Individual learning has proven to be problematic to most teachers where they try and solve teaching challenges on their own. Participants have expressed their concern on the issue of development within their schools, which forced them to look for other options of development this is what they said:

*Being part of a professional community has helped me grow by interacting with different peers and being able to learn from each other when facing challenges, when we plan lessons,*

*develop tasks, prepare worksheets, set formal tests, projects and moderate afterwards.*  
(Thandi)

*Networking occurs in different ways and by meeting with different people. When you network you are able to get new information from other teachers. Seemingly all participants concurred with each other on the benefits of networking; this is what the other two said:  
A vast difference has been made through partnering with professional learning communities. This has been accomplished through a variety of experiences, skills and strategic responses from the authorized and legitimate facilitators.* (Snakho)

*Learning from others has developed me more than only teaching and assessing learners. Before I lacked classroom management, but with the help of Plc. s, this changed.* (Nelly)  
*I have gained confidence, if only these developmental meetings can be continuous. There's a lot that I have gained by networking with other teachers.* (Sbonga)

From the participants' point of view it appears that networking has a lot of positives in teacher's development, since it can happen both formally and informally, as long as its capacity is to learn from other teachers who share similar expertise in their field of development.

#### **4.3.5 Learning through Cluster**

It has been noted that teachers can learn through cluster meetings. However most of them indicated that they use this time to prepare for lessons. When they were asked their reflection on the activities that take place in cluster meetings; like what have you been doing in those meeting and how have these meeting developed their love of teaching the subject: statements were states below;

*During cluster meetings we set question papers, moderate learner's scripts, have discussions on previous question papers' standards and develop memorandums. Other activities include content discussion which is based on the content knowledge of the subject, "concurred with Snakho on this one, by stating that it is a sustainable subject because it enlightens the way for those who are business minded. After exploring business information, one could apply the different business strategies.* (Thandi).

Looking at the above responses, it indicated that these cluster meeting were designed for preparation and submission of work, indicating that one cannot solely rely on those meeting

activities for intensive development. This confirms that teachers could appreciate both workshop and cluster meetings, irrespective of complains about the duration and the insufficient information, but it was indeed helping them, especially with the nature of learning activities on Business Studies related to TLCs.

*I can only say clusters have little benefit for us as teachers compared to one day workshops. Business Studies is a very practical subject that is easy to explain using real world examples. Learners can easily relate with their surroundings, but only if they are observant, its practicality makes it even easier for me as an educator to relate to what happening in their daily lives (Nelly).*

*Since teaching Business Studies presently requires one to understand what is happening around the world, attending these cluster meeting have helped us a little, it since there is still a gap in how to teach the subject competently. (Snakho)*

*With my cluster we normally meet at the end of every term, meaning we meet four times in a year and what we normally do there is set question papers and memorandums for March, June and September, we also set all tasks (project, assignment and presentation) and after marking we meet again for moderation within the cluster. (Sbonga)*

*During cluster meetings we set question papers, moderate learner's scripts, discuss previous question papers' standards and develop memorandums. Other activities include content discussion which is based on the content knowledge of the subject. (Thandi)*

*We also do lesson plans, I can just say that we prepare everything for the term within my cluster. There is some development during our meetings, because we don't just end with moderating learners' work. We also looked at which obstacles we encountered, and how the learners answered certain questions and their overall performance. (Kuhle)*

From the above discussion its looks as if there hasn't been much development in the cluster meetings, but rather they were used for work submission, which does not develop teachers professionally.

*We have assignments, projects and presentation as learning activities which are carried out individually and then, when we gather our cluster we check if they up to the cognitive level required by the Department of education. Normally when we meet with my cluster, most of*

*the time is spent preparing common tasks like assignments, projects or class tests that would be written during the year. (Snakho)*

Participants have acknowledged the value of clusters but expressed their concerns about teacher development. All of them said clusters are good or are accommodating them in preparing for what is to be done throughout the year but there's no learning that takes place there regarding content or classroom challenges.

#### **4.4 LEARNING INDIVIDUALLY**

Individual learning is a way of how teachers are able to develop themselves individually through the use of different sources. In this case one needs to understand the role of teachers, one of which is that a teacher is a scholar and life-long learner. Teachers require that skill to be able to develop themselves, without interacting with others. In terms of individual learning, teachers have different responses, while they agreed on the others.

*The nature of learning activities within the subject is to develop subject related learning materials, resources including handbooks, reference books and study guides. Task clusters are helpful when organising workshops to facilitate capacity building and professional development amongst Business Studies teachers. (Thandi)*

*We have assignments, projects and presentation as learning activities which are carried out individually and when we gather within our cluster we check if they are up to the cognitive level required by the Department of education. (Snakho)*

*Having an ideal choice of wanting to fast-track my career or to learn more about readiness to form or manage a business, made me choose Business Studies, as I wanted to explore the various facets of management within the Business sphere, from finance to communication and marketing.(Kuhle)*

*But looking at the changes that occurred within the subject, made me realize that what we teach is hardly subject compatible. (Thandi)*

#### **4.4.1 Reading Policy Documents**

Policies are an essential component of any organization. Policies are important because they address pertinent issues, within the Department of Education. The main policy document, important to teachers is the CAPS document and annual teaching plan (ATP) which give a clear direction on what is to be done, and when. Most teachers use these policy documents as a form of individual learning: This is what the participants said:

*As an experienced educator I do understand the importance of reading policy documents on promoting continuous learning, if I had all the power, no teacher would go to class without an annual teaching plan (ATP), since it one of the important documents.(Thandi)*

*Departmental documents makes it easy for us as teachers to understand what is to be done and when. (Sbonga)*

*Having the CAPS document on my side has helped me a lot in understanding the content and the examination guidelines which also give us important topics that are always assessed. (Snakho)*

*I believe that the annual teaching plan is a very important document for our teaching and learning. One is able to find everything that is needed for teaching and learning process. (Kuhle)*

Policy documents seem to be very helpful to all participants, if they could be used effectively by subject teachers, specifically the annual teaching plan, examination guideline and Scope. These documents contain lots of information which can help with teaching and learning. It has been noted that the reading of policy documents is a form of individual learning that teachers engage in to empower themselves on curriculum and school developments.

#### **4.4.2 Use of Internet**

Successful teaching and learning is often influenced by the availability of different resources, one of which is the internet. This source plays an important role in promoting teacher development. All five participants are aware of the benefits of using internet to improve their teaching and learning. This is what they said:

*There are quite a number of new topics that were added within our subject and I sometimes have teaching challenges in teaching them but with the help of internet, and Google I find everything I need. (Thandi)*

*Within my school we have 24 hour internet access which makes it easy for us to check different definitions on the subject matter. (Sbonga)*

*Internet helps us a lot within our subject these days, because the tasks that are given to our learners requires them to have access to the internet, without which they would not cope, since textbook do not provide enough information.(Kuhle)*

Utilization of the internet to engage in researching information to improve teaching skills and practice helps us to keep abreast of curriculum developments. This is what Snakho said:

*I may not have much information regarding the content of the subject since I'm a novice but with the help of internet, whenever I face any challenge I just use the internet and it helps a lot.*

Based on the above discussion it shows that teachers who have access to internet have more chances of solving their daily challenges associated to content of the subject quickly. All of them utilise the internet as a foundation of learning and to advance methods and skills to approach learners.

#### **4.4.3 Utilization of resources from Higher Education Institutions**

The matter of credentials of the facilitators or teachers also had an influence in their experience's and level of drill given to them during the time of evolution. The facilitators were giving basic information about curriculum changes but lack content of the subject and did not clearly understand the major changes from Business Economics to Business Studies.

*I believe that the training of teachers should be something that is done throughout the year, not only at the beginning of the year. It should not be an event, but rather a process. (Sbonga)*

*I had an opportunity to further my studies, first by obtaining ABET certificate and completing a B.Ed. Honours has helped me a bit in changing my way of teaching since there is no form of development that we receive from cluster meetings. (Nelly)*

*I believe that training of teachers should be something that is done throughout the year, not only at the beginning of the year. It should not be an event, but rather a process. Another issue that emerged from the findings is the issue of monitoring. (Snakho)*

*I believe learning with others is beneficial to us as teachers but doing these short courses (ACE) actually developed my teaching skill. (Thandi)*

From the above discussion it is evident that continuous professional development is a necessity for teachers. Most teachers mentioned different courses that they have engaged in as part of development

#### **4.5 CHALLENGES WITHIN PROFESSIONAL LEARNING**

Teachers have numerous roles during the course of time. Before, teachers were only expected to be the transmitters of the knowledge, but in our days teachers are expected to transmit knowledge, council learners, facilitate their understanding, mentor their learners and do administrative duties as well, which has changed the duty framework of teachers. Therefore this requires adaptation to new curriculum and to be experts within the teaching community.

*Regardless of the challenges encountered, cluster meetings have had a positive impact in developing my skill on how to handle all these challenges, by that as an educator, I learn from my cluster and after that I am able to go back to the classroom and pass on the content to my learners confidently. (Sbonga)*

*Even though it's not an easy journey with the new curriculum to cover the whole syllabus since it has lot of chapters to be covered, but with the help of morning classes and vacation classes, I can say yes, I do cover it. (Kuhle)*

*Sometimes I find myself behind the syllabus for different reasons, in which case I normally use extra classes which entail morning, afternoon or weekend classes to bridge the gap between the content and timeframe. (Thandi)*

*Professional development seems static within my school as the teachers around there do not know really what is supposed to happen within learning communities, so within my school I can just say that most teachers just remain static their jobs until they retire or move onto other opportunities. This becomes a huge problem since Business Studies needs a higher cognitive level, than with Business Economics, which was just divided into two categories,*

*which are higher and standard Grade. There was nothing challenging, but with Business Studies which requires a broader scope, and requires learners to be able to critically examine the questions being asked to them, it is different. So basically the questions are not as straightforward as it was with Business Economics. (Snakho)*

Both Snakho and Thandi lamented that the experiences of the new curriculum has been putting them behind in the syllabus, and to cover rather added vacations and extra classes to balance out. It is noteworthy that such responses were common to the participants and that time is also a challenge within the changed content state. It now requires more time to be taught. They even indicated that it was morning, winter and afternoon classes that help, without which they would not have been able to complete the syllabus on time.

#### **4.5.1 Lack of Collaborative and Teamwork**

Collaborative education is an umbrella period for a diversity of tactics in education that include joint academic struggles by teachers and learners. Collaborative learning refers to practices and environments which involve common task preparation which each individual depends on and is accountable for. It involves the use of small groups of teachers who always work together in everything related to teaching and learning. It is a process of shared creation, of two or more individuals interacting to create a shared understanding of a concept, discipline or area of practice that none had previously possessed or could have come to, on their own. Most teachers fail work collaboratively with others. Participants maintained as follows:

Working with others has proven to be success in most cases, but most teachers fail to understand the mentality. Teamwork is about a group of people working together to achieve certain goals. In other words, for a team to be successful the people involved must have shared values, communication, interpersonal attitude and behaviour. Teamwork fails when people do not want to listen to another.

*I can't say I'm doing anything differently, but I do use the worksheet and material from cluster, even my lesson plan is now linked to what we were supposed to do, so we have been developed especially with finding the ways to approach a lesson. Clusters have not given us direction, I have not acquired a new skill, but there's still more to be learnt. (Kuhle)*

*As an experienced educator I do understand the importance of working with learners in promoting continuous learning but what makes it more effective is the engagement of different sources that I always use, like information from media which is something that my learners can relate to easily even when we do our normal work, I also make use of past exam papers, local and national media sources which make it easy to promote teaching and learning. I prefer working this way because where I work everyone does things in their own way. (Snakho)*

*In my school there's no teamwork since most teachers thinks they are right. (Thandi)*

*We don't have much time for meetings on content based issues but rather for assessment. Even when we are together we don't listen to one another, everyone wants to do things in their own way. Even when you have a challenge within your class you are only able to find help in your cluster, other than that in our school, everyone is doing things in his or her own way. (Nelly)*

Based on the manner in which the participants responded, there are number of challenges faced on daily basis which affect content delivery. They all reported on different attempts in trying to understand or find new ways to enhance teaching.

*Team teaching brings a lot of positivity but most people fail to use it or don't understand it. I used to face challenges when I was supposed to teach Total Quality Performance (TQM) so with the help of teachers from other schools I do manage, but I wish I had that type of group within my school, it would make things very easy.(Snakho)*

Witnessing the above discussion, teamwork or collaboration has lots of benefits, as a result, more ideas are developed and productivity improves. When parents, teachers and learners work together, more opportunities are created for learners. But most schools are still lacking methodology.

#### **4.5.2 Lack of support from leadership**

District, principals, and HOD support teams are mandated by the Education White Paper 6 to support any training in benefit of effective teaching and learning. Teacher support in this regard can be referred to encouragement or help given to teachers cope with Curriculum changes and to prevent the process of change from failing. From what I have gathered from

teachers is that none of them meet within their schools for developmental purpose but rather for certain important issues: The following statement revealed thus:

*As I mentioned earlier, the only development that occurs in my school seems to be IQMS. As much as it identifies areas of development for teachers but assistance is not provided afterwards, so I take it as just one of the many documents required by DBE that seem to be developmental. (Sbonga)*

It is clear from the above, that management does not understand their roles as leaders since most teachers complained about a lack of support from leadership.

*We submit our files to our HOD fortnightly just to check if we do our lesson plans or if I am on par with the annual teaching plan, other than that there is no development that occurs between us. (Snakho)*

*There's no support from my principal, since I am the subject head and my principal does not understand what is happening with my subject. Sometimes I even have to reason the importance of content workshop with him, since it's my only source of information. (Thandi)*

Judging by the views, it appears that there's no support from leadership, even the DBE workshops are occasional in a term, and with no support. The principals of the schools in this case also do not meet with teachers around issues of teaching and learning but only have briefings on special issues.

#### **4.5.3 Lack of knowledge of curriculum change and content knowledge**

A further important challenge was that the government does not come up to standard, because they do not monitor. Let me make an example, looking at the workshops that they conducted, the Department never monitored to see whether all the teachers from a certain school were trained. The participants raised concerns about the inadequate of information that was being provided by facilitators at the workshops. Participants pointed thus:

*When we went to these workshops you could see that they, themselves did not have clarity about those changes in the Curriculum. It is known that most of the time transformation comes with challenges. It was difficult because training was not appropriate. (Thandi)*

*These workshops were a broad overview of the content, one would come back from those workshops even more confused. (Kuhle)*

This is an indication of lack of proper planning, how can you have transition when you lack facilities related to that change?

*So I can just say, that clusters have as little benefit for us as teachers as these one day workshops. Business Studies is a very practical subject that is easy to explain using real world examples, learners can easily relate with their surroundings but only if they are observant, its practicality makes it even easier for me as an educator to relate to what happening in their daily lives, since teaching Business Studies in our times requires one to understand what is happening around the world, so attending these cluster meeting has helped us a little it since there still a gap in how to teach the subject competently. (Snakho)*

*There is a lot of information missing, and you can't tell me that you change the entire content and let teachers train themselves because these workshops are facilitated by other teachers who also know nothing. (Thandi)*

You cannot change the content of the subject and also lack people who understand it any better, because teachers' concerns were that these people, who were supposed to train them on the content also lacked knowledge. So how does the department expect teachers to deliver in classes having these challenges?

#### **4.5.4 Time as a Barrier**

I believe that time is a very important asset in the process of change, even though it is regarded as immaterial. The reason I am saying this is because, if time is taken into consideration, it might prevent any generation of resistance that might manifest from those who are expected to implement change. Lundgren, Scheckle and Zinn (2015) are of the view that sustainable development is a process that takes time, so it needs to take place in a gradual manner. This is what the participants said:

*Sometimes I find myself behind the syllabus for different reasons, in that case I normally use extra classes which entail morning afternoon or weekend classes to bridge the gap between the content and timeframe. (Thandi)*

*I believe that training of teachers should be something that is done throughout the year, not only at the beginning of the year. It should not be an event, but rather a process. Another issue that emerged from the finding is the issue of monitoring. (Snakho)*

*I have no problem with the issue of time, yes most of the terms being used are new but are not that confusing, but what I have noticed is that proper planning really helps, because if there's something that you don't understand it's better to find out while you're preparing and not have a problem in class. (Nelly)*

*The subject should have been allocated more hours of the academic time, but as mentioned earlier the curriculum planners did consider us nr time when they changed the curriculum. (Sbonga)*

Most teachers have the feeling that the syllabus given is more than the allocated time allows for, and that is why most teachers fail to complete the syllabus on time.

*I think the syllabus is more than the allocated time that is why we fail to finish on time, so I always make use of weekends. Basically when these changes occurred, they should have considered time. That is why we always find ourselves unable to finish in time. (Snakho)*

*I have no problem with time allocation because I have learnt to add my own time to everything. I find the terminology used is quite interesting since learners are able to engage in any active learning and follow instructions easily. (Thandi)*

Observations show that if the use of extra classes was not applied teachers would still be complaining about the issue of time allocated, but they have managed to find other ways of managing teaching time.

#### **4.5.5 Direction to the Teachers to Execute Efficiency**

Ever since these changes were implemented, a lot that has happed, especially with training that was provided by the department of education. There have been content workshops where teachers were trained on how to handle and implement the new curriculum and also to maintain it in class, the intention of the department of education was to improve and maintain quality results within learners.

*We were also trained on the scope of the subject from Grade 10-12, and how to handle different topics within the subject; this encompassed the knowledge skills values or themes to be covered in Business Studies. I believe that these content workshop allocated for us always bridge the gap between teachers perception about the subject and the curriculum. (Thandi)*

*It is recommended that as teachers of the subject at a particular school first plan together a broad subject outline (subject framework) for three levels to arrive at an understanding of the subject content and progression which needs to be in the classroom, as the subject framework has been completed, the teachers should develop work schedules and lesson plans which serve as a guideline that is why I believe that it was informative and helpful to us as teachers. (Sbonga)*

The level of expectation in the new curriculum required a pedagogical approach as well as a practical approach as stated by Thandi, while Snakho affirmed that training was not enough. Nor could one say that it helps these teachers to deal with these changes and occurrences. It is noted that these workshops were being conducted by teachers who were also failing to pass on the content to their colleagues. In contrast, Sbonga restated that curriculum content should be classified into three progressions before adoption, to teach and plan its framework properly in order to be helpful to teachers. This had a negative effect on learners as teachers were failing to deliver the content to them. With these challenges, teachers had no choice but to turn to other teachers in order to have a clearer understanding of the content. Even then they had different views on these workshops on how they helped them to acquire the new expected skill in Business Studies and promote continuous learning.

The other challenge faced by teachers is the ability to deal with diverse personalities among peers. If not taken into thought it becomes a barrier which leads to disagreement about objectives. Teachers need to understand that learners represent attitudes from different backgrounds, so teachers require necessary skills or knowledge to teach these learners.

The issue of diversity requires one to completely understand, by both teachers and learners. An optimistic and an inclined classroom atmosphere are required by teachers to have inclusive lessons. If such mind-set is created from the start, then managing a diverse classroom will be successful.

#### **4.5.6 Lack of Resources**

Another issue that emerged from the discussion was a lack of resources. When I asked participants about the availability of resources that were supposed to be used when the new Curriculum was introduced, they indicated that it was not enough. The three participants shared the same feeling that lack of resources is a barrier to the learners they are teaching. Participants indicated below:

*When these changes occurred, DBE failed to provide us with teaching aids relevant to this new curriculum. (Snakho)*

*I had to make copies for my learners daily; since they do not have textbooks. Other than that I would spend most of the time writing notes for that teaching. (Sbonga)*

*I had a huge challenge with teaching material which was not enough, even the textbooks given to us lacked sufficient information that is why I find myself using five different textbooks. It's even worse with learners, because either they share textbooks or you make copies for them, which takes time. (Thandi)*

Most teachers complained about the inadequate teaching material available to them, since change required new teaching and learning materials.

*If they could have relevant teacher materials available and handed out, especially for newly appointed or inexperienced teachers, these workshops came with new abundant information on the subject as well as knowledge which helps to keep up with all the changes in the subject. (Nelly)*

Most teachers agreed with each other, that a lack of resources becomes a barrier in effective teaching and learning. They also feel that DBE did not do proper planning with regards to material to be used. While teachers had to face resources challenges, there comes another challenge of workload and personal commitment among teachers.

#### **4.5.7 Workloads and personal commitment**

Personal commitment is the capability of an individual to have a clear vision of goals combined with an accurate perception of reality. Workload is the amount of work to be done

by teachers. Basic administrative and support tasks were reported to be the most important issue among secondary support staff, which includes arranging/ordering materials and resources, maintaining records, data analysis and input. This is where teachers are expected to act voluntarily, taking on and fulfilling obligations. The participants revealed through the statements hereunder;

*The tasks that are supposed to be completed per term are way too much, if I can say. (Thandi)*

*I am frequently asked by SMT or Head to take on extra tasks (Awards evening organization, form tutor, attendance, assembly presentations for other staff)... without reducing the workload Elsewhere. (Nelly)*

*Talking about the things that occur in my classroom is part of development, so from my experience sharing information and experiences actually develops you, I am not even ashamed to share my results within these meetings because I strongly believe that the response from different colleagues may or will definitely make a huge difference in my classroom practices” (Thandi).*

This is evident that teachers are not satisfied with workload given to them, they even mention that they even fail to complete their work because of high workload.

*I have to put in extra time to complete my own responsibilities. There is also the expectation to attend out of hours events without extra pay. Even my workload is too much for someone teaching grade 12. (Kuhle)*

*The workload given to us is way too much, it affects the way we work, having too many learners also demotivates us since it requires lots of work. (Snakho)*

Desire is the key to motivation, but it is determination and commitment to an unrelenting pursuit of your goal and a commitment to excellence that will enable you to attain the success you seek. Teachers need to always refine their goals. It's hard to commit yourself to something if your finish line is just an unclear point off in the distance.

The presentation of data for this study has been emphasized within the themes to discuss some aspects related to the business teacher's experiences of curriculum changes.

## **4.6 CONCLUSION**

The aim of this study seeks to explore the experiences of business studies teachers in the context of curriculum change and professional development. This chapter presented the findings from data collected through the means of interviews. The themes were generated from participant's experiences. Data were presented through direct quotations from the participants. The next chapter will be based on the discussions of findings with regards to the literature and theoretical frame work of the study.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **DISCUSSIONS AND ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter provides a discussion of the findings that were analysed and presented in the previous chapter. The essence of this chapter therefore, is the discussion of categories that emerged from the data analysis process, in answering the following critical questions:

- What are Business Studies teacher's experiences of learning through professional learning community in the context of curriculum changes?

Three themes emerged from the data analysed and presented in the previous chapter, and offered broad insights into participants' experiences of learning through professional learning communities (PLCs). The discussion of the key findings will be discussed in relation to the literature that exists and they will be discussed in the following three key themes:

1. Learning within a professional learning community.
2. Challenges within a professional learning community.
3. Benefits derived from participating in the TLC.

The above themes formed discussions and analysis of findings as there some sub-themes emerged to strengthen the discussions.

#### **5.2 LEARNING WITHIN A PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY**

After all the presented evidences, the overall picture I come up in regard to the efficacy of current initiatives on professional development, the researcher believes there is still more work that needs to be done. Even the opportunities created during the time of change were not enough. How have these professional learning communities assisted them in development of content knowledge to reach required cognitive level and promote teacher development.

In regards to the learning within a professional learning community, participants expressed the following, as written below:

### **5.2.1 Reflections of Teachers' Professional Learning Community**

The findings revealed that experiences of learning through professional learning communities are not the same. Some feel that Professional development seems static within their schools; it's like some like the teachers do not know really what is supposed to happen within learning communities, so most teachers just remain static in their jobs until they retire or move onto other opportunities. This becomes a huge problem since Business Studies needs a higher cognitive level, with Business Economics it was just divided into two categories which are higher and standard Grade. There was nothing challenging, like in Business Studies which require a broader scope and requires learners to be able to critically examine the questions being asked of them. So basically the questions are not as straightforward as it was with Business Economics. Additional learning through professional communities has not been promoted in other schools; the idea of growing the subject together academically is stifled. Meanwhile, other teachers perceived that the status of learning community required a broader scope that requires critical examination of questions on business studies.

Findings aligned with Rose and Marge (2012) that curriculum likens a course to be run as planned and prescribed, for intended learning outcomes for the learners. This supports that a curriculum should be developed by teachers to be functional in their respective classrooms. This entails that a curriculum needs to be functional and detailed, to help business studies teachers to undertake the challenges of broader scope involved on this subject. Jansen (1998) posits that to implement a curriculum without quality incentives would be difficult. In contrast, Goodlad and Sue (1992) confirm that despite teachers and learners experiencing conflicts on curriculum, the plan intends to thrive on learning opportunities for a specific time frame and place. A curriculum provides a tool aimed at behavioural changes in learners through a structured activities (Goodlad & Sue, 1992).

The findings further revealed that professional learning communities had a positive impact on teachers by helping them to pass the content to learners properly, even though there is still much that needs to be done with professional development, the little time we have already had within schools has helped them as Business Studies teachers. They have grown in the subject and meeting with different peers within the subject has developed them academically since there's a lot that one learns from others. Noting that Business Studies cognitive levels are higher, learners benefit as they are three cognitive levels which ensure that they are

comfortable with the assessment activities, like higher order for high flyer learner's middle and lower order questioning for those learners who are struggling.

The Findings confirmed that business studies' cognitive levels are consistent and relevant, to benefit learners as stated, types of 'flyers' orders have been adopted. Teachers acknowledged that professional communities have much to do on professional development, and further maintained that some of the meetings with peers have helped them to grow academically through learning from others. This new curriculum was intended to clean up the education organization by giving all learners equal quality education, which would deliver learners with pertinent skills, so that they can contribute towards South Africa's ability to produce economic growth. In efforts to make those variations, OBE turned out not to be a success because first of all, the setting where it would be implemented was never considered, secondly, the language was too complex, confusing and at times inconsistent, which damaged the already delicate learning setting of schools and classrooms in the new the South Africa (Jansen, 1998). Jansen (1998) further states that most teachers did not have access to material on OBE or comprehend where information may be obtainable and most prominently, official support was rough, split and for some teachers it was missing. The subject of curriculum changes looks at how the school programme has altered since 1994. The curriculum has been modified since the inception of the Outcome Based Education (OBE) curriculum, commonly known as Curriculum 2005 (Jansen, 1998).

Curriculum 2005 was planned in a way that teaching was to be learner centred, allowing space for learners to be proactive and active participants of their own learning. It was supposed to be a guide that allows teachers to shape their learning programme. Teachers and learners were very confused by the interpretation of the curriculum, and its internal difficulties with application. Vandeyar's (2003) findings on curriculum changes revealed that new assessment practices in the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) (2003) posed challenges to educators because it (NCS) provided high standards of assessment that educators did not understand. This becomes a challenge because it results in educators are having difficulty in adapting to the new assessment practices. Instead of addressing the issue of equity, it started demanding more attention from the department on non-compliances to the written curriculum. Therefore, the failure of C2005 suggested further changes within the curriculum.

Looking at the above responses on curriculum changes, it seems to emphasise the failed approach that had some weaknesses. Teachers showed dissatisfaction with the level of information that was being given them. So from data gathered from the teachers, the time of Curriculum change was a very difficult time for everyone in a sense that the level of support to deal with change was not enough. They pointed out that the process was not made easy for them. It was too demanding and time consuming. There was confusion, anxiety, fear of the unknown and a lot of uncertainty. The picture that is being painted shows that the implementation of change did not bear fruits as it was expected. There are many things that were not put into consideration, to ensure that the implementation of the new Curriculum is successful.

The finding also revealed that most teachers have no problem with the issue of time. I have noticed is that proper planning really helps, because if there's something that you don't understand it is better to find out while you're preparing, rather than having a problem in class. Even the assessments seem fair because the learners are prepared from the beginning of the FET phase to answer questions and prepare assignments, just as they will have to, in their final year.

One of the characters of curriculum change is meant for the benefit of the learners and to best prepare them for labour market. The expected changes in the newly designed curriculum are only as effective as the teachers can implement them in his or her classroom. In this case the new curriculum required more time to be taught but the department of education did not take that into consideration when designing it. That is why things were not easy for them during the transition time, but with the help of professional learning communities they seem to be managing. Findings by Linn and Miller (2005), point that in all subjects, the evaluation teams deemed the CAPS documents to be more user friendly than the NCS equivalents, mainly due to the number of subject-specific policy documents that had to be consulted in NCS (a minimum of four). Kelly (2004) concurs with Hoadley and Jansen (2002) that results of this level of documentation meant that lesson preparation became complicated and unwieldy for teachers using the NCS. Even the language used is generally believed acceptable for both curricula. Some of the evaluation teams observed difficulty with the educational 'jargon' used in the NCS when describing OBE. This has been reduced in the CAPS, where much simpler language is used to label the teaching and learning procedure (Umalusi, 2014).

Findings revealed that teachers wished for an opportunity to further their studies, first by obtaining an ABET certificate, B.Ed. Honours would help them in changing the ways of teaching since there is no form of development that is received at cluster meetings. They also believe that training of teachers should be something that is done throughout the year, not only at the beginning of the year. It should not be an event, but rather a process. Another issue that emerged from the finding is the issue of monitoring.

Additional Participants indicated that the Department of Education comes up with good strategies to sustain change, but they fail to monitor. Professional development plays an important role in developing us as teachers but there still needs to be clarity regarding teacher learning and cluster meeting. With professional learning communities one is able to share classroom experiences, as in how you tackle a certain topic, what strategies make learners understand better, and what can one do to improve teaching skill, but mostly we look at challenges faced and try to overcome them together.

Another teacher centred his statement on sharing quality information to develop both learners and teachers should be merged with the original plans. Others emphasized that classroom experience could help to tackle a certain topic to make learners ready to overcome such challenges. The teaching and learning experiences vary from the mode of subjects at a particular time, this involves different methods of teaching to achieve the lesson objectives for the subject to be taught. The primary purpose of teaching at any level of education is to inculcate fundamental change on the student (Tebabal & Kahsay, 2011). To facilitate the process of knowledge transmission, teachers should apply appropriate teaching methods that best suit given objectives and students' exit profiles. Teachers require effective and motivating teaching strategies which make students want to learn more and be interested in learning (Ayeni, 2011). This, therefore, suggests that Business Studies teachers should be vigilant and select effective teaching strategies during instructional delivery. Thus, various scholars have mentioned that effective Business Studies teaching strategies encompass case studies, computer aided learning, collaborative learning, brainstorming and much more (Warui, 2014).

Business Studies is a subject that addresses knowledge, skills, attitude and critical values required for informed, productive, ethical and responsible participation in the formal and informal economic sectors. The subject encompasses business principles, theory and practice

that underpin the development of entrepreneurial initiatives, sustainable enterprise and economic growth (Umalusi, 2012). Mhlanga (2012) asserts that teaching business studies has always seemed easy to others, but proven a big challenge to most teachers, who still use the traditional way of teaching.

Findings revealed that talking about the things that occurs in the classroom is part of the development experience, sharing information and experiences actually develops you among teachers. Most of them are not ashamed to share their results within meetings because they strongly believe that the response from different colleagues may, or will make a huge difference in classroom practices.

The finding has been emphasized within the themes to discuss some aspects related to the business teacher's experiences of curriculum changes. In line with Lauglo (2005), the issue that drives business studies curriculum in secondary education in Africa, is the attempt to provide an economically relevant education that prepares students for the world of work. The Education Strategic Plan (2015) states, that teachers should use teaching strategies which are student-centred in order to support the curriculum implementation on subject specifications. Findings by Linn and Miller (2005) contend that urgency of implementation failed to confirm the technological abilities of the operatives (teachers) to the application of these incentives, and thus deprives full delivery of the achieved knowledge. This confirms teachers' experiences of the introduction of curriculum change. The researcher can say that their experiences were very difficult and challenging. Participants felt that were not were not adequately equipped to face the changes that were brought by the new curriculum. The time that was given to teachers to deal with change was not enough to make the experience any less frustrating. The overall picture with regard to the responses makes one come to the conclusion that the teachers did not know what was expected of them. Even though the expectations were stipulated, teachers did not have a clear idea of how to achieve what was expected.

### **5.3 CHALLENGES WITHIN A PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY**

Challenges were the first theme that emerged from data. The participants gave their opinion on how they experienced the process of curriculum changes. This change was organized by the department of education, but was supposed to be implemented teachers. The conventional

approach was used by the curriculum disseminators. The aim was to organize workshops or seminars for all teachers within their respective subject groups. Such workshops are understood to have been done nationally with an intention of helping teachers during the implementation and teaching of this new curriculum, but when asked how helpful the workshops were, two of the participants responded that these workshops were not very helpful. Nevertheless, there were some positive responses in terms of being told about the changes in the curriculum. Previous findings confirm that case studies are widely used in the teaching and learning of Business Studies (Azuama, 2014). Case studies are active learning methods which present the scenarios that apply the concepts learned in the classroom to the real life situation (Beckisheva, Gasparyan & Kovalenko, 2015). Research has revealed that the use of case studies improves students' ability to synthesize complex analytical questions about the real-world issues, which has resulted in students' motivation to participate in class activities, thereby promoting learning, and increasing performance on assessments (Bonney, 2015).

So looking at the change that occurred in Business Studies, do they think that these were major changes in the subject, and how were they affected?

### **5.3.1 Teachers' Experiences Teaching of Business Studies as Curriculum Changes**

Findings revealed that there were huge changes within the subject, some said when they started teaching this subject was known as Business Economics, and now the differences between Business Economics and Business Studies are very large. The biggest change is the scope of Business Economics, it focuses on understanding the concepts, advantages and disadvantages. Learners were taught in a way that they could just learn for exam purposes. It focused more on a narrow field, while Business Studies covers a variety of topics within the business field. Our Business Studies learners are taught on how to devise strategies and critical , so change within the subject is huge.

Participants maintained that there are a series of changes that occurred on the curriculum since they started teaching. These changes have their merits and demerits on learners because of its involvement of device strategies for learners to grasp, since business studies require critical analysis of the subject. However, the challenges of the huge task of business studies forced a change of mind from the initial intention to become a business studies teacher in future. Persistent changes caused more confusion. In another view, participants perceived that business studies should be taught with strategies to allow the learners to be critically prepared

for the subject task. The findings confirmed that imbalance from both sides occurs to disengage the circular flow of teaching and learning, and as such short circuit fundamental changes on learning expectations, which affected teachers, will equally affect learners. However, Tebabal and Kahsay (2011) assert that the primary purpose of teaching at any level of education subscribes to inculcate fundamental changes into the students which perhaps may not be effectively implemented in cases where any imbalances occur. To facilitate the process of knowledge transmission, teachers should apply appropriate teaching methods that best suit given objectives and students' exit profiles. Teachers require effective and motivating teaching strategies which make students want to learn more and be interested in learning (Ayeni, 2011). This, therefore, suggests that Business Studies teachers should be vigilant and select effective teaching strategies during instructional delivery. Thus, various scholars have mentioned that effective Business Studies teaching strategies should encompass case studies, computer aided learning, collaborative learning, brainstorming and much more (Warui, 2014).

Findings revealed that most teachers wanted to fast-track their career, or to learn more about the readiness of forming or managing a business, made them choose Business Studies as they wanted to explore the various facets of management within the Business sphere, from finance to communication and marketing. But looking at the changes that occurred within the subject has given them hardly anything in teaching the subject that is compatible.

This statement was supported by other teachers, who stated that many changes really occurred with business studies since 1994 which has made the replacement of Business Economics with Business studies, as curriculum changed with the idea of accommodating all learners. They further stated that because of continuous changes to the curriculum, future dreams of teaching business studies have not been realized.

From the participants responses it showed that the subject changed from Business Economics to Business Studies, which created difficulty by changing the scope of the subject which is totally different from the old one, which had structured the content the way that it was supposed to be taught totally differently. The way the subject has changed, continuously has given most teachers a hard time about their capability or competency to teach the subject, as they even have the feeling that during these changes, the training given to them was not enough. This is what they said, when they were asked of their reflection on the activities that could take place in cluster meetings, like what has been done in those meeting, and how have

these meetings developed their love of teaching the subject. Stoll (2006) further argues that when teachers share ideas about how they actually teach in their classrooms, they get equipped with new teaching methods that are easy to transfer to their own classrooms. When teachers collaborate, with the aim of professionally developing themselves, they become part of a professional learning community (Brodie, 2013). In professional learning communities, teacher learning occurs because of the interaction that characterizes these communities (De Clercq, 2014). Such learning is valued because one's knowledge gets transformed when combined with that of others in the generation of new understandings (Kennedy, 2005). Brodie (2013, p. 6) applauds the collaboration of professional learning communities, because individual teacher's learning from conventional teacher development programs do not necessarily make for coherent or sustained changes for learners.

### **5.3.2 Meetings for the Business Studies and Teachers' Development**

The findings as per meetings for business studies purposes and teacher's development, Thomas and Guskey (2002) allude that professional development makes efforts to bring change to the classroom practices of teachers, by changing their attitudes and beliefs, and to change the learning outcomes of learners. Joshua and Bibiano (2015) challenged the efficiency of teaching business studies with modern computer instruments to ease difficulties which occur without the proper education of learners to understand computer literacy. Meanwhile, Kwok (2014) unveils that professional development is important to improve the competency of teachers facing various challenges. The researcher believes that provided teachers were developed professionally with knowledge and skills, they would be able to adapt to curriculum changes. It will also make an enormous difference in how they perceive and experience these Curriculum changes.

Professional development is the skill, knowledge and ongoing learning undertaken to improve one's ability to do the job and grow as a professional, and be on top of the game and stay abreast professionally. Professional development determines how teachers have experienced these changes and to what extent they have understood them. The level of professional development given to teachers at school level in order to implement these changes is still in question, judging by the quality of results obtained by learners (Kelly, 2006).

The finding revealed that teachers normally meet with their clusters at the end of every term meaning its four times in a year, and they set question papers and memorandums for March, June and September, and they also set all tasks, projects, assignments and presentations, after marking they meet again for moderation within the cluster. They also do lesson plans, so basically they prepare everything for the term, within the cluster there is some development during our meetings, since they look at the obstacles encountered. Most concurred with each other in saying that clusters have as little benefit as the one day workshops. Business Studies is a very practical subject that is easy to explain using real world examples, learners can easily relate with their surroundings but only if they are observant, its practicality makes it even easier for me as an educator to relate to what happening in their daily lives, since teaching Business Studies in present days requires one to understand what is happening around the world, so attending these cluster meetings has helped us a little, as there is still a gap in how to teach the subject competently.

Findings further revealed that cluster meetings are of little benefit due to business studies being a practical subject which positioned learners to be practical observers of their environment in daily lives, and to make them understand happenings around them, as both teachers and learners. During cluster meetings they set question papers, moderate learner's scripts, discuss previous question papers' standards and develop memorandums. Other activities include content discussion which is based on the content knowledge of the subject. This concurred with one by stating that it is a sustainable subject because it enlightens the way for those who are business minded. Even after exploring business information one could apply the different business strategies.

These findings showed that most teachers perceived it the same way, while others have different opinions of the meeting attendance. The findings on changes in curriculum and teaching of Business studies in South Africa questioned its capability to assist learners becoming entrepreneurs, or being able to start their own businesses. It involves craftsmanship of a teacher to apply the new teaching methods of Business Studies which promotes creative thinking and problem solving, while Business Economics emphasized memorization learning, which was about remembering the facts, while overlooking the notion of an in-depth understanding of Business Studies. However, strategies needed for the maximum delivery of expected entrepreneurs in future markets, should possess critical understanding and learning of Business Studies through creative thinking and problem solving (Kallaway, 2012, p. 27).

Hamp-Lyons (2007) supports that critical thinking in Business Studies teaching necessitates a deep and clear understanding of the business world. Yet, Chika (2012) confirms that learners were exposed, to acquire meaningful learning experiences through quality mentorship to advance knowledge to further enable them to understand meanings throughout the world. This means that learners become independent thinkers.

Looking at the above responses, it indicated that these cluster meetings were designed for preparation and submission of work, meaning that one cannot solely rely on those meeting activities for intensive development. This reinforces that teachers could appreciate both workshops and cluster meetings, irrespective of complains about the duration and the insufficient information. It was helping them, especially with the nature of learning activities on Business Studies related to TLCs.

### **5.3.3 Activities Related to Learning**

In relation to activities on learning, Pihie and Sani (2009) found that observation has shown that teachers have not been able to adapt to all these changes that occurred within the subject since they are still using the traditional method of teaching, where a teacher is regarded as the only source of information and the learners as the vessels that need to be filled with knowledge or learning material. Within these changes, teachers must be willing to apply the new approach and must be able to articulate their ideas to make a meaningful contribution to the new curriculum implementation. That is why this study seeks to explore Business Studies teacher's experiences from relative activities of learning through PLCs in the context of curriculum changes. Moreover, teachers' statements related to learning activities relevancy maintained thus; they have assignments, projects and presentation as learning activities which are carried out individually and then, when we gather, we go to our cluster to check if they up to the cognitive level required by the Department of education.

Findings revealed that some activities that normally happen at cluster meetings, such as projects, assignments and presentations, correlate if they were able help learners' reasoning as ordered by the Department of Education. Meanwhile, other teachers maintained the that the nature of learning activities in the subject is to develop subject related learning materials, resources including handbooks, reference books and study guides. Organising workshops to facilitate capacity building and professional development amongst Business Studies teachers when referring to task clusters are helpful. Others felt that learning business studies helps to

develop learning materials such as handbooks, study guides and reference books to facilitate learning development. Findings revealed that teachers see cluster meeting as a means of introducing activities relevant to help teaching and learning. The facilitators were giving basic information about the curriculum changes but there may be lack of content of the subject and lack of clearer understanding of the major changes that occurred when changing from old Business Economics to the new Business Studies.

Based on the findings, teachers' professional learning and development tries to correlate the more important morals and principles, as well as contributory purposes. Kelly (2006) affirms the idea that teachers are on the right track if they work with other teachers to meet their professional development necessities. Sithole (2012) argues, what the teachers were destined for, was a way of getting information for their subject in relation to another principles of professional development. Joshua and Bibiano (2015) disagree that professional development propels business studies teachers to reflect on their own practice for maximization of the core objectives to advance students' capacity to economic stability. Another study entails that the subject advisor strongly believes that teachers need to attend professional development workshops to satisfy their professional development needs on teaching their subject effectively (Msomi, 2016). Nonetheless, Pihie, and Sani (2009) open that awareness of these challenges does not only affect novice teachers, but the experienced teachers equally face the same challenges with Curriculum interpretation that leads to professional development.

It is noteworthy that engagement should be made available to focus on the relevance to their core duties of mediating content and subject by an educational approach to work. This promotes high acquisition of subject information and insights which could emanate to professional development workshops, where teachers were given tasks comprised of activities related to their teaching subjects (Gounder, 2014). Nevertheless, Tang, GU and Whinston (2012) confirmed that motivational drive like love, commitment or passion are a stimulant to made teachers consciously appropriate all possible expertise designed as part of their relevant job descriptions on professional development.

Maistry (2008) asserts that there was argument about the Department of Education trying develop teachers through Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS), at school level, which has been criticized, with a view that IQMS does not evaluate competence sufficiently to assist teachers to identify their needs (Maistry, 2008). Mokoena (2005) states that through the IQMS evaluation most teachers were willing to be appraised, but not for their

professional developmental purposes. Maistry (2008) further noted that development and performance appraisals are combined, which often makes it difficult to transparently and accurately identify teacher development needs to effectively teach business studies related lessons. Teachers perhaps undergo fewer processes because of salary progression attached, and no substantive teacher learning and development ever takes place.

#### **5.3.4 The Effect of The Old, and The New Curriculum on Business Studies Teachers and Learners**

The findings from scholars defined as Le Donné, Fraser and Bousquet (2016), purported that basic implementation of innovative strategies are paramount to simplify the social science subject, which involves actualizing practical instructional materials to transform a system. This implies that thorough application of teaching those scientific core principles to improve the nature of the economy, could thrive beyond imagination. Opfer (2016) maintains that professionalism needs to be attached to the overall conduct in teaching practices which influence the outcomes of methods applied as a teacher within the space of education. As such, Wayne and Youngs (2003) state that personal qualities of teachers might successfully overcome the barriers to teaching and learning, particularly business studies at a school. On this note, Woolfolk (2010) agrees that engagement of subject management promotes efficiency whereby both teachers and learners enjoy mutual relationships through continuous feedback on assigned lesson activities. According to Ayeni (2011), teaching is a process that involves bringing about desirable changes in learners that could help to achieve specific outcomes on the subject. However, regarding the old and the new curriculum on business studies;

Findings revealed that teachers believed that Business Studies has changed a lot because it discusses the current issues, such as business laws, creative thinking and business ethics to name a few. Learners who have studied Business Studies have a better understanding of the business world, when compared to the Business Economics learners. As some teachers were trained in the old system, which they are used to, it was difficult for them to adapt when the Department came up with these changes. Most of them use the traditional way of teaching, while Business Studies requires a learner centred way of teaching. Additionally, Business Economics was not well structured, compared to Business Economics where so much important information was missing. Business Studies is designed in a way that its

learners acquire a unique skill to open their businesses, even if they don't do well academically, since it entails three cognitive levels; higher, middle and lower order.

From this statement; teachers trained in the old system of business studies as curriculum entailed, were used to changes, while others complaint that business studies was not structured properly because it had much important information missing. The findings on teachers learning maintain a notion that lacks definitional accuracy on literature, nonetheless Fraser, Kennedy, Reid and Mckinney (2007, p. 157) postulated that “teachers professional learning can also be taken to represent the processes that is instinctive, deliberate, individual and social, result of specific changes in the professional knowledge, skills, attitudes, beliefs on teachers’ actions”. Meanwhile, by definition in line with the Borko’s (2004) opinion, who declares that the core of teacher learning can only be silenced through exploration of different backgrounds and taking into account the professional learning that engages teachers on an individual capability as learners themselves and more appropriately, as part of a communal organization such as a learning community.

The participant’s responses, revealed a number of challenges faced during the time of change, most teachers reported similar attempts to grasp the new curriculum stated that the purpose of effective implementation and staff development should have been the major concern during the time of change. Ganyaupfu (2013) asserts that a possible explanation for teacher-directed instruction as a type of strategy which is less time-consuming than active learning and cognitive activation strategies requires less commitment from disengaged students. This invention enables teachers to cover a lengthy curriculum and focus on preparing standardised tests which may not have had sufficient time to prepare for these lessons (Boardman and Woodruff, 2004). However, Hattie (2009), states that it is likely that not many teachers have been adequately trained to manage and implement the practices related to both of these strategies to teach business studies, unlike related subjects. At this juncture, based on teachers’ ideas, Woolfolk (2010) concurs that increasing the number of planning hours for business studies teachers can provide them with more time to develop more complex teaching strategies to adequately disseminate to the learners. Adunola (2011) maintains that teachers need to be conversant with numerous teaching strategies that take recognition of the magnitude of complexity of the concepts to be covered within the curriculum for the realization of standardization.

The methodology of teaching should have also been taken into consideration during this time, since methods had to be more educational. This required that the lesson should be taught in a way that learners will be actively involved in the lesson. The teachers have numerous roles in the course of time. Before, teachers were only expected to be the transmitters of the knowledge but now, teachers are expected to transmit knowledge, counsel learners, facilitate their understanding, mentor learners and do some administrative duties, as well as change the duty framework of teaching. Therefore this requires adaptation to the new curriculum and to be experts within the teaching community.

#### **5.4 BENEFITS DERIVED FROM PARTICIPATING IN THE PLC**

As the findings unfold, the researchers have specified that the study was about teachers' experiences of Curriculum change related professional development, and then shift the focus to the process of change by finding out about teachers' experiences over the process of change, to develop teachers professionally. Workshops were used during the time of Curriculum change; training in this case could be regarded as a process of learning the skills that are required to perform teaching tasks. The researcher sought to investigate the extent to which this training could go in schools further and to explain why teachers need constant training, which attracts benefits for teachers teaching business studies. Furthermore, the researcher tried to find out whether the teachers themselves have had support, and how often they have experienced it at schools, or at any level of the education system.

##### **5.4.1 Teachers' Experiences Regarding Training for Curriculum Development**

The participants shared their experiences regarding the training and re-training as part of development, and about the accuracy of information given during the time of change.

Dube and Moffat (2009), argue on premise that social participation occurs in the learning process of each quadrant and members construct meaning through their active participation and negotiation which consequently impacts on the development of a member's identity. Kamla (2012) maintains that teachers learn faster from students as classroom participation takes on collaborative exploration of the subject, as such business studies insights empower teamwork activities that allows new knowledge discovery, especially when handling difficult subject tasks. Each social interaction is therefore considered to be a community of practice, since these interactions are defined by the common goal of learning to improve practice and

contribute to quality teaching and learning. Gay, Mills, Airasian (2006) and Henson ((2004) re-affirmed, that alternative solutions emerge at question, brainstorming and presentation periods, where students are given the privilege to explore answers to given problems, which requires modern solving methods. The Business studies subject goes with statistical instruments leading to creativity. Fraser et al. (2007) defined teacher learning as a process of self-development, acceptance of change and individual growth in knowledge, skills and teachers beliefs. Teacher learning communities acknowledge the importance of moving away from the traditional way of teaching and learning to adapt socially, with new innovations. At this juncture, Dufour and Eaker (2008. p. 27) suggest that teacher's learning encourages transition from a tradition of isolation to a culture of collaboration on teaching modality. The collaboration on teaching plays vital role in improving teacher's competency to face various challenges (Kwok, 2014). In contrast, Schmoker (2005, p. 141), claims that teachers learn best from other teachers where they literally support themselves by teaching the art of teaching. This necessitates an active contribution of individual's ranges beyond mere engaging on activities, rather than a sense of professionalism on learning practices. This mentioned shared engagement of individuals is branded to share activity with relative consequences in a community of practice. The findings from participants confirmed this.

Findings revealed that when it was introduced, teachers were given a 5 day training period which was not enough. Being given a short period of time, the training felt rushed and we were not given a meaningful picture of the new curriculum, which those people who were conducting them did not understand either . It is like the Department took teachers who were as confused as we were, train them and then they would be sent back to train us. Additionally, teachers could see that facilitators did not have clarity about those changes in the Curriculum. It is known that transformation comes with challenges, most of the time. It was difficult because training was not appropriate. So when the Department decided to change the approach, they did not think about us as teachers or the implementer's of that new curriculum. You cannot train a person for only three days or one week, to say the least, and then expect that person would be able to face the challenges.

Some teachers have mentioned the relevance of the training for teachers' development, but others stated that attention given to curriculum changes urgency, pointed out that 5 days training was not enough for effective delivery of changes, as there was no specific sign that government wanted to educate the teachers to be familiar with the current changes because

training was not accurate, compounding difficulties experienced by teachers. More so, others maintained that during the changes of curriculum, it was difficult to understand because the training offered was not appropriate and yet some teachers just decided to change approaches to suite their teaching. In her view, three days training was not enough for curriculum clarification. The findings are supported by Flores (2005), who asserts that professional development does not modify the way things have stood, but to recover the methods in which things are done in the arena of any profession. It is typically enforced by the alteration that has taken place, which the educational organization, has encouraged people to keep up with the rest of their counterparts. Change can be positive once the people who experience it understand the need for change. I believe that it is safe to say that the research that has been conducted on professional development has shown that professional development closely relates to change, in a sense that change is often experienced by the very same people who undergo development of any kind (Flores, 2005).

Findings revealed that these workshops only gave a broad overview of the content; one would come back from those workshops even more confused. Facilitators, failed to answer questions. Most of the time, the second hand information is not the same as the first hand information; it is not the same to listen to something yourself rather than being told by someone else. If you are told by someone else, chances are, some information is going to get lost. So in this situation, the onus was on the teachers to prepare thoroughly for the new content.

Other teachers felt that, ever since these changes, a lot that has happed especially with training that was provided by the department of education. There have been content workshops where teachers were trained on how to handle and implement the new curriculum and also to maintain it in class. The intention of the department of education was to improve and maintain quality results within learners. Teachers were also trained on the scope of the subject, from Grade 10-12, and how to handle different topics within the subject, this encompassed knowledge skills values or themes to be covered in Business Studies. They believe that these content workshop allocated for them always bridges the gap between teachers perceptions about the subject and the curriculum.

Findings further revealed that firstly, workshops were a broad overview of the content and that those workshops confused them even more. Facilitators too seemed confused, in one of teacher's opinion it was noted that some information is going get lost. Others opined that

although it was the department of education's intention to ensure quality results for learners, the scopes of business studies should be handled differently. From grade 10-12 the teacher's perception of the subject and the curriculum has to change. Teachers even recommended that as teachers of the subject at a particular school, they first plan a broad subject outline (subject framework) for three levels, in order to arrive at an understanding of the subject content and progression which needs to be seen in the classroom, and as the subject framework has been completed the teachers should develop work schedules and lesson plans which serve as a guideline, is why I believe that it was informative and helpful to us as teachers.

Findings by Borko (2004) recognize that positions of collaborative interactions amongst teachers, can substitute teacher learning in their development constitutes experiences. Meanwhile, Desimone (2009) clarifies that the collaborative connections between teachers of a similar school grade serve as an influential tool for teacher learning. Fraser *et al.*, (2007) concurred that teacher learning undergoes a rounded process of individual and collaborative procedures aimed at recovering the professional information, skills, arrogances, politics, and actions of the teachers. This consequently serves the subject framework to help drive this study since it was summarized as the essential component of collaboration which allied to PLCs. According to Evans (2002), who asserts that the process, which is on-going may not have been completed. However, Heinonen and Poikkijoki (2006) assert that professional development activities always leads to teacher learning through seminars and workshops which seems effective in supporting teachers' learning and thus improves experiences in development.

Findings revealed that the level of expectation in the new curriculum required the pedagogical approach as well as practical approach, as stated by teachers, to change. While others affirmed that training was not enough, nor could one say accurately that these teachers were helped to deal with these changes and occurrences. It is noted that these workshops were being conducted by fellow teachers who were also failing to pass on the content to their colleagues. In contrast, one teacher reaffirmed that curriculum content should be classified into three progressions before adoption, in order to teach and plan its framework properly to be helpful for teachers. This had a negative effect on learners, as teachers were failing to deliver the content to them. With these challenge, teachers had no choice but to turn to other teachers in order to have a clearer understanding of the content. Even they had differing

views on these workshops, and how they helped them to acquire the new expected skills in Business Studies and promote continuous learning.

#### **5.4.2 Pedagogical Changes of Teaching Business Studies**

The core importance finding revealed by a Boston (2013) study, explored secondary mathematics teachers' learning and instructional alteration after participating in a professional development workshop. It was revealed that teachers' learning was better while contributing to solving mathematical tasks, the same approach could be applied to business studies problems. Jita and Mokhele (2014) support that to understand from teachers the available constructions and delivery of professional development packages and to understand the decentralized curriculum leadership system might appear, and work effectively with teachers. This revealed that workshops and seminars are needed for the development of appropriate educational approaches to affect teaching and learning business studies. This would mean that teachers teaching business studies need to correct their approach on subjects being taught.

Findings revealed that teachers have not been doing anything differently, but use the worksheet and material from clusters, even the lesson plan is now linked to what was supposed to be done, so teachers have been developed, especially in finding ways to approach a lesson, clusters have given them direction, even with how learners should write essays. Teachers have acquired new skills, but there is still more to be learnt. Teachers need understand the importance of working with learners in promoting continuous learning, but what makes it more effective is the engagement of different sources, like information from media, which is something that learners can relate to easily even when we do our normal work. They need to make use of past exam papers, local and national media sources which makes it easy to promote teaching and learning. Teachers believe that the department of education could have done more of this training, and make it a process rather than an event which can have positive effects on teaching and learning.

In this part teachers confirmed that direction should be given to learners by teachers to gain skills needed through the promotion of continuous learning. Effective engagement from media on the government effort for positive effects on teaching is needed. These meetings have to be continuous, so that one can be able to acquire the expected skills, and relevant teacher materials should be available and handed out, especially for newly appointed or

inexperienced teachers, these workshops must come with new abundant information on the subject, as well as knowledge which can help to keep up with all the changes in the subject.

The findings with participants exposed that skills development is required for business studies teachers. Others revealed that there should be skills development if relevant teaching material is available for them at cluster meetings, especially during workshops so that inexperienced teachers could be supported with subject knowledge for better performance in their various classrooms. However, teachers sustained that pre-knowledge by developing skills as learnt from clusters have positive influence to function effectively and confidently to the learners of business studies contents. Participants emphasized the issue of insufficient time, that whenever there is change in the education system, time must be a high priority. People who would be implementing the change must be given time to familiarize themselves with the new system. The researcher has found this very consistent with Guskey (2002) who maintains that change is a gradual and a difficult process for teachers.

#### **5.4.3 Syllabus considerations as changes on curriculum**

The question is how much time would be considered realistic and whether they are able to cover the syllabus on time, and if not, what happens. Based on the time frame for system changes;

Findings revealed that it's not an easy journey with the new curriculum to cover the whole syllabus since it has lot of chapters to be covered, but with the help of morning classes and vacation classed most teachers were able to cope. While others unveiled that sometimes they find themselves behind in the syllabus for different reasons, in which case they normally use extra classes which entail morning, afternoon or weekend classes to bridge the gap between the content and timeframe.

Additionally teachers lamented that experiences of the new curriculum has been putting them behind the syllabus, and to cover they rather added vacations and extra classes to make up time. It is noteworthy that these problems were common among the participants, and that time is also a challenge with the content state, which now requires more time to teach. They even indicated that it required morning, winter and afternoon classes to help them to complete the syllabus on time.

Mothilal (2011) focuses on teacher learning through clustering, provoking the insights of five participant's experiences within a cluster. This exposed that cluster learning was instrumental towards inspiring collegiality and collaboration between teachers and was also helpful in providing chances for teachers to be involved in self-initiated learning. Furthermore, it was found that teachers in the cluster engaged in informal replication performance as a result of content knowledge distribution about lessons. In the same vein, Vandeyar (2005), and Hamp-Lyons (2007) concurred that feedback assists the educator to model and shape appropriate performance of learners and at the same time gives guidance to learners on how to self-assess. This kind of feedback clearly depicts the manner in which assessment strategies and classroom practices have to be changed. Moreover, it is evidence that the educator no longer associates errors with lack of intellectual ability but rather, the educator diagnoses the cause of the learners' errors in order to give appropriate feedback. Findings contributed by the scholars; Shepard, 2001; Hoadley & Jansen, 2002; Vandeyar & Killen, 2003; Maree & Fraser, 2003; Hamp-Lyons, 2007) believed that transformation occurrences on assessment practices can affect a particular curriculum, for change of system is an indication of the power and influence that assessment has on the implementation process. The maximum effect of the curriculum content, input, outcomes and competence is based on the need to redefine the learner's capability (Kelly, 2004). Factors that could disturb the plan and the practice of curriculum include; teacher interpretation, teacher misunderstanding, resource constraints, learner background knowledge, teaching methods used, classroom shapes, class size, and teaching.

## **5.5 CONCLUSION**

This chapter dealt with the discussions and analysis of the findings which represent the participant's responses, and literature reviews support the theoretical framework relevance of this study. The study revealed that participant's experiences were closely similar to the literature in relation to teacher's professional learning development on curriculum changes. The next chapter will present the conclusions, recommendations and some guidelines, limitations and suggestion for future research.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECCOMENDATIONS**

#### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

The main purpose of this study was to explore teachers' experiences of learning through Professional learning communities in the context of curriculum changes. This chapter summarises the study, draws conclusions and makes recommendations on the basis of the conclusions.

#### **6.2 OVERVIEW OF THE CHAPTERS**

In chapter 1 I introduced the study and its background. I specified that there are many changes that occurred within our curriculum after 1994. I drew from the introduction of C2005 up to CAPS, that indicated how these changes have affected the teaching profession also indicated that these changes did not affect only curriculum but even our subjects were affected by these changes. I then expressed the research problem as connecting the need to hear from teachers themselves how they experienced change related to curriculum and professional development provided.

In Chapter Two I presented the literature reviewed in relation to Business Studies teacher's experiences of learning through professional learning community in the context of curriculum changes. This chapter started by reviewing literature on the following: Curriculum, Curriculum changes in South African education system, the nature of Business Studies as a subject. It further discussed the professional development of teachers, teacher learning and professional learning communities.

This chapter started by defining the Curriculum by different scholars, of which, one is Rose and Marge (2012), who understand curriculum as a course to be run, they suggest that curriculum is only what is planned and prescribed to be taught to learners or what is intended. Their view of curriculum focuses on the official curriculum which is nationally developed to help teachers in classroom. Separating what is purely curriculum from what is education generally is difficult. Initially, curriculum and instruction is surrounded by arrangements of factors which are also called common places, acting together in practical, real world environments. After that it discussed the changes within Business Studies as a subject. The

teaching and learning experience varies from the mode of subjects at a particular time, which involves different methods of teaching to achieve the lesson objectives for the subject to be taught. The primary purpose of teaching at any level of education is to inculcate fundamental change on the student (Tebabal & Kahsay, 2011).

Additionally, it also discussed professional development during this time of change. Curriculum changes have confirmed the significance of requirements for professional development of teachers, since they are at the vanguard of the application of the Curriculum. Professional development is the skill, knowledge and ongoing learning undertaken to improve one's ability to do the job and grow as a professional, be on top of the game and stay abreast professionally. Professional development determines how teachers have experienced these and to what extent they have understood them. It further discussed teachers' experiences of learning through professional learning community. The teacher's experiences of learning in a professional community ensures all skills acquisition from micro and macro system of education sector.

Finally it discussed the benefits of a professional learning community. To learn a profession in a community provides one with some value added incentives to be called benefits which perhaps enhance the intent of learning for adaptation and reception of new environment. Hord and Hirsh (2008) state the list of benefits by pointing out that teachers involved in a PLC contribute to school reform and improvement.

This study was framed by theoretical framework known as constructivism which is the social atmosphere of foundation of information where people construct information when they interrelate with each other or with their involvements. (Watson, 2001). The first type is cognitive constructivism which constructs new knowledge from teachers' experiences through processes of accommodation and assimilation. In cognitive constructivism teachers were able to give first-hand information of their experiences of learning through professional learning communities. The second type is social constructivism which is a sociological theory of knowledge, according to which human development is socially situated and knowledge is constructed through interaction with others. Social constructivism created a situation for the current study to explain the importance of teachers learning together through professional learning communities.

In Chapter Three I described the study as qualitative, located within the interpretive paradigm and employing a case study design. I found the case study design as appropriate in that it thoroughly describes complex phenomena, such as recent events, important issues, or programmes, in ways to unearth new and deeper understanding of these phenomena (Lapan, Quartaroli and Reimer, 2012). I reported that there were five participants.

Data was generated using interviews and field notes. Ethical considerations of participants and trustworthiness were also discussed. The use of interviews was based on the fact that it allows the researcher to get in-depth information about teacher's experiences of learning through professional learning communities in the context of curriculum changes.

In chapter Four I presented and discussed data. This was done through the theme of teacher's experiences or learning through professional learning communities in the context of curriculum changes. The following themes emerged on the study.

- Teachers experiences of learning within a professional learning community.
- Challenges within a professional learning community.

Through this process, the findings revealed that teacher's experiences were different, even though there are some similarities with regards to professional development using different sources.

Chapter Five presented the discussion of findings of the study in detail. The Chapter discussed each theme highlighted in Chapter four and supported findings with existing literature and theoretical framework.

### **6.3 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS**

This section presents the summary of the findings under each of the research objectives. The summary of the findings presented according to the themes that emerged from the findings is thus used to draw conclusions and propose recommendations. The summary of the findings is presented according to the objectives of the study.

The purpose of this study was to explore Business Studies teachers' experiences of learning through professional learning communities in the context of curriculum changes.

In relation to my first aim of my study which was to explore how teachers learn in a PLC my initial, limited view of teachers' collaborative learning capacity, was transformed after the appearance of various modes of teacher learning from the data. Firstly teachers engage in learning on a collaborative basis through various modes of learning, such as from learning from DBE, clustering, mentoring, workshops and networking. The second theme was learning as an individual. On an individual basis, teachers utilize the internet to engage with educational policy documents, and utilizing of resources from higher education institutions to enhance their teaching practices and to keep abreast of educational developments.

In relation to curriculum changes findings reveal that the changes were welcomed by teachers very well with that hope that it will bring more development into their level of teaching and learning but lack of adequate training resulted into more problems. What is been noticed is that the department of education took the issue of change light with regards to the level of training provided while changes were huge to teachers. There's even a gap between education theory, policy and practice, creating spaces for addressing practical issues.

The findings revealed that the use of these different modes of learning seem to be working for teachers but the main challenge in using them is that, they are done occasionally, others do not serve their purpose of developing teachers, for an example IQMS. Mokoena (2005) states that through the IQMS evaluation most teachers are willing to be appraised but not for their professional developmental purposes. Teachers also engaged in the mode of learning through workshops which have been confirmed by teachers to be unhelpful to them, since some of them are conducted by their colleagues who also lack content. The objectives of the study was achieved as the department of education may use this dissertation and understand better the need for professional development and its benefit within schools

### **6.3.1 Challenges Within Professional Learning Community**

The Researcher believe that there are more challenges that are faced by teachers within their schools like lack of collaborative and teamwork, teachers complained about their colleagues doing things in their own ways, lack of support from management, it seems as if management does not promote professional development amongst their staff members. Teachers also had challenges of workload which is too much and this causes them not to finish their tasks on

time. Unfortunately if principals and their staff members lack understanding and benefits of PLC there won't create platforms for it within their schools. They need to understand the importance of learning through PLCs and its benefit within the teaching profession.

#### **6.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The choice of this research was limited to Business Studies teachers' school in the Pinetown district in KwaZulu-Natal. Only teachers who were teaching Business studies in Grade 12 were selected as participants. The study was restricted to one particular grade and it is not known what the views for other grades within Business Studies in other schools are. The findings of the study therefore, cannot be generalized for the entire province or for the country at large, although these results can at least provide a picture of how teachers can learn through PLCs. There was also a limitation in a method employed in the study as it was only qualitative.

#### **6.5 RECOMMENDATIONS**

This case study highlighted the issue of professional development approaches as one of the most important aspects in the Curriculum reform and developing teachers professionally. Based on the conclusions, I make the following recommendations:

DBE implemented these curriculum changes with the intention of changing the education system characterized by racism, but findings revealed that teachers did not change their way of doing things during the transition time. Professional development of teachers was not considered during this time. That is why teachers failed during its implementation because they did not understand their role during this time since they were not well equipped. In terms of these curriculum changes I recommend that the department of education invest more in teacher development before all the changes. When conducting a developmental workshop, they must make sure that they provide teachers with relevant information to the proposed change.

In terms of promoting teacher learning through PLCs, this has to start within the school where the Principal and Hod's should be more involved in supporting teacher learning by providing support to them. Department of education must also make sure that they support the schools with all necessary documents to ensure professional development is promoted

within schools. Professional development is the skill, knowledge and ongoing learning undertaken to improve one's ability to do the job and grow as a professional, be on top of the game and stay abreast professionally. Professional development determines how teachers have experienced these and to what extent they have understood them. The level of professional development given to teachers at school level in order to implement these changes is still in question, judging by the quality of results obtained by learners. (Kelly, 2006)

Based on the findings, most schools do not promote professional development, it is very important that the department of education put initiatives in place which will aim to continuously develop teachers professionally, and not assessing their work only. I also believe that the needs of development should not be packed with any other things but stand on its own.

#### **6.6.RECOMENDATIONS FOR FUTHER STUDIES**

The study was conducted in 5 schools in the Pinetown district. Surely it is not the only district which has teachers who have experienced difficulties with the Curriculum changes and lack of professional development. It would be interesting to see how rural schools have experienced these changes of Curriculum and how they have experienced the level of professional development. In addition the research employed only the qualitative method. The quantitative method is needed. There is a need for further research on the same topic but using the quantitative method which involves a large sample of teachers to provide broader experiences of learning through PLCs. I recommend that a further study be conducted to obtain the views of SMT's who did not form part of this study. A further study would explore the role of SMT's in developing teachers professionally within schools.

#### **6.7 CONCLUSION**

This final chapter set out to provide an outline of the study. Thereafter conclusions were drawn from the findings linked to the key research questions. Finally recommendations were made. The findings revealed that PLCs enhance teaching Business Studies in a positive manner. The sampled teachers highlighted the benefits and importance of learning through a professional learning community and suggested ways on improving teaching within their

classes. This suggests that professional learning communities play a major role in enhancing quality teaching and learning.

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# APPENDICIES

APPENDIX A

ETHICAL CLEARANCE



**UNIVERSITY OF  
KWAZULU-NATAL**  
**INYUVESI  
YAKWAZULU-NATALI**

09 January 2019

**Mrs Duduzile Khoza (215081662)**  
School of Education  
Edgewood Campus

Dear Mrs Khoza,

**Protocol reference number: HSS/1319/018M**

**Project title: Exploring Business Studies teachers' experiences learning through professional learning communities in the context of curriculum changes**

**Approval Notification – Expedited Application**

In response to your application received on 21 August 2018, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

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

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.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

.....  
**Professor Shenuka Singh (Chair)**

/ms

Cc Supervisor: Dr JC Ngwenya  
cc Academic Leader Research: Dr SB Khoza  
cc School Administrator: Ms Sheryl Jeenarain

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**Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee**  
**Professor Shenuka Singh (Chair) / Dr Shamila Naldoo (Deputy Chair)**  
Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building

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**FACULTY OF EDUCATION**  
**(Edgewood Campus)**  
**School of Social Science Education**  
*Edgewood Campus*  
*Private Bag X03*  
*Ashwood*

The Principal

**APPLICATION FOR CONDUCTING RESEARCH**

I am currently registered as a Masters student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. I hereby request permission to carry out my research at your school. The research is entitled:

Teachers experiences learning through professional learning communities: A case study of three schools in Pinetown district. The purpose of the study is to explore Business Studies teachers' experiences of learning through professional learning communities in the context of curriculum changes. The study will explore Grade 12 Business Studies teachers' on how can they develop one another. Because I intend to get indepth information in your school particular from those teachers who are currently teaching Grade 12, multiple methods will be used for collection of data.

By this letter i request permission to interview one of Business Studies teacher in Grade 12.the interview will not be longer than 50minutes and it will be after school or during weekends depending on the time which the teacher will prefer. interview will be tape recorded to make sure I don't miss out any important information. Interview transcript will be kept safely by the researcher and the supervisor after the research has been completed the researcher will destroy all the personal information

The period anticipated for data collection is between Sept and Oct.

Throughout the research process as well as in the reporting of the findings:

- Teachers' participation in the research is voluntary.
- Teachers' can withdraw from the research process at any time and the decision will not disadvantage the participant.
- Their identity will not be disclosed in the dissertation.
- Their names and the school will not be disclosed at any point during or after the study. Throughout the research process as well as in the reporting of the findings their anonymity and confidentiality is secured.
- After submission of the thesis, data will be stored with the university for a period of five years, after which the documents will be shredded and audio tapes will be destroyed.

Thank you for taking time to read this letter, I am looking forward to speak to you soon.

Your participation and teacher's participation will be highly appreciated.

For any further information, I have enclosed herein the contact details of my supervisor, Dr J. Ngwenya, Contact Number, 0312603621 Email: [NgwenyaJ@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:NgwenyaJ@ukzn.ac.za)

Yours faithfully  
Duduzile Sipehelele Khoza

Should you give permission for me to conduct research on your school, please complete the following:

I ..... the Principal of.....  
hereby

give permission for.....to conduct research in the  
school.

School stamp

Signature

.....



**FACULTY OF EDUCATION  
(Edgewood Campus)  
School of Social Science Education**  
*Edgewood Campus  
Private Bag X03  
Ashwood*

**INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH PROJECT**

**Dear: Educator**

I am a masters student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal conducting a research project titled, "Exploring Business Studies teachers' experiences of learning through professional learning communities in the context of curriculum changes: A case study in three schools in Pinetown district." I will be visiting your school as part of a research project focusing on teachers' experiences of learning. The purpose of the study is to explore how teachers can learn from one another during the curriculum changes. Because I intend to get in-depth information about teachers' experiences of learning through learning communities grade 12 in particular, multiple methods will be used for collection of data.

The period anticipated for data collection is between Sept and Oct 2018.

Throughout the research process as well as in the reporting of the findings:

- Teachers' participation in the research is voluntary.
- Teachers' can withdraw from the research process at any time and the decision will not disadvantage the participant.
- Their identity will not be disclosed in the dissertation.
- Their names and the school will not be disclosed at any point during or after the study.

Throughout the research process as well as in the reporting of the findings their anonymity and confidentiality is secured.

The researcher will use any information from teachers' in a way that will assure their continued respect among their colleagues. The information obtained will strictly be used for research purposes and will be used with stringent confidentiality. The data will only be used for research purposes and will be securely stored in a lock-up cabinet.

After submission of the thesis, data will be stored with the university for a period of five years, after which the documents will be shredded and audio tapes will be destroyed.

For any further information, I have enclosed herein the contact details of my supervisor.

Yours sincerely

Duduzile Sipehelele Khoza

**Supervisor:** Dr J. Ngwenya

Student No: 215081662

Contact Number: 0312603621

Contact Number: 0828325845

Email: sphehmkhathini@gmail.com

**DECLARATION**  
**(To be completed by the educator)**

I \_\_\_\_\_ (full name of educator) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project. I understand that participation is voluntary and I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

-----

**SIGNATURE OF THE EDUCATOR**

**DATE**

Consent for audio recording Social Sciences,  
College of Humanities,  
University of KwaZulu-Natal,  
Edgewood campus

Dear Participant

**INFORMED CONSENT LETTER (AUDIO RECORDING)**

My name is Mrs. Duduzile Sipehelele Khoza I am Masters Candidate studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Edgewood campus, South Africa. I am conducting a study on Business Studies teachers' experiences of learning through professional learning communities in the context of curriculum changes. I hereby request your permission that I audio record the interview responses during data collection process.

Please note that:

- Your confidentiality is guaranteed as your inputs will not be attributed to you in person, but reported only as a population member opinion.
- The interview may last for about 1 hour and may be split depending on your preference.
- Any information given by you cannot be used against you, and the collected data will be used for purposes of this research only.
- Data will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after 5 years.
- You have a choice to participate, not participate or stop participating in the research.
- You will not be penalized for taking such an action.
- The research aims at knowing the challenges of your community relating to resource scarcity, peoples' movement, and effects on peace.
- Your involvement is purely for academic purposes only, and there are no financial benefits involved.
- If you are willing to be interviewed, please indicate (by ticking as applicable) whether or not you are willing to allow the interview to be recorded by the following equipment:

	Willing	Not willing
Audio equipment		
Photographic equipment		
Video equipment		

I can be contacted at:

Email: sphehmkhathini@gmail.com

Cell: 0828325845

My supervisor is Doctor Jabulisile Ngwenya who is located at the School of Social Sciences, Edgewood campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal.  
Contact details: email: Ngwenyaj@ukzn.ac.za Phone number: 031 202 4357

You may also contact the Research Office through:  
P. Mohun  
HSSREC Research Office,  
Tel: 031 260 4557 E-mail: [mohunp@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:mohunp@ukzn.ac.za)

Thank you for your contribution to this research.

**DECLARATION**

**I..... (full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.**

**I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.**

**SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT**

**DATE**

.....

.....

**Topic:** a case of Business Studies teachers' experiences of learning through professional learning communities in the context of curriculum changes

### **Semi-structured individual interviews schedule**

Firstly, I would like to pass my heartfelt gratitude for your willingness to participate freely in this study. You were purposively and conveniently selected to be the participant as you are Business Studies Grade 12 teachers. The purpose of this study is to explore Business Studies Teachers' experiences of learning in terms of content, curriculum changes, curriculum changes in Business Studies, teachers' experiences of learning, professional learning communities and other important factors that describe quality.

### **Questions**

#### **Curriculum changes**

- There are many changes that occurred with Business Studies after 1994, do you share the same sentiment? Why.
- Why did you choose Business Studies out of all the subjects?
- What do you like about teaching Business studies?
- What is the nature of learning activities in Business Studies (TLCs)?
- Tell me more about the activities that takes place in cluster meetings.
- What have you been typically doing in cluster meetings?
- Which of these activities do you find most useful and why?
- Do you see any major changes from Business economics to Business studies?
- Do you thing Business Studies equip our learners to achieve the required outcome?

## **Teacher development during curriculum changes**

**In terms of teacher development, during curriculum changes teachers are supposed to be developed in order to deal with the new curriculum needs**

- Given that Business Study is not an easy subject as it seems, were you given enough training during these changes?
- How accurate or informative was the content workshop in preparing you to deliver the new content in class?
- What activities in cluster that helps you to develop your content knowledge and promotes teacher development?
- Do these workshops help you to acquire the new expected skill in Business Studies?
- What have you been doing differently in your class as a result of what you have learned in cluster?
- To what extent do you talk about your classroom experiences in cluster meetings?

## **Time and Vocabulary**

- How do you find the new terminology used in Business Studies?
- Are you able to cover the syllabus on time? If not, what do you do to make sure that the content is covered before exams?
- What can you say about cognitive level of Business Studies compared to Business Economics?
- How do you find assessment with Business Studies?

## **Guidance and support**

- Were you given enough support during these curriculum changes?
- What do you do if there's a topic or chapter that you don't understand?
- Do you ever meet with other colleagues not for workshops or moderation but for personal development?

- Does any of these meeting help you with developing your understanding in regards to content of subject?

### **Other questions**

- What does professional development looks like in your school?
- Has been part of professional learning community made a difference for you as a professional? How
- Do you think you would have experienced the same opportunities without the organisation of the professional learning community at your school? Why or Why not?
- Talk about opportunities that you have experienced as a result of being part of a professional learning community. Have these experiences helped you to grow professionally?

Thank you!!!

6/3/2019

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1/36

APPENDIX G

EDITORS LETTER

95 Uplands Road  
Blackridge  
Pietermaritzburg  
3201  
2 June 2019

To whom it may concern,

RE: Editing of Thesis by Duduzile Siphelele Khoza

This document, “Exploring Business Studies Teachers’ Experiences of Learning through Professional Learning Communities in the Context of Curriculum Changes: A Case of Five Schools in the Pinetown District” has been professionally edited.

Yours Sincerely

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(Mrs) D.N.Wodaks

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