AN ACTION LEARNING MODEL TO ASSIST CIRCUIT TEAMS TO SUPPORT SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAMS TOWARDS WHOLE-SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT

By

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DECLARATION

I, Geoffrey Hermanus Van Der Voort, Student number 179032970, hereby declare that the thesis for the Doctor Educationis is my own work and that it has not previously been submitted for assessment or completion of any postgraduate qualification to another University or for another qualification.

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ABSTRACT

This research study took as its point of departure the general state of underperformance of the majority of schools in South Africa. A review of the literature uncovered evidence that suggested that the state of school management in the majority of schools was in disarray. The problem was compounded by the poor quality and haphazard nature of support that District and Circuit Officials of the Education Department rendered to schools. I therefore saw the need to conduct a scientific investigation into how Circuit Teams could be assisted to support School Management Teams towards whole-school development.

Against this background, I formulated the following primary research question to guide the study: *"How can Circuit Teams effectively support School Management Teams of underperforming schools towards whole-school development?"* The following secondary research questions arose out of this to provide further direction to the study:

- How can Circuit Teams assist School Management Teams to develop and implement their respective School Improvement Plans?
- How can Circuit Teams be assisted to develop, implement and monitor their Circuit Improvement Plans?
- What recommendations can be made to improve service delivery to the schools?

The primary aim of the research was therefore to design an action learning model that would enable Circuit Teams to support School Management Teams of underperforming high schools towards whole-school development.

A qualitative research approach was adopted for this study, as it best suited the purpose of the research, and the philosophical assumptions of the researcher. In addition, I drew on a constructivist-interpretative and a critical theory paradigm to guide the design. I chose action research as the specific methodology for the study as, in line with critical theory it aims to empower people to facilitate social change and improvement at a local level.

Purposive sampling was used to select four underperforming high schools in the same township within the Cape Town Metro, belonging to the same education Circuit and District Office to participate in the research. In addition, the members of the Circuit Team that serviced these schools were also brought on board as participants. In total, 40 people participated in the research: 4 members from the Circuit Team, 4 Principals, 8 Deputy Principals and 24 Heads of Department.

Data were generated in the period January to June 2012 using structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. Data were analysed by following the eight steps for analysing qualitative data identified by Tesch.

An Action Research cycle consisting of the following five steps was followed with participants during the fieldwork, viz.:

- Identification of the problem
- Designing the action plan
- Implementing the action plan
- Evaluating the action, and
- Reflection and lessons learnt.

Two Action Research cycles emerged from the fieldwork. The first cycle dealt with assisting the schools and Circuit Team to construct their improvement plans. The main findings from this cycle were (1) that the Circuit Team did not function as a team, due to the autocratic management style of the Circuit Team Manager, and the plan of action to address the underperforming schools was not developed in a participative manner. In addition, the Circuit Team had no Circuit Improvement Plan in place with which to support the schools. (2) The schools did not receive the required support to prepare their School Improvement Plans, and although they were able to articulate their areas of support needed, none of them undertook the process of School Self-Evaluation and therefore did not have School Improvement Plans in place.

The second action research cycle dealt with the support that schools needed from the other pillars of the District Office to implement their intervention plans. Three themes emerged from this action research cycle: (1) The School Management Teams required capacity-building to manage their schools effectively, (2) teachers needed support to implement the curriculum, and (3) learners required assistance to achieve better results.

As the outcome of the research, a spiral model consisting of three distinctive phases, each having several loops that describe the particular action that Circuit Teams and School Management Teams have to undertake was developed as the ultimate outcome of the research. The structure of the model was explained, and explicit guidelines for operationalizing it in practice were provided.

Based on the findings and the construction of the model, a number of recommendations were put forward to guide future research and practice in the area of Circuit Team support to underperforming schools.

In conclusion, this research study contributed to the body of knowledge by exploring, investigating and describing the working relationship between Circuit Teams and School Management Teams, which until now has not been adequately covered in the existing literature and research. The study culminated in a theoretical model which can be used to improve this relationship permitting Circuit Teams to better support School Management Teams towards whole-school development. The action research design also allowed a more participative and democratic relationship to develop between the Circuit Team and the School Management Teams of the four schools, which is also an innovative idea considering the traditional hierarchic and autocratic approach which has been the norm in the past. Hopefully the findings of this study will encourage the emergence of democratic partnerships between Departmental officials and school management, leading to the empowerment and transformation of school management.

KEY WORDS

Action research
Circuit Improvement Plan
Circuit Team(s)
Model
School Improvement Plan
School Management Team(s)
School self-evaluation
Underperforming school(s)
Whole-school development
Whole-school evaluation

OPSOMMING

Hierdie navorsingstudie het die algemene toestand van onderprestasie waarin die meeste skole in Suid-Afrika vasgevang sit, as vertrekpunt geneem. ‘n Oorsig van die literatuur het aan die lig gebring dat die meeste skole in die land wanordelik bestuur word. Hierdie problem is vererger deur die swak gehalte en dikwels lukrake ondersteuning wat Distriks- en Kringbeamptes van die Onderwysdepartement aan skole bied. Derhalwe het ek die behoefte om ‘n wetenskaplike ondersoek te loots oor hoe Kringspanne bemagtig kan word om Skoolbestuurspanne tot geheelskoolontwikkeling by te staan, raakgesien.

Teen hierdie agtergrond het ek die volgende primêre navorsingsvraag geformuleer om rigting aan hierdie studie te gee: “*Hoe kan Kringspanne die Skoolbestuurspanne van onderpresterende skole effektief ondersteun tot geheelskoolontwikkeling?”* Die volgende sekondêre navorsingsvrae het hieruit ontstaan om verdere leiding aan die studie te verleen:

- Hoe kan Kringspanne Skoolbestuurspanne ondersteun met die ontwikkeling en implementering van hul Skoolverbeteringsplanne?
- Hoe kan Kringspanne bemagtig word om hul Kringverbeteringsplanne te ontwikkel en te implementeer?
- Watter aanbevelings kan gemaak word om dienslewering aan skole te verbeter?

Die hoofdoel van die navorsing was derhalwe om ‘n model te ontwerp wat Kringspanne sou bemagtig om Skoolbestuurspanne van onderpresterende hoërskole tot geheelskool-ontwikkeling te lei.

Ek het ‘n kwalitatiewe navorsingsbenadering vir hierdie studie gevolg omdat dit die doel van die navorsing, asook my filosofiese aannames die beste ondersteun het. Tesame daarmee het ek ook ‘n konstruktiwistiese-interpretatiewe en ‘n krities-teoretiese paradigma vir die ontwerp van die navorsing aanvaar. Ek het aksie-navorsing as die spesifieke metodologie vir die studie gekies, aangesien dit in lyn met kritiese teorie is en ook daarna strewe om mense te bemagtig sodat sosiale veranderings en verbeterings op plaaslike vlak kan plaasvind.

Doelbewuste proefsteek is gebruik om vier onderpresterende hoërskole in dieselfde woonbuurt binne die Kaapstad Metro vir deelname aan die navorsing te identifiseer. Hierdie vier skole resorteer onder dieselfde Kringspan en Distrikskantoor. Daarby het ek die Kringspanlede wat hierdie vier skole bedien, as deelnemers aan boord van die navorsing

gebring. In totaal het 40 mense aan die navorsing deelgeneem: 4 Kringspanlede, 4 Skoolhoofde, 8 Adjunkhoofde en 24 Departementshoofde.

In die tydperk Januarie tot Junie 2012 is data gegenereer deur die gebruik van gestruktureerde, semi-gestruktureerde en ongestruktureerde onderhoude, waarneming van deelnemers, en dokumentêre ontleding. Data is na aanleiding van die agt stappe wat Tesch vir die ontleding van kwantitatiewe data geidentifiseer het, ontleed.

‘n Aksie-navorsing siklus bestaande uit die volgende vyf stappe is tydens die veldwerk met die deelnemers gevolg, naamlik:

- Identifisering van die problem
- Ontwerp van ‘n aksieplan
- Implementering van die aksieplan
- Evaluering van die aksie, en
- Nadenke en lesse geleer uit die ervaring.

Twee aksie-navorsingsiklusses het tydens die veldwerk na vore gekom. Die eerste het gehandel oor hoe die skole en Kringspan met die ontwikkeling van hul verbeteringsplanne bygestaan kon word. Die hoof bevindinge van hierdie siklus was (1) die Kringspan het nie as ‘n span gefunksioneer nie as gevolg van die autokratiese bestuurstyl van die Kringspanbestuurder, en die plan om die onderpresterende skole aan te spreek was ook nie op ‘n demokratiese wyse ontwikkel nie. Daarbenewens het die Kringspan geen Kringverbeteringsplan om die skole mee te ondersteun, in plek gehad nie. (2) Die skole het nie die nodige ondersteuning om hul Skoolverbeteringsplanne te skryf, ontvang nie, en alhoewel hulle hul prioriteite vir ondersteuning kon verwoord, het nie een van hulle deur die proses van Skoolselfevaluering gegaan nie, en derhalwe was hul Skoolverbeteringsplanne nie in plek nie.

Die tweede aksie-navorsingsiklus het oor die ondersteuning wat die skole van die ander afdelings van die Distrikskantore nodig gehad het om hul verbeteringsplanne uit te voer, gehandel. Drie temas het tydens hierdie siklus aan die lig gekom: (1) die Skoolbestuurspanne het kapasiteitsbou benodig om hul skole effektief te bestuur, (2) die onderwysers het leiding ten opsigte van kurrikulumimplementering dringend nodig gehad, en (3) die leerders het ondersteuning nodig gehad om beter uitslae te kon lewer.

Die uitkoms van die navorsing was ‘n spiraalmodel wat uit drie onderskeie fases bestaan het, waarvan elkeen enkele lussies gehad het, wat die spesifieke aksiestappe wat die Kringspanlede en die Skoolbestuurspanne moes uitvoer, beskryf het. Die struktuur van die model is bespreek, en duidelike riglyne om dit in die praktyk suksesvol te gebruik, is verskaf.

Gegrond op die bevindings van die studie en die ontwerp van die model is ‘n aantal aanbevelings gemaak om verdere navorsing te stimuleer, en om Kringspanne te bemagtig om onderpresterende skole by te staan.

Ter afsluiting: hierdie navorsingstudie het tot die veld van kennis bygedra deurdat die werksverhouding tussen die Kringspanne en Skoolbestuurspanne verken, ondersoek en beskryf is – ‘n aspek wat op die huidige oomblik nie voldoende in bestaande literatuur en navorsing aandag geniet het nie. Die ontwerp van ‘n teoretiese model wat gebruik kan word om die werksverhouding tussen die Kringspanne en Skoolbestuurspanne met betrekking tot geheelskoolontwikkeling, was die uitkoms van die navorsing. Die aksie-navorsingsontwerp het ook daartoe bygedra dat ‘n meer deelnemende en demokratiese verhouding tussen die Kringspan en die Skoolbestuurspanne van die vier skole ontstaan het – wat ook ‘n innoverende gedagte was indien in aanmerking geneem word dat die tradisionele hierargie en outokratiese benadering van die verlede die norm was. Dit word vertrou dat die bevindinge van die navorsing sal bydra tot die vestiging van demokratiese verhoudinge tussen Departementele amptename en Skoolbestuurslede, wat verder tot bemagtiging en transformasie van Skoolbestuur sal lei.

SLEUTELWOORDE

Aksie-navorsing
Geheelskoolevaluering
Geheelskoolontwikkeling
Kringspan
Kringverbeteringsplan
Model
Onderpresterende skool
Skoolbestuurspan
Skool self-evaluering
Skoolverbeteringsplan

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I dedicate this thesis to the loving memory of my father, mother and two grandmothers who inspired me since I was a little boy to obtain my Doctorate Degree one day. With this study, the dream that they laid on my heart has been fulfilled.

Dona requiem aeterna eis, o Domine.

ACRONYMS

ADA	Administrative Development Assistant
ANA	Annual National Assessment
APIP	Academic Performance Improvement Plan
AR	Annual Report
CA(s)	Curriculum Advisor(s)
CASS	Continuous Assessment
CCA	Chief Curriculum Advisor
CIP(s)	Circuit Improvement Plan(s)
CT(s)	Circuit Team(s)
CTM(s)	Circuit Team Manager(s)
DA	Democratic Alliance
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DBSA	Development Bank of South Africa
DC	Development Charter
DDG	Deputy Director-General
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
ECDoE	Eastern Cape Department of Education
EDO(s)	Education Development Officer(s)
FET	Further Education and Training
GBF	Governing Body Foundation
GET	General Education and Training
GMSA	General Motors South Africa
GMSAF	General Motors South Africa Foundation
HCDS	Human Capital Development Strategy
HEQC	Higher Education Quality Committee
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus Infection / Acquired immunodeficiency Syndrome
HOD(s)	Head(s) of Department
ILST	Institutional Learning-Support Team
IMGM(s)	Institutional Management and Governance Manager(s)
IQMS	Integrated Quality Management Systems
JET	Joint Education Trust
MBWA	Managing By Walking Around
MFT(s)	Multi-functional Team(s)
NMMU	Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University
NSC	National Senior Certificate
NSLA	National Strategy for Learner Attainment
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Study
PM	Performance Management
PMDS	Performance Management and Development System
QA	Quality Assurance
QLP	Quality Learning Programme
RCL(s)	Representative Council(s) of Learners
SAR	School Annual Report
SDC	School Development Committee
SDP	School Development Plan
SE	Systemic Evaluation
SG	Superintendent-General
SGB	School Governing Body
SMT(s)	School Management Team(s)
SNE	Special Needs in Education

SPMDS	Staff Performance Management and Development System
SSE	School Self-Evaluation
TIMSS	Trends in Mathematics and Science Study
UNESCO	United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization
WBS	Work Breakdown Structure
WCED	Western Cape Education Department
WSD	Whole-School Development
WSE	Whole-School Evaluation

CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Can the high percentage of underperforming schools in South Africa be improved, and if so, what can be done to turn the situation around? Finding an answer to this question was the reason I embarked on this research study: to develop an action learning model that will enable Circuit Teams (CTs) to support School Management Teams (SMTs) towards whole-school development (WSD). Bloch (2009:17) set the percentage of underperforming schools in South Africa at between 60% and 80%. Khosa (2010:2) emphatically stated that "The State itself has acknowledged that no less than 80 per cent of public schools are not meeting minimum performance standards."

My experience while working as a Circuit Manager in the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) in the period 2001 – 2004 played a major role in the selection of the research topic. I need to highlight five issues in this regard:

Firstly, during this period of employment I was called upon *inter alia* to be the leader of various Multi-Functional Teams (MFTs) that had to assist underperforming schools to become fully functional institutions of learning. In retrospect, it became clear that these MFTs were the nuclease from which the CTs developed. At that particular stage in time the MFTs were not formally institutionalized in the WCED. This only happed in 2008 when the WCED officially referred to them as CTs.

Secondly, the scope of work that the MFTs had to perform necessitated that a coherent plan of action which would ensure support to these schools by a number of experts in the WCED (such as curriculum advisors to assist teachers in successfully implementing the curriculum) had to be developed and implemented. In hindsight, this plan was the forerunner of what is now referred to as the Circuit Improvement Plan (CIP) which forms a central theme in this thesis.

Thirdly, the CIP had to be based on the developmental needs of each school that was part of the intervention. The MFTs guided each school to make their developmental needs explicit by putting it in writing. This written plan eventually became known as the School Improvement Plan (SIP) which is also dealt with extensively in this research study.

Fourthly, the greatest impact that the above exposure had on my professional development was not the development of CIPs and SIPs per se, but the *actual results* that came from implementing the plans contained in these documents. One particular case in this regard will always remind me of the power that quality and focused support to schools can have on an institution and its community: This particular school struggled for years to achieve at least a 40% pass rate in the annual Grade 12 examinations. The dramatic turn-around that the particular MFT made at that school over a three-year period resulted in the school achieving an 82% Grade 12 pass rate at the end of 2004.

Fifthly, my experience in working with underperforming schools was that the majority of the problems that each of them experienced could be directly linked to ineffective school management. The inability of the SMTs to manage their schools effectively resulted in the MFTs having to spend the greatest portion of their time and efforts to assist the SMTs towards improved school management. It was because of this experience that my research study places a high emphasis on quality support to SMTs of underperforming schools.

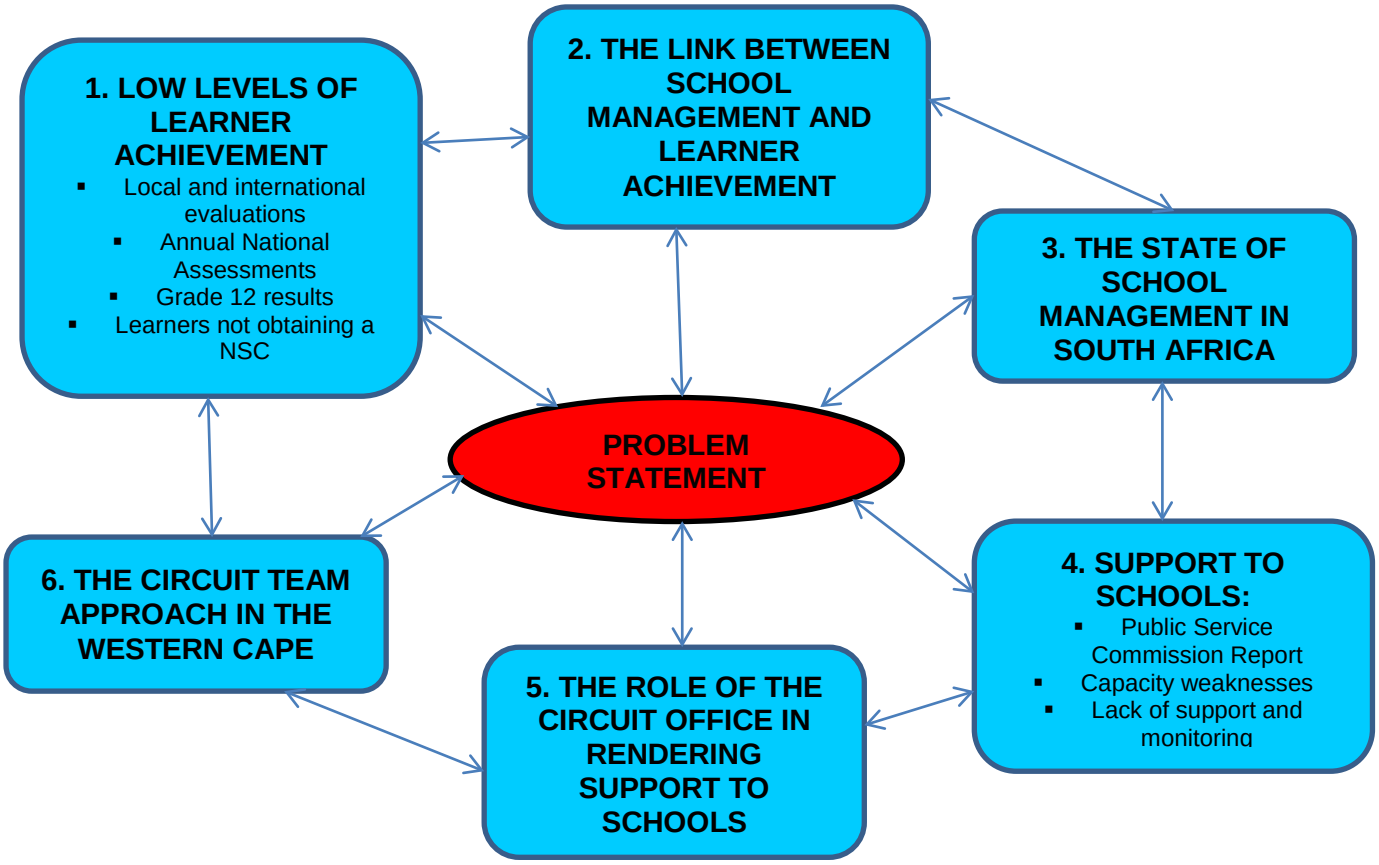
1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Westraad (2011:3 – 7) discussed some of the numerous problems that schooling in South Africa, as a developing country, faced. Amongst others she referred to high levels of poverty (which contributes to unemployment, alcoholism, malnutrition and dysfunctional family lives) and the impact of HIV/AIDS. The safety and security of learners and teachers at schools were threatened and many schools required significant infrastructural improvements or expansion to deal with the demands for proper education. Taking the low levels of learner achievement into consideration, she concluded that

> South Africa has failed too many children already. It is critical that as a matter of urgency we begin to identify the key mechanisms that need to be put in place to provide a basic quality education for all children in our country (2011:6).

Taking Westraad's latter statement, as well as the topic of this research study into consideration, I decided to explore the following issues which, according to my experience, are directly linked to the problem statement: the low levels of learner achievement in South Africa, the link between learner achievement and school management, the state of school management in the country, the quality of support that the Department of Basic Education (DBE) provides to schools, the role of the Circuit Office in supporting schools towards WSD, and the CT approach that the WCED implemented in that province. The discussion will underline the fact that these six themes are also related to one another. Figure 1.1 below visually depicts the structure of the discussion in this sub-paragraph of the thesis:

Figure 1.1: The structure of the discussion related to the background to the study:



1.2.1 The level of learner achievement in South Africa in general

There are multiple and complex factors that impact on learner achievement. Such factors can be school-related (such as large class sizes and unsafe schools), community issues (such as access to resources in the form of libraries and museums), factors related to teachers and teaching (for example inexperienced teachers and access to teaching resources and equipment), and family matters (such as participation in school activities and at-home reading). Taking the dynamics of the country as a whole into consideration, these factors vary from school to school, district to district, and community to community. Some of these factors fall within the school's control whilst the school cannot be held accountable for some of the other problems that impact on learner achievement.

However, the fact that the majority of schools in the country are underperforming (par. 1.1), as well as the fact that South African learners perform poorly when compared to other countries (as is explained in the following sub-paragraphs) cannot be ignored, and SMTs have *some* role to play in this regard. As the discussion in par. 1.2.2 puts forth, good school management does help to improve learner performance in the long run. When a SMT has a

comprehensive SIP in place and is supported by the CT on an on-going basis, the school should be in a better position to identify learners' needs and support their learning, thereby working towards enhanced academic results.

The necessity to address the level of learner achievement in this research study was also based on the argument that various institutions, scholars and authors put forward: that the quality of education in a country can be measured in terms of learners' academic performance (Provincial Government of the Western Cape, Western Cape Education Department, Directorate: Quality Assurance (2010:1), Bloch (2009:58 – 60), United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO] (2004:4) and Republic of South Africa (2001a:11) – to name only a few). It is for this reason that the background to the study begins with an exposition of how learners in South Africa in general achieved academically.

1.2.1.1 A brief overview of the findings of major studies into the levels of learner achievement in South Africa (2003 – 2008)

In the period 2003 to 2008 numerous South African learners participated in local and international studies aimed at measuring learner performance in a number of subjects. Table 1.1 below contains a summary of the results of learners in each of these tests.

Table 1.1: Summary of South African learner achievement results in local and international studies (OEDC 2008:54; Taylor, Fleisch and Shindler 2007:13 – 17)

STUDY	SOUTH AFRICAN LEARNER RESULTS
2003: Grade 3 Systemic Evaluation results (SA study)	39% reading comprehension 30% numeracy
2003: Trends in Mathematics and Science Study (International study)	SA achieved the lowest scores in both Mathematics and Science (Grade 8)
2006: Grade 6 Systemic Evaluation results (SA study)	35% for Languages 27% for Mathematics 41% for Natural Science
2006: Progress in International Reading Study results (International study)	Grade 4: 13,2% Grade 5: 18,2%
2008: Monitoring Learner Achievement (MLA) project results (SA study)	Grade 4 learners: lowest in Numeracy, 5th lowest in Literacy and 3rd lowest in Life Skills

Learners who participated in the sampled Grade 3 schools obtained an average of 68% for listening comprehension, but achieved only 39% for reading comprehension, 30% for numeracy and 54% for life skills. The fact that at the Foundation Phase level learners

achieved such low percentages for reading and numeracy was cause for concern as achievements in these two learning areas directly influence learner achievement in secondary schools (Taylor, Fleisch and Shindler 2007:17).

The results of the first round of the Trends in Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) [also released in 2003] were "*cause for considerable national anxiety"* (Taylor, Fleisch and Shindler 2007:16). In November 2002 the Human Science Research Council administered the TIMMS 2003 to 9,000 Grade 8 learners (15-year-olds). The results reflected little change from the 1999 assessment in which East Asian countries scored the highest, while South Africa appeared at the bottom of the list with the lowest average scores in both Mathematics and Science. The average South African score for Mathematics was 264 compared to the international average of 467 and the Science mean score was 244 compared to international average of 474. The low average scores concealed the huge spread in achievement amongst the 9000 learners that took the test. South Africa had the widest distribution of scores in Mathematics and Science of all the participating countries. Learners who attended former black schools had average Mathematics scores of 227 compared to the average scores of learners who attended former white schools whose mean score was 456, which was close to the international average (Taylor, Fleisch and Shindler 2007:16).

In 2006 the Department of Education released the results of the Grade 6 Systemic Evaluation (SE). The academic performance of a sample of 34,015 learners tested in 2003 in three learning areas: Language, Mathematics and Natural Sciences provided insight into the levels of achievement of learners in South Africa. The Department found that learners obtained mean scores of 35% for Language, 27% for Mathematics and 41% for Natural Sciences (Taylor, Fleisch and Shindler 2007:13).

In the same year a large-scale study looking at the reading competency of primary school learners in South Africa, called the Progress in International Reading Study (PIRLS), was launched. This study involved over 30,000 learners in Grades 4 and 5. The results of the study showed that the raw mean scores for the Grade 4 learners was 13,2% and for the Grade 5 learners 18,2%. Unlike all previous studies, the 2006 PIRLS study offered learners the option of taking the test in any of the 11 official languages. The results revealed that, whether the test was written in the mother tongue (mean Grade 4: 13,9% and Grade 5: 17,2%) or the language of teaching and learning (mean Grade 4: 12% and Grade 5: 17,2%) reading levels differed very little. This negligible difference seemed to indicate that learners were unable to read in *any* language. (Taylor, Fleisch and Shindler 2007:14 - 15).

The above findings alert us to the reality that South African learners across the spectrum of the education system are seriously underperforming academically. For me, the state of affairs is extremely worrying, and portrays a clear picture that effective teaching and learning are not taking place at our institutions of learning. I have to concur with Bloch (2009:20) that our children are being denied opportunities because of the poor quality of education they receive.

1.2.1.2 An overview of learner achievement levels in the 2011 Annual National Assessment

Towards the end of 2011 the DBE decided to move away from only focusing on learner performance at Grade 12 level, and to conduct research into learner achievement at Grades 3, 6 and 9. According to the DBE, the purpose of the Annual National Assessment (ANA) is to track learner performance each year in Literacy and Numeracy, continuously improve learner performance, monitor progress, guide planning and distribute the required resources to help improve learner performance in Literacy/Language and Numeracy/Mathematics in grades 3, 6 and 9 (Republic of South Africa, Department of Basic Education, 2011a:4 – 5).

The following table presents the performance of learners in the 2011 ANA across the levels of achievement for Grades 1 – 6:

Table 1.2: Summary of learner achievements Grades 1 – 6 in the 2011 Annual National Assessment (Republic of South Africa, Department of Basic Education, 2011a:8)

Grade	**% Achievement levels**			
	Level 1 (1 – 34%)	Level 2 (35 – 49%)	Level 3 (50 – 69%)	Level 4 (70 – 100%)
1	19.7%	13.3%	26.2%	40.8%
2	25.5%	16.9%	26.7%	30.9%
3	42.4%	15.7%	23.3%	18.6%
4	63.8%	19.4%	12.1%	4.8%
5	66.4%	14.3%	12.8%	6.5%
6	60.4%	17.0%	16.0%	6.6%

The above table clearly shows that learners in Grades 1 and 2 were generally speaking, performing better, when compared to the percentages of levels 3 and 4 to that of levels 1 and 2. However, as from Grade 3 up to Grade 6, there is a sudden increase in the

percentage of learners who underperformed (percentages in levels 1 and 2) and a steep decline in those being able to achieve at level 4. The results listed in table 1.2 are not essentially different from those listed in table 1.1, and both provided a strong indication that, at primary school level, South African learners are not making the grade at all.

A further analysis of the ANA results done by Macfarlane (2011:2), found that in 2008, 36% of the grade 3s scored under 35% in literacy, but in 2011, 44% did. In 2008 15% of the grade 3s scored more than 70% in numeracy, but in 2011 only 5% did. In 2008, 54% of the grade 6s scored under 35% in numeracy, but in 2011 64% did, and in 2008, nearly 10% of grade 6s scored above 70% in languages, but only 7% could achieve this in 2011. This situation is also extremely worrying as it indicates a further decline in learner achievement.

1.2.1.3 An overview of Grade 12 results, 2008 - 2011

Having taken an overview of the situation regarding learner performance in the primary school, I conclude this sub-section by presenting a brief overview of the Grade 12 results. The following table from the DBE contains a summary of the results from 2008 up to 2011:

Table 1.3: Comparison of National Senior Certificate passes from 2008 to 2011 by Province (Department of Basic Education 2011c:44)

PROVINCE	2008			2009			2010			2011		
	Total wrote	**Total achieved**	**% achieved**	**Total wrote**	**Total achieved**	**% achieved**	**Total wrote**	**Total achieved**	**% achieved**	**Total wrote**	**Total achieved**	**% achieved**
Eastern Cape	60 294	30 496	50.6	68 129	34 731	51.0	64 090	37 345	58.3	65 359	37 997	58.1
Free State	29 163	21 503	71.8	29 808	20 680	69.4	27 586	19 484	70.6	25 932	19 618	75.7
Gauteng	92 723	70 822	76.4	98 659	70 871	71.8	92 241	72 538	78.6	85 367	69 216	81.1
KwaZulu-Natal	136 743	78 747	57.6	132 176	80 733	61.1	122 444	86 556	70.7	122 126	83 204	68.1
Limpopo	84 614	45 958	54.3	83 350	40 776	48.9	94 632	54 771	57.9	73 731	47 091	63.9
Mpumalanga	42 153	21 815	57.8	53 970	25 882	47.9	51 695	29 382	56.8	48 135	31 187	64.8
North West	33 157	22 554	68.0	30 665	20 700	67.5	28 909	21 874	75.7	25 364	19 737	77.8
Northern Cape	9 948	7 230	72.7	10 377	6 356	61.3	10 182	7 366	72.3	10 116	6 957	68.8
Western Cape	43 966	34 479	78.4	44 931	34 017	75.7	45 764	34 831	76.1	39 960	33 110	82.9
NATIONAL	**533 561**	**334 239**	**62.6**	**552 073**	**334 716**	**60.6**	**537 543**	**364 147**	**67.8**	**496 090**	**348 117**	**70.2**

- THE 2010 EXAMINATION RESULTS, COMPARED TO 2008 AND 2009

Although the results of the 2010 National Senior Certificate (NSC) clearly represented an improvement from what the Grades 12s of 2008 and 2009 achieved, Saunders (2011:17) made the following analysis of the 2010 results, which raised a number of concerns: nearly 70% of the 263 034 grade 12s who wrote Mathematics achieved less than 40% - and they were included in the small number entering university with Mathematics. He also found similar trends regarding Science: Of 205 364 pupils who wrote Physical Science, 47.8% passed with 30% and above, and 29.7% passed with 40% and more.

In English First Additional Language, a subject taken by nearly half-million students, only 71.3% got 40% or more – which meant that nearly 30% (133 353 students) got less than 40% but passed. He also uncovered that data released by quality assurance body, Umalusi, revealed that in the 2010 matric exam the raw mean (that is, before standardization) for Accounting was 27.8% and for Mathematics 23.7%. Of the 537 543 pupils who wrote matric, 67.8% passed – which means that only 364 513 of the 1.1 million or so who started their schooling 12 years ago left school with any qualification at all (2011:17).

- THE 2011 EXAMINATION RESULTS

The Governing Body Foundation (GBF) which represents a significant number of School Governing Bodies (SGBs) country-wide claimed that the 2011 NSC results broke the psychological barrier of the 70% pass rate. The organization viewed the 24.3% learners who obtained a Bachelor's degree pass as "noteworthy" (2012:3).

However, concerns were expressed on a number of issues. The GBF referred to an analysis of the Physical Science papers conducted by two experts which revealed that the questions contained in the paper were "straightforward with little challenge for able students" (2012:4). In addition, there was a marked absence of the balance between questions relating to knowledge and understanding, and questions that tested scientific investigation and science in society. Furthermore, the GBF expressed concern regarding the poor Mathematic results, and blamed the policy that "forced" learners to continue with Mathematics for the sake of enhanced admission to tertiary institutions and job searches. Life Orientation was also a matter of concern: the good pass rate in the subject did not correlate with learners' practical application of the skills and knowledge in society – particularly when a person viewed the increase in HIV prevalence, crime rates, substance abuse, bullying, teenage pregnancies and dysfunctional families.

Chetty and Barnes (2012) praised the DBE for notable successes, such as the increased pass rate, closer monitoring of the examination, setting of common papers across Provinces, and various interventions during the 2011 academic year which included workbooks, revision camps, weekend classes and holiday classes. However, it expressed concern of the 1.1% drop in the Mathematics pass rate, 1.2% drop in the Accounting pass rate and 11.2% drop in Economics pass rate. The high percentage of learners who failed Mathematics (53.7%) was also alarming.

1.2.1.4 Learners who did not obtain a National Senior Certificate

Robertson and Watson (2012) [*Learningenglish.voanews.com]* reported that the large number of learners who leave school without completing their NSC, remained a problem for the South African economy. The report quoted Prof. Motala from University of Johannesburg saying that only 45% of the grade 12 class of 2011, who started off in grade 1 in 2000, successfully completed their NSC. The drop-outs of this group have to compete with better educated people for jobs, and often account for the 24% unemployment rate in the country. Although explicit data was not provided, Republic of South Africa, Department of Basic Education (2012:23 and 2011d:8) also expressed concern about the drop-out rate in the "final grades of schooling", referring to learners dropping out between grades 9 to 12.

Republic of South Africa, Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) (2012:14) claimed that Further Education and Training (FET) Colleges played a pivotal role in addressing South Africa's skills needs by offering full qualifications, short courses, skills programmes and learnerships. The DHET awarded R318 million to 64,572 FET College students in 2011 to enroll for the National Certificate (Vocational) programmes. However, the DHET reported that

> "many needy students had to be turned away from colleges … Even in cases where awards were made, accommodation and transport costs could not be covered, resulting in some cases of high absenteeism and even student drop-outs in the course of the year" (Republic of South Africa, Department of Higher Education and Training 2011:55).

The brief overview sketched above adds to the problem of learner achievement at South African institutions of learning. It emphasizes that there was a large number of learners who simply do not complete their formal schooling every year, but also highlights that a significant number of learners who enter FET Colleges annually, fail to complete their studies.

In summary, the achievement levels of South African learners as indicated in the learner performance in local and international studies, the results of the 2011 ANA and the grade 12

learner achievement levels, and those opting for the FET College route strongly indicate that South African learners (both in the primary and in the high schools) are not making the grade. The overall quality of education in the country therefore remains poor.

1.2.2 The link between learner achievement and school management

Day, Sammens, Leitwood, Hopkins, Gu, Brown and Ahtaridou (2011), Coleman and Glover (2010), Salazar (2008) and Everard, Morris and Wilson (2004) are some of the authors who argue that learner achievement (or the lack thereof) can be linked to the manner in which schools are managed. Schools that produce good results are led by effective, hard-working and committed Principals who have the ability to inspire teachers and learners to do their best and, as a result, create a positive learning environment.

Lezotte and McKee (2006:110) referred to research done by Marks and Printy, which disclosed that effective schools are *inter alia* characterized by principals who provide strong instructional leadership, and regard their teachers as professionals in furthering high-quality teaching and learning. These researchers also found that in such schools, the authentic achievement of learners is higher. The same authors (2006:111) cited research by Briggs and Wohlstetter, who found that underperforming schools were less likely to focus on teaching and learning, and were more preoccupied with power struggles and housekeeping issues than the curriculum and instruction. In such schools there was no meaningful change to improve their results.

In the same vein, Macfarlane & Chaykowski (2011:2) referred to a study done by the Human Science Research Council, Stanford University and the University of Botswana on the effect of teacher absenteeism on low learner achievement levels. The study pointed out that neither principals nor teachers considered absenteeism from duty to be a factor that seriously impeded on learner performance. The authors concluded that “most schools in the South African education system have plainly and simply organized themselves to produce something that is not student achievement.” This statement confirms the view of Lezotte and McKee above that, in underperforming schools, the focus is not on authentic teaching and learning. It also emphasizes the fact that learner achievement levels are negatively affected when schools are not properly and effectively managed.

On the positive side, Naidu, Joubert, Mestry, Mosoge and Ngcobo (2008:186 – 187) emphasized that the role of the SMT in effective schools was firstly to develop a clear vision for the institution, and then to ensure that there was a strong focus on the management of

the curriculum. The latter term represented everything that was taught, how it was taught, how the content was assessed and how educators interacted with each other on the delivery of the curriculum. In this context, these authors (2008:187) also referred to West-Burnham who stated that there should be “an obsession” with enhancing and improving teaching and learning in a school.

Kruger (in Van Deventer, Kruger, Van Der Merwe, Prinsloo and Steinmann 2009:2 – 3) explained that the majority of schools in South Africa are characterized by a poor culture of teaching and learning, and that one of the most important challenges facing education in the country is the restoration of this culture. He emphasized that the school principal and the SMT have a vital role to play in creating and maintaining a sound culture of teaching and learning.

Based on my experience as a Circuit Manager, working with underperforming schools, I fully support the viewpoint expressed in the above statement. As mentioned in par. 1.1 of the thesis, the MFTs in which I was involved had to spend the majority of our time and efforts uplifting the SMTs of the underperforming schools, and it was only after the school management became functional that the levels of learner achievement began to increase.

1.2.3 The general state of school management in South African schools

The above discussion highlighted the role that a functional SMT can play towards improved learner results. When the high level of underperforming schools in South Africa is taken into account (par. 1.1) the question arises as to the quality of management and leadership in our institutions of teaching and learning. In this section a brief overview of the current state in which SMTs in the country find themselves, is presented, highlighting *some* of the most pertinent problems that ineffective SMTs experience.

Hindle, a former Director-General at the Department of Basic Education, emphasized problems experienced when especially principals did not maintain effective discipline, stating that the education system

> … contains within it too many school principals, who are unable or even unfit to manage, some of them promoted for political ends rather than their educational achievements. Principals who are unable to exert discipline over pupils are a problem, but even more so those who cannot exercise authority over their staff. Intimidated, and concerned for their tenuous position, principals approve (or turn a blind eye to) teachers who take off for meetings, funerals, and the suchlike, stealing teaching time for our children (2011:21).

In the Eastern Cape Department of Education (ECDoE) - where I worked at the Provincial Office for almost a decade - the Senior Managers from the Provincial Office, together with politicians, would visit the underperforming schools at the commencement of each academic year. In 2008 they reported to the Head of Department: Education that some of the most basic functions that SMTs had to undertake were lacking at these schools. These included issues such as teachers not having lesson plans, the portfolios of teachers and learners not meeting the basic minimum requirements laid down in the National Protocol on Assessment, little or no evidence of school-based moderation of marks by the SMTs, no functional subject committees (meaning that teachers teaching the same subject did not meet to plan the teaching of their subject), and no remedial teaching done after exams were completed. As a result, learners were not provided the opportunity to learn from the mistakes they made during the examinations (Province of the Eastern Cape, Department of Education 2008a: 7 – 10).

In 2009 the Senior Managers reported, *inter alia,* that the complacency of SMTs at the underperforming institutions led to the breakdown of the culture of teaching and learning. The SMTs did not co-ordinate and oversee the effective implementation of the curriculum in all the grades in the school, nor other requirements, such as assessment, that went along with curriculum implementation. Such schools also portrayed poor planning: the SIPs were either non-existent or, where they were in place, there was very little (if any) evidence that the activities listed in these plans found expression in the day-to-day activities of the schools (Province of the Eastern Cape, Department of Education 2009c: 6 – 7).

It was not only in poorly performing Provincial Departments such as the ECDoE where the most basic issues that SMTs had to adhere to, were not in place. In better performing Provinces, such as the WCED, a number of basic issues were found lacking, and the SMTs of these schools were held to account. In the WCED's Whole School Evaluation (WSE) Trend Report for the 2nd semester of 2010, the following were *some* of the issues that needed to be attended to by the SMTs, and were found lacking in a significant number of schools which were externally evaluated by the Provincial WSE teams:

> Although the SIPs were documented, these were not implemented in many of the schools. There was no evidence of any strategic plans to ensure that improvement occurs. In addition, there was no indication that any monitoring of the implementation of SIPs is being done by either the SMTs or the district officials. Although target setting for academic improvement were incorporated in the SIPs; such targets remained a paper exercise. There was very little evidence of effective management and monitoring of the respective Learning Area/subject departments by the SMTs. This led poor commitment to time on task and ineffective curriculum delivery. The lack of communication with regard to strategies, decision making, execution of tasks and feedback were key factors that caused schools not to be performing optimally. The reason was that managers were not being held

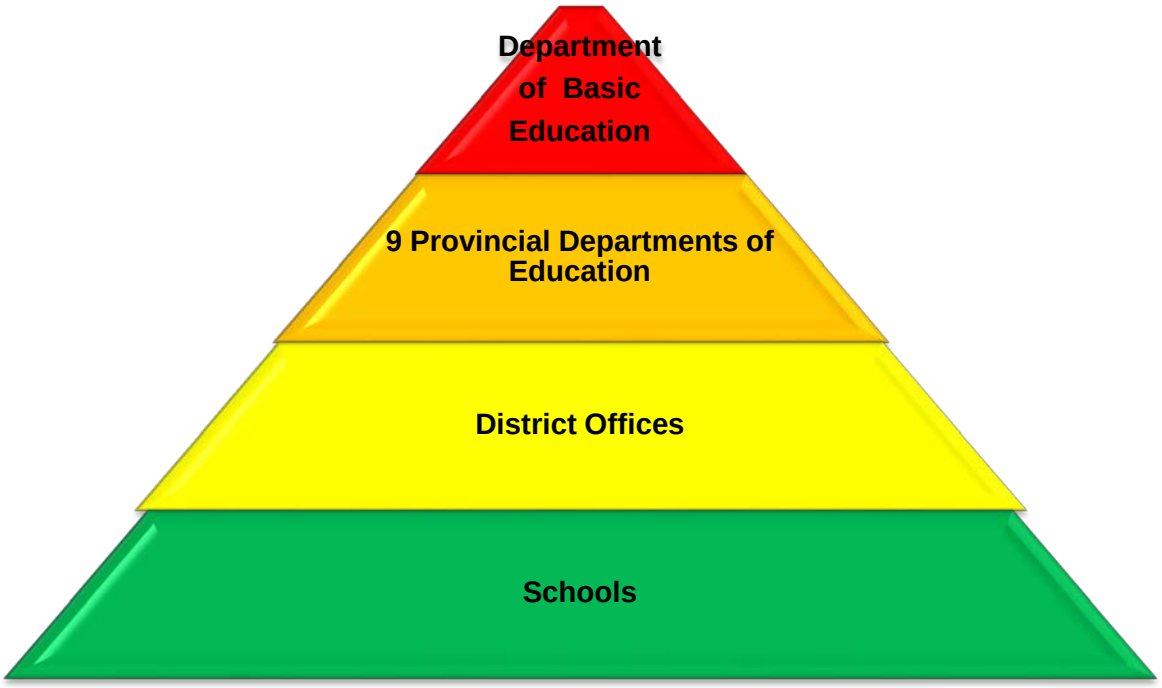
> accountable for ensuring that improvement strategies were implemented on an ongoing basis. In addition there was no evidence of any strategic plans, with realistic targets to ensure that improvement would take place. Although it was mandatory, six of the schools that underwent WSE did not conduct School Self-Evaluations (Provincial Government of the Western Cape, Western Cape Education Department, Directorate Quality Assurance 2010:4).

Looking at the picture unfolding above, and taking my experience as both a high school Principal and Circuit Manager into consideration, this snap-shot of the state in which SMTs find them is cause for extreme concern. The most basic functions of a SMT (which are elaborated on in Chapter 2) were found lacking: the ability to plan properly, the necessary skills to manage an institution, ensuring that systems were in place for curriculum implementation, holding people accountable for their areas of responsibility, and monitoring the implementation of what has been planned.

1.2.4 The general state of support to schools by the Department

Schools do not exist in isolation – they are part of a much bigger entity called the Education System which consists of various layers: the Department of Basic Education (at a National level), nine Provincial Education Departments, District Offices and Schools. The function of the District, Provincial and National Offices is to assist and support the schools in delivering their core function: to improve the education achievements of all learners (Republic of South Africa 2001a: 11). The hierarchy and relationship between the school and the other layers of the Education System is depicted in Figure 1.2 below:

Figure 1.2: The structure of the Education System in South Africa



Since monitoring of and support to schools is one of the Department's core functions (see Chapter Two for an in-depth discussion), the District Office is the organizational unit of the DBE which exercises a direct influence on the quality of learners' performance. Clarke (2011:8) argued strongly that the Districts needed to be held accountable for the quality of education in the schools under their jurisdiction. Against this background, the question arises: "What is the quality of support that the Department, and specifically the District Office, provides to schools?" In the following section I present some of the most pertinent findings in this regard:

1.2.4.1 The results of a survey conducted by the Public Service Commission in three provinces

In a survey conducted in three provinces (Limpopo, Northern Cape and Kwa-Zulu Natal) the Republic of South Africa, Public Service Commission [PSC] (2006:3) found that some schools were hardly ever visited by Circuit Managers. As a result, the Circuit Managers played no meaningful role in improving education in the classroom (PSC 2006:4).

This study also found that in the Limpopo Province, support to former Model C schools was limited. Schools in rural areas in that province were rarely visited. None of the principals interviewed said that they could sit down with Circuit Managers to discuss management

problems at the schools. Instead of interacting with SMTs on issues of strategic importance to the schools, the visits of Circuit Managers were described as mere routine visits, in which they would check up on class attendance, looking at educators' lesson plans, assess the state in which the school infrastructure was and perhaps attend a class or two that educators were teaching (PSC 2006:12).

A similar finding of the study was that, in the Northern Cape Province, District Officials visited schools randomly. The nearer the school was to the District Office, the easier it was to obtain support from the District Office and the higher the probability of the school being visited by District Officials. The other problem was the duration of the visits: schools felt that District Officials did not have enough time to give proper attention to all their problems (PSC 2006:21).

In Kwa-Zulu Natal it was found that certain urban schools complained about the low level of intervention and assistance given by the Department. It appeared that instead of Circuit Managers providing guidance for the schools, the schools guided and informed the Circuit Managers (PSC 2006:29).

1.2.4.2 Capacity weaknesses at District level

Research undertaken by Taylor, Fleisch and Shindler (2007:20) noted that serious capacity weaknesses in all Provincial Departments of Education affected both the quality of policy development and the ability of Departments to implement policy. In many instances, National and Provincial Departments were understaffed and more importantly under-skilled and inexperienced in key areas. This adversely impacted on the system.

While these weaknesses persisted in Provincial Departments of Education, they were often more acute at District level. One of the most important lessons learnt during the past decade of school improvement initiatives was the central role of District Offices, which were often the only contact that schools had with outside agencies. Unfortunately, there was considerable instability at this level of the school system with various restructuring and redesigning initiatives undermining the capacity of District Officials to provide support and monitoring services to schools. The most critical factors which would contribute to strengthening the educational bureaucracy included: stabilizing structures and personnel, filling of established posts, combating patronage, standardizing operating procedures, simplifying performance management systems and providing sustained and relevant training (Taylor, Fleisch and Shindler 2007:20). The role of strong, well resources Districts as being

fundamental to assist poorly functional schools to higher levels of efficiency was identified by these authors (2007:34).

1.2.4.3 Lack of support or monitoring by District Offices

Taylor, Fleisch and Shindler (2007:7) also found that not only were the Provincial and District level bureaucracies extremely weak – characterized by large number of vacant posts, poor management systems and a paucity of essential resources, such as transport for school visits – but many were in a more or less continuous state of instability due to frequent restructuring and personnel changes. Under such circumstances, schools were actually left to themselves, with virtually no support from or monitoring by District Offices. I use the Eastern Cape as an example to illustrate this problem:

During the June 2008 school visits, the Senior Managers from the Provincial Office found that Districts did not respond timeously to requests for assistance from schools. The monitoring and support to schools was generally speaking, low on the agenda of District Offices. At District level, the various units (such as Management and Governance, and Curriculum) did not work together as teams to address the problems that schools faced (Province of the Eastern Cape, Department of Education 2008a:8). This also came to light during the January 2009 school visits. (Province of the Eastern Cape, Department of Education 2009c:7).

In April 2009 the ECDoE published a brief report on visits undertaken to schools for the purpose of monitoring the opening of schools for the second academic quarter. This report stated that one of its 11 findings was that Education Development Officers (EDOs) did not visit schools frequently (Province of the Eastern Cape, Department of Education 2009d:2).

The latter statement was echoed in a snap survey undertaken by the Sub-Directorate: Standard Setting and Benchmarking of the ECDoE which involved 60 schools in 6 Districts in the Province. This survey found, inter alia, that “Whereas the provincial standard determined that EDOs had to visit schools at least twice per quarter (i.e. 8 times per annum), the average number of visits to these schools was 1.6 per annum.” (Province of the Eastern Cape, Department of Education 2009b:401).

The same Sub-Directorate completed another survey of schools in May 2009 during which the leader of the team observed in the Port Elizabeth District Office that all the eleven EDOs spent the entire week of his visit to the District, in their offices for the entire day and were not

seen visiting and supporting schools (Pitt: interview: 2009). In interviewing the EDOs from this District, the team leader discovered that the EDOs had no formal management tool, checklist or intervention plan [i.e. the CIP] that informed their visits to the schools.

In May 2009 the ECDoE released its "Comprehensive Systemic Evaluation Programme", aimed at evaluating the Department's service delivery system. Amongst others, the results emanating from this report showed that EDOs did not assist schools and that there was, generally speaking, a lack of support from District Offices (Province of the Eastern Cape, Department of Education 2009e:10). The findings also stated that:

> Obtaining help (from the Department) on the telephone is virtually impossible and some staff members are rude and insulting. Red tape and bureaucracy in the ECDoE contribute to problems, and lack of competence and inefficiency of staff exacerbates the problem (Province of the Eastern Cape, Department of Education 2009e:13).

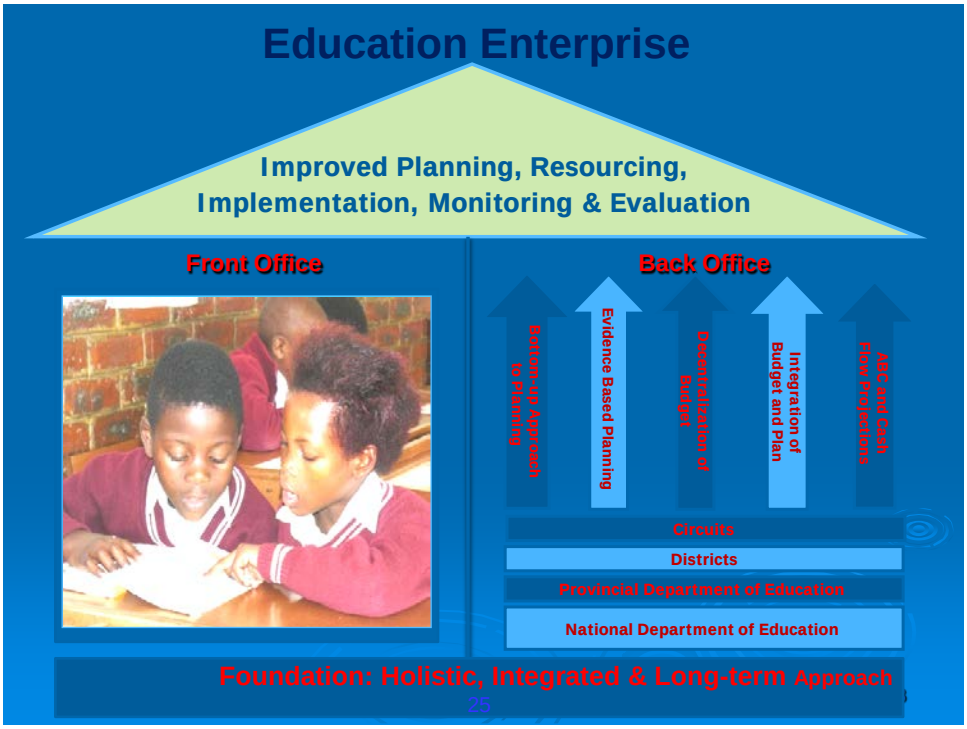
Some of the stakeholders who were interviewed reported that Departmental officials were often unavailable to assist schools, support to schools from Subject Advisors and EDOs was poor, there was often a poor response to queries and concerns, too many (Departmental officials) were perceived to be incompetent and officials only visited schools when they required information or when they had problems with the school (Province of the Eastern Cape, Department of Education 2009e:15).

All of the above clearly indicate that schools throughout the country do not receive the support, assistance and guidance by the very people who were employed by the system to do just that. The general picture that unfolds up to this point is that it is not only the institutions of learning that are not performing optimally, but that the entire Education System is seriously underperforming – and that the learners (and their future) are being compromised because Government employees across the system do not deliver on their core functions.

1.2.5 The role of the Circuit Office in supporting schools

In order to understand how the concept of the "Circuit Office" fitted into the structure of the Education System, it is important to consider what MacMaster (2009b:26) referred to as the "Education Enterprise", in which he distinguished between the "front office" and "back office" of Education. According to him, the "front office" was the class rooms in the schools and the "back office" consisted of Circuit, Districts and the Provincial and National Departments of Education. He developed the following figure to effectively explain this notion.

Figure 1.3: The Education Enterprise (MacMaster 2009b:26)



Although the purpose of the current discussion was not to analyze the above diagram in detail it is crucial to point out that Mac Master identified the "missing link" in the working relationship between the District Office and schools as the **Circuit.** He concluded that "The Education System is made up of interdependent parts that cannot be acted upon independently such as the Department of Education, Provincial Education Departments, Districts, **Circuits** and Institutions." (Mac Master 2009b:6) [own emphasis].

To reinforce the concept that the Circuit has a crucial role to play in effective service delivery to schools, Mac Master (2009b:17) introduced the notion of ***"Circuit Improvement Plans"*** (CIPs) which have to be based on the School Improvement Plans and School Development Plans (see discussion in Chapter Two [par. 261] for clarification of these terms) of the schools within the Circuit. According to him (Mac Master 2010) the CIP was the planning and management tool for the Circuit Manager which directed the support provided to schools in a coordinated manner.

From my experience I am convinced that, when SIPs and CIPs are not in place, it is practically impossible for a Circuit Manager or a Principal to perform the task he/she has been employed to do. In the case of a Circuit Manager: without a CIP, effective support and intervention at school level cannot take place. Similarly: without a well – constructed SIP a

Principal has no agenda to lead and manage his/her institution towards whole-school development. In addition, SIPs and CIPs are also the tools that hold Principals and Circuit Managers accountable for the performance of their tasks.

1.2.6 The Circuit Team approach adopted in the WCED

Against the background of the discussion in sub-paragraph 1.2.5, a milestone approach by the WCED in optimally utilizing its Circuit Offices to strengthen support to schools in that Province has to be recorded. Although this aspect will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Four, it is imperative for the purposes of this research study to briefly refer to the *modus operandi* that the WCED developed in this regard.

Following a major redesign process during 2006 – 2007, the WCED organized itself into eight education districts, which were sub-divided into forty-nine circuits (WCED 2008a). The newly established CTs were specifically designed to provide holistic support to schools (Western Cape Provincial Government 2008b).

It is of crucial importance to view this initiative of the WCED in the light of the discussion in par. 1.2 of this research study: the critical need to enhance learner performance and to strengthen SMTs (see par. 1.2.3). If one considers the NSC results listed in table 1.3 above, it is obvious that the Western Cape is the province in the country that is delivering better learner performance results by far. Furthermore, the same pattern repeats itself in the 2011 ANA results, which are listed below in table 1.4, showing the results per Province:

Table 1.4: Results of the 2011 ANA per Grade and per Province (Republic of South Africa, Department of Basic Education, 2011b:20)

PROVINCE	GRADE 3		GRADE 6	
	Literacy	Numeracy	Languages	Mathematics
Eastern Cape	39%	35%	29%	29%
Free State	37%	26%	23%	28%
Gauteng	35%	30%	21%	25%
Kwa-Zulu Natal	39%	31%	29%	32%
Limpopo	30%	30%	21%	25%
Mpumalanga	27%	19%	20%	25%
Northern Cape	28%	21%	27%	28%

PROVINCE	GRADE 3		GRADE 6	
	Literacy	**Numeracy**	**Languages**	**Mathematics**
North West	30%	21%	22%	26%
Western Cape	43%	36%	40%	41%
South Africa	**35%**	**28%**	**28%**	**30%**

The above information emphasizes that the WCED was doing something unique and therefore obtained different results. In my opinion the CT approach is one of the innovations of the WCED that is contributing significantly to the higher achievement rates in the Western Cape. This best practice of the WCED therefore requires further investigation with the aim of developing a model that other provinces in the country can implement, taking their particular needs, circumstances and challenges into consideration.

1.3 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

The background to this research study clearly indicated that the majority of primary and high school learners in South Africa were not receiving the quality education to which they are constitutionally entitled, and that ineffective school management and leadership was one of the major causes of the problem. The poor quality of support from District and Circuit Offices was a main factor that contributed to the poor performance of many SMTs in South Africa.

As it will be discussed further in Chapter Two the role of the District and Circuit Offices in supporting schools towards WSD, is scarcely found in literature, and very little research has been conducted on these two layers of the education system (Chinsamy 2002:3,5). In addition, literature and research on the SIP is limited, with the result that the importance of this management tool (especially with regard to WSD) is often neglected by school managers. The discussion in Chapter Two will also reveal that the CIP has hardly ever been researched and written about.

Although the CT approach has been implemented in the WCED since 2008, it has not yet been the focus of any research at all. If the view is adopted that the CT approach is *one* of the interventions developed by the WCED to improve learner performance (as indicated in tables 1.3 and 1.4), this issue seriously warrants further research and investigation. This research study aims to close the gap in knowledge by developing a model that will provide

explicit guidelines for SMTs and CTs to interact constructively with one another towards enhanced WSD – guidelines that can be adapted to suit local and specific circumstances.

1.4 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The current state of underperforming schools calls for innovative ways to strengthen the system at institutional level, and to ensure adequate and continued support to school managers to optimally fulfill their functions. There is a need to investigate how the CT approach can add value to such an initiative, and how other Provinces in the country can utilize the system to develop a partnership between the Circuit Office and school managers.

Against this background, the following **primary research question** has been formulated to guide this research study: *"How can CTs effectively support SMTs of underperforming schools towards whole-school development?"*

From the above, the following **secondary research questions** were formulated to provide further direction to the research study:

1.4.1 How can CTs assist SMTs to develop and implement their respective SIPs?

1.4.2 How can CTs be assisted to develop, implement and monitor their CIP?

1.4.3 What recommendations can be made to improve service delivery to the schools?

1.5 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

The primary aim of the research is to design a model that will enable CTs to support SMTs of underperforming high schools towards WSD. In order to achieve this aim, the following objectives are pursued:

- To undertake a literature review on WSD, with specific reference to the roles of CTs and SMTs;
- To investigate the implementation of the CT approach within the WCED;
- To document the outcomes of an action research intervention aimed at investigating the support and intervention provided to SMTs of underperforming high schools in a particular Circuit in the WCED, and
- To develop a model, based on the outcomes of the action research study and literature review that will assist CTs to support SMTs of underperforming high schools towards WSD.

1.6 RESEARCH DESIGN

Mouton (2001:55 – 56) explains that a research design is the blueprint or plan of how researchers intend to conduct research. The research design focuses on the end product – what kind of study is being planned and what kind of results are aimed at. The research design takes the research problem (question) as its point of departure.

To explain how scientific research is linked to problems in everyday life, Mouton (2001:137 – 142) introduces the concept of "The three worlds framework" in which he distinguishes between the world of everyday life and lay knowledge (world 1), the world of Science and scientific research (world 2) and the world of meta-Science (world 3). In terms of world 3, the researcher has to consider various paradigms in the philosophy of Science (such as positivism, realism, postmodernism, critical theory and phenomenology) as well as paradigms in research methodology (which are quantitative, qualitative and participatory action research). The choices that the researcher makes regarding the world of meta-science, enable him/her to interact with the body of knowledge and the research process from the world of Science (world 2) in order to address social/ practical problems that exist in everyday life (world 1) and that require intervention, action, programmes or therapy. It is against this background that the philosophical framework (the particular paradigm in the philosophy of science) which will underpin the research is presented.

1.6.1 Philosophical Framework

According to www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/paradigm a paradigm can be described as a philosophical and theoretical framework of a scientific school or discipline within which theories, laws, and generalizations and the experiments performed in support of them are formulated. It is important for a researcher to outline the philosophical assumptions in which research is embedded as it enhances the understanding of the research design and methodology, and also reconciles the research purpose and research process. Taking the research question into account, I decided to adopt both an *interpretative-constructivist paradigm* as well as a *critical theory paradigm* for this research study.

According to Creswell (2003:8 – 9) the interpretative-constructivist researcher tends to rely on the participants' views of the situation being studied. Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003:139,141) describe the interpretative-constructivist paradigm as being associated with qualitative approaches to research. In this paradigm the interaction between the researcher and participants is essential as they strive to make their values explicit and to create the

knowledge that will be the results of a particular research study. In addition, Adair (2000) states that the perceptions and values of all the participants in a research setting are needed to explore the various possible interpretations.

The Critical Theory paradigm was expounded by Habermas who viewed this approach as emancipatory, concerning itself with the *praxis* – action to be informed by reflection with the view to emancipate (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2007:28). According to these authors, the purpose of Critical Theory is not merely to understand the situation, but to *change* it. The intention has to be transformative: to transform society and individuals (2007:26).

Linking the above to my research study, the Critical Theory paradigm was selected with the view of building the capacity of both SMTs and the members of the CT, in relation to WSD. The SMTs in particular need to be assisted to change the underperforming situation they find themselves in, and have to be empowered to successfully manage and lead their institutions of learning as self-managing schools. Therefore the focus has to be on WSD, guided by the most pressing priorities each of the schools have identified, which need to be addressed systematically.

1.6.2 Research approach

This study adopts a **qualitative research approach** as it best suits the purpose of the research and the philosophical assumptions of the researcher. It is also most suitable to when little is known of the topic and the research is therefore exploratory in nature (Creswell 1998:17). According to Maxwell (1996:99) qualitative research is subjective, value-laden, biased and an *ad hoc* process that accepts multiple realities through the study of a small number of cases. This method is rooted in paradigms such as subjectivism, interpretivism and constructivism. Data is analyzed through thematic exploration.

Best and Kahn (1997:185) describe the qualitative approach, amongst others, as studying real-world situations as they unfold naturally, and exploring open questions rather than testing theoretically-derived hypotheses. The data that emerges from the fieldwork captures the descriptions of people's personal perspectives and experiences. In qualitative studies the researcher is always in close contact with the people, situation and phenomenon under study. He/she assumes that each case is unique and is driven by his/her passion to understand the world in all its complexity.

1.6.3 Research methodology

Neuman (2006:28) states that Action Research (AR) is associated with the critical theory paradigm. Patton (2002:221 – 225) describes AR as a form of research that aims to solve specific problems in a program, organization or community. The desired result is to solve the particular problem "here and now". AR operates from a point of view that the participants need to become part of the change process by getting engaged in the program to study their problems in order to solve those problems themselves. Since the aim of this research study is to gain an understanding of the perceptions of both the CT members as well as the SMTs involved, a research design that is compatible with a constructivist and critical approach, supported by AR, is employed.

In as far as the steps involved in AR are concerned Welman, Kruger & Mitchell (2005: 205) and McTaggart (1989) describe the process as "*cyclical"* or "*spiral".* These authors describe a cycle that progresses through the phases of (1) tentative planning, (2) acting, (3) observation, (4) reflection, and (5) evaluation of the primary results – the final phase providing feedback for the first phase (tentative planning) for a following cycle of action. These issues will be explored in greater detail in Chapter Three.

1.7 RESEARCH METHODS

According to Mouton (2001:56) research methods refers to the kinds of tools and procedures used. To unpack the research methods used in this study, the issues of sampling, data generation and data analysis are briefly discussed below. These issues are explored in greater detail in Chapter Three of the thesis.

1.7.1 Sampling

In this study purposive sampling (which is a characteristic of qualitative research approach) has been utilized. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985:202) purposive sampling is aimed at maximizing the amount of information gathered and not to facilitate generalizations, while Bless and Higson-Smith (2000:85) view purposive samples as being convenient, less time-consuming and less costly.

This research study drew on a sample of four underperforming high schools in a particular urban township area in the greater Cape Town Metro of the Western Cape, where many

schools in this area were characterized by serial underperformance for a number of years. As a result the WCED targeted this area for intensive support and intervention (WCED News 2011:2). These four high schools are situated in the same circuit, and therefore supported by the same CT. The participants were the CT members (especially the Circuit Team Manager [CTM], Institutional Management and Governance Managers [IMGMs] and School Psychologist), the Further Education and Training (FET) Curriculum Advisors (CAs), who are centralized at the District Office, and the SMTs of the four underperforming high schools.

1.7.2 Data generation

Taking the lead from Mouton's outline (2001:151), I used the following data generation methods for the purpose of this research:

- Interviews (structured, semi-structured and unstructured);
- Participant observation, and
- Document analysis.

The interviews and participant observation assisted me greatly in becoming an active participant in the execution of the research, and was a valuable means to allow me to come in close contact with the people, to interact with them and to begin to understand what their experiences, hopes and frustrations were. The document analysis on the other hand provided me the opportunity to critically study trends and patterns in the daily existence of the schools, as well as to triangulate what I uncovered through the first two methods of data generation.

1.7.3 Data analysis

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2005:153) the fundamental task during data analysis is to identify common patterns or central themes in people's descriptions of their experiences. Interviews were audio-taped, transcribed verbatim and the transcripts read and analyzed to gain a perspective of the perceptions and experiences of the participants. I also used my field notes to capture my observations during the fieldwork, and then related and cross-referenced the participant observations with the findings emanating from the interviews. In addition, the field notes were also utilized to note patterns and tendencies, as well as other relevant information that I uncovered (such as examination results) during my study of the documents.

The eight steps identified by Tesch in Creswell (2003:142 – 145) formed the basis for analyzing the qualitative data for this research study. These are listed and explained in detail in Chapter Three.

1.8 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

1.8.1 Model

Hornsby (2005:945) defines a model as:

> "… a simple description of a system, used for explaining how something works or calculating what might happen … example to copy: something such as a system that can be copied by other people … (approving) a person or thing that is considered an excellent example of something … to create a copy of an activity, a situation, etc. so that you can study it before dealing with the real thing…"

The Free Dictionary (http://www.thefreedictionary.com/model) describes the term as "A schematic description of a system, theory or phenomenon that accounts for its known or inferred properties and may be used for further study of its characteristics."

Taking the above statements into consideration I proposed the following working definition for the term "model" for this research study: *"The construction (development/ design) of a guide that can assist to achieve the intended outcomes of an intervention (system/theory/phenomenon), and which can be adapted to suit the particular needs of communities or localized settings."*

1.8.2 Circuit Team(s)

The WCED is the only Province that, at the time of completion of this research study, has implemented the CT approach, and therefore the information in this sub-paragraph is based solely on the documentation from this Provincial Education Department. In par. 1.2.6 mention was made of the restructuring of the WCED which led to the establishment of CTs.

The CTs operate at circuit level (i.e. a sub-section of the District Office) where members of the team support the schools organized in a particular circuit. CTs are responsible for Institutional Management and Governance (IMG) at schools, school administration, curriculum issues related to the General Education and Training (GET) Band of the NQF and matters pertaining to learners with special education needs. Teacher development and support would also form an integral part of the duties performed by Circuit Teams (Western Cape Provincial Government 2008; WCED 2008a).

Each CT consists of a Circuit Team Leader, two advisors on IMG, one advisor on school administration, one team member responsible for Foundation Phase curriculum support, one to two specialists in the Intermediate and Senior Phase education, a school psychologist, school social worker and a learning support advisor (Western Cape Provincial Government 2008a).

1.8.3 School Management Team(s)

The Department of Education identifies three categories of employees at school level who are, in terms of their appointment, members of the SMT:

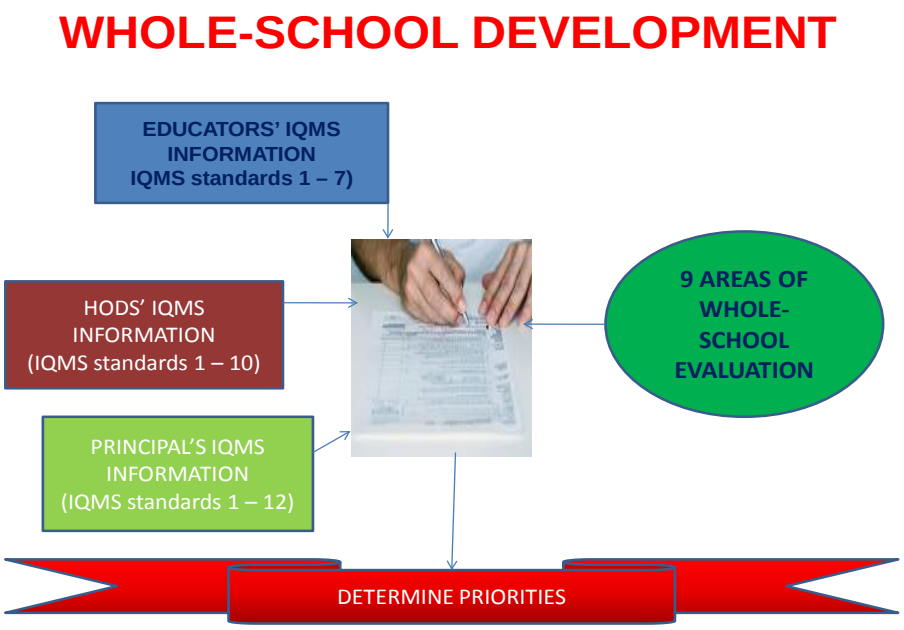
- The Principal;
- The Deputy Principal(s) – if appointed (because small schools do not have Deputy Principal(s) as part of their staff establishment), and
- Head(s) of Department (Republic of South Africa, Department of Education, 2000a:2).

1.8.4 Whole-School Development

Whole-school development is a holistic process that aims to improve all aspects of the school (such as its academic achievements, infrastructure, social environment and security), *and involves all members of the school community* (i.e. the SMT, SGB, educators, support staff, learners, parents, community members, Alumni, Departments of Education and Social Development and donors) (Westraad 2011:8, Naidu *et al.* 2008:66 and Ngubane 2005:20) *to collectively contribute to quality education* (Moolla 2006).

The factors that are paramount in determining WSD are, according to GMSA [http:www.gmsouthafricafoundation.com], the frameworks found in the South African WSE Policy and the Integrated Quality Management Systems (IQMS) guidelines. This means that the nine areas of WSE as well as the twelve performance standards of IQMS form the building blocks on which WSD has to be based. WCED (2007) concurs with this point of view. The following figure aims to illustrate that WSD has to incorporate WSE and IQMS, and that specific priorities need to be set for a specific period of time, as will be explained at large in the course of Chapter Two.

Figure 1.4: Factors that determine Whole-School Development



1.9 MEASURES FOR ENSURING TRUSTWORTHINESS

The following techniques, based on Leedy and Ormrod (2001:106) as well as Lincoln and Guba (1985:219) were adopted in this research to ensure trustworthiness:

- In-depth interviews;
- An audit trail;
- The research took place in the natural setting of the participants;
- Audio recordings were made of interviews;
- Various data collection procedures were followed;
- Peer examination took place;
- A literature control was done;
- Independent coding and re-coding was done;
- A rich description was used to portray the situation so that readers could draw their own conclusions;
- A detailed description of the research methodology was provided, and
- Consistency was ensured by preserving raw material and applying the same procedure throughout the research.

The concept of trustworthiness is discussed in more detail in Chapter Three.

1.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

According to Struwig and Stead (2004:66 – 67) research ethics provides researchers with generally acceptable guidelines on how to conduct research in an ethical manner. The following ethical measures were adhered to during the research to protect the authenticity of the data: Objectivity, integrity and authenticity of the data were maintained. I ensured that none of the information provided was fabricated. Ethical publishing practices were applied and plagiarism rejected. Appropriate recording of data was ensured. From the outset the research was conducted in a transparent manner, while the rights and dignity of participants were respected.

The participants were fully informed of the nature and outcomes of the research, as well as the roles that they were required to play in the roll-out of the qualitative study. They gave their consent to participate, whilst they were reminded that their participation was voluntary. They were given the assurance that they would remain anonymous and that no reference to their person would be made at any time. The information provided by them as well as issues that flow from the discussions and interactions were held in the highest confidentiality. When the research was concluded, full disclosure of the outcomes thereof was shared with everybody who participated. Ethical considerations are expanded on in Chapter Three.

1.11 OUTLINE OF THE THESIS

The thesis is organized into the following chapters:

Chapter 1: General introduction to the research and rationale for the study, problem statement and research aims, clarification of key concepts, brief overview of research design and methodology and an explanation of the research plan are provided.

Chapter 2: A literature study to review issues related to whole-school development, with specific reference to the roles of the CTs and SMTs in this regard.

Chapter 3: A literature study on the essential requirements that a qualitative research study has to adhere to, with specific reference to the application of action research within the context of qualitative research, and to explain the research design in detail with reference to literature.

Chapter 4: The conceptualization and implementation of the CT approach in the WCED.

Chapter 5: The implementation of an action research design aimed at investigating the support and intervention of a particular CT in the WCED to four underperforming high schools.

Chapter 6: The design of a model that will assist CTs to support SMTs of underperforming high schools towards whole-school development.

Chapter 7: Summary, conclusions and recommendations.

1.12 SUMMARY

In Chapter 1 the background to the research was introduced. The underperformance of the majority of schools in South Africa was taken as the point of departure, and specific emphasis was placed on the low level of learner achievements in both primary and high schools. The link between the levels of learner achievement and school management was established, after which an overview of the underperforming state of many SMTs in the country was presented. The lack of proper and ongoing support to schools by the Department of Education was investigated, and the role of the Circuit Office as the "missing link" was highlighted. This section of the thesis concluded with a discussion of the CT approach that the WCED adopted in 2008, and the positive impact this had on learner achievement levels.

After stating the rationale for the research, the problem statement and research question underpinning the research were introduced. The aim and objectives of the research study were then presented.

A constructivist-interpretative paradigm as well as a critical-theory paradigm was adopted for the study. The qualitative research approach was explained, after which action research, as the research methodology for the study, was explained. Issues pertaining to research methods (sampling, data generation and data analysis) were briefly described, followed by the clarification of concepts.

The measures of trustworthiness as well as the ethical considerations for the research were introduced. The Chapter concluded with the research plan, indicating that there would be seven chapters that would contribute to the intended outcome of this research study: to design of a model to assist CTs to support SMTs of underperforming high schools towards WSD. The following chapter will take on the form of a literature study relating to issues of WSD, with specific reference to the roles of CTs and SMTs in this regard.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL DISCUSSION ON WHOLE-SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT, WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO THE ROLES OF THE CIRCUIT TEAM AND SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAM

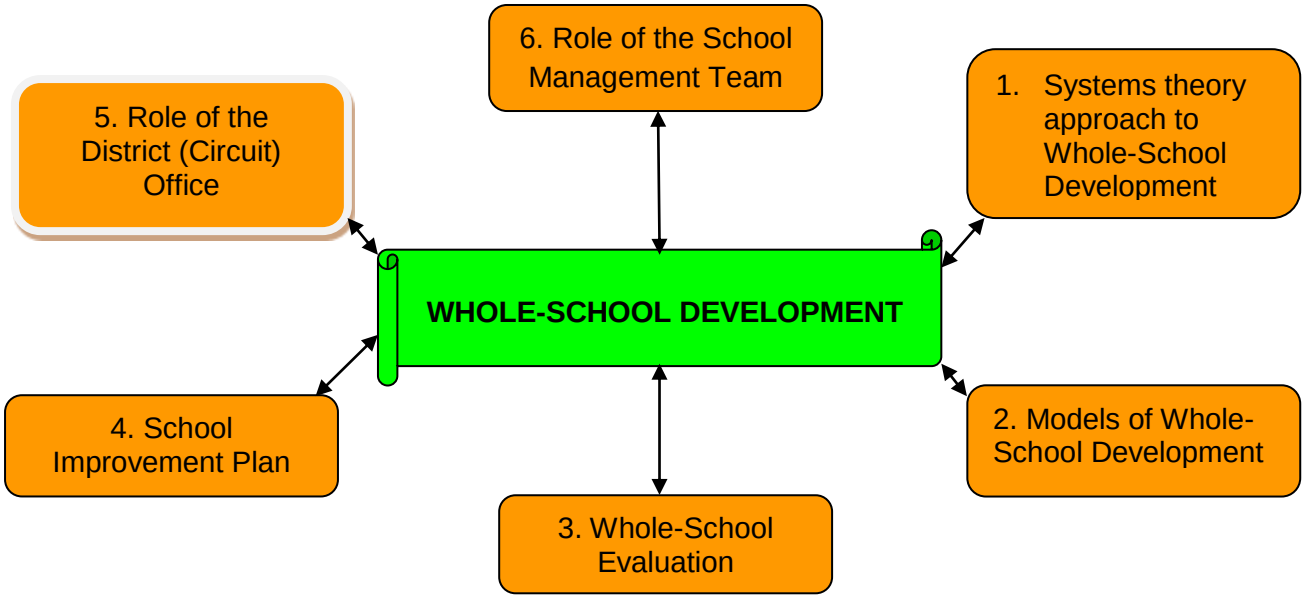
2.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter One the introduction and background to the research study were presented, followed by the rationale for the study. The problem question that would guide this research was then introduced, *"How can Circuit Teams effectively support School Management Teams towards whole-school development?"* Three secondary research questions were also formulated to provide further direction to the research study. The primary aim of the research, with the objectives it intended to achieve, was stated, after which the philosophical framework, the qualitative research approach and research methodology were introduced. This was followed by the clarification of concepts, measures of trustworthiness and ethical considerations. The chapter concluded with the chapter outline and research plan.

In this chapter a critical discussion by means of a literature review of WSD is presented as a theoretical framework of the study. According to Mouton (2001:91) there are six possible ways to structure the literature review: chronologically (by date of study), by school of thought, theory or definition, by theme or construct, by hypothesis, by case study, or by method. Taking the problem question of the research study into consideration, and analyzing the key concepts contained in it, I decided to structure the theoretical framework of my research according to theme (construct).

The central theme of the research question is WSD. The way in which the SMTs and the members of the CT interact with this concept forms the overarching structure for the literature review. When I unpacked the concept of WSD in relation to relevant literature, the following interrelated themes were identified as the basis for the literature review in this chapter: systems theory, models of WSD, WSE, SIP and the role of the CT and SMT in relation to WSD. The interrelationship between WSD and these other sub-constructs is depicted in Figure 2.1 below:

Figure 2.1: An outline of the structure of the literature review



2.2 WHOLE-SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT

Figure 2.1 above places the concept of WSD at the centre of the framework of the literature review. As WSD is also the central theme of this research, the literature review starts off with a discussion on WSD, by looking at a definition of the concept, followed by an overview of the role of school management and leadership in relation to WSD. The issue of a school as a learning organization is also unpacked, after which the role of reflection in WSD is addressed. Change management in relation to WSD is explored, before any of the other sub-constructs are addressed.

In par. 1.6.4 of the thesis, the following definition of WSD was put forward:

> Whole-school development is a holistic process that aims to improve all aspects of the school (such as its academic achievements, infrastructure, social environment and security), and involves all members of the school community (i.e. the SMT, SGB, educators, support staff, learners, parents, community members, Alumni, Departments of Education and Social Development and donors) (Naidu et al. 2008:66, Ngubane 2005:20 and Westraad 2011:8) to collectively contribute to quality education (Moolla 2006).

This definition underlines the importance of viewing a school in a holistic manner, and taking all aspects of school life into consideration when implementing WSD. The discussion in par. 2.5 will take this point further, and emphasize that the nine areas of WSE caters for “all aspects of the school”.

2.2.1 The role of management and leadership in Whole-School Development

The above definition of WSD strongly implies that the process of WSD at institutional level has to be managed in order for it to succeed. Ngubane (2005:21) not only points to the fact that the SMT (as the managers and leaders at school level) has to implement and guide WSD, but also stresses that the quality of the leadership and management in the school plays a vital role in determining the successful implementation of WSD. The discussion in par. 2.6 and 2.8 enhances this statement by pointing to the fact that WSD is indeed a core responsibility of the SMT.

The statement by Ngubane relates strongly to my experience as Principal and Circuit Manager. The exposure I had in assisting schools with their WSD emphasized the fact that schools can only grow and develop if the SMT of a school is willing to learn and to be zealous in taking ownership of and implementing the necessary improvements that will take their institution of learning to greater heights. On the other hand, without exception, I found that ineffective SMTs were the root cause of the underperformance of their schools. This reconfirms the statement in par. 1.1 of the thesis that the MFTs had to spend the majority of their time at the underperforming schools on supporting the SMTs to become fully functional.

Queensland Government, Department of Education, Training and Employment (2011:1) supports my point of view. It states that strong school leadership is a key to improving learning outcomes across the school. Effective school principals actively build the tone and ethos of the school and establish high expectations for teachers and students. They develop a leadership team that promotes a shared commitment to quality teaching and improving student achievement. These managers establish ambitious goals for improving student achievement and provide for the on-going professional learning needs of teachers.

Murakami and Orr (2012:5) report from the various case studies they undertook that the role of successful principals is vital to sustain developments and improvements at school level. They found four basic priorities that school principals need to address in order to improve schools: strengthening the infrastructure of the school, organizing the departments, engaging learners and involving parents (2012:4).

The above view (with particular reference to the involvement of learners and parents) is shared by Ngubane (2005:21 – 22). When discussing the concept of WSD, he specifically refers to the importance of participative management, and rules the top-down management approach as obsolete within the context of WSD. His viewpoint is that a participative

management approach supports the idea of school-based decision making, through which the autonomy of schools is increased.

School-based decision-making contributes to the establishment of self-managing schools, which Ngubane (2005:22) defines as institutions where significant and consistent decentralization of authority to make decisions related to the operations of the school, has taken place. The process of school-based decision-making (on issues such as goal setting, policy formulation, planning, budgeting and evaluation at all levels of the school) calls for Principals to consult all relevant stakeholders for inputs that will lead to WSD. Pollock and Winton (2012:16) support this notion, stating that "School success is a dynamic process that requires on-going efforts by all involved." (Own underlining.)

Owens (2010:6) takes the above statements further: Whilst it is important for a Principal to adopt the roles of a strategic thinker and a culture builder in order to promote sustainable change and enhanced academic achievement levels in the their schools, they have to build relationships of trust with others. In this regard Owens specifically mentions honest communication, competence and openness. Shared values and vision, collective responsibility, reflective professional inquiry, and collaboration are necessary to build and sustain WSD.

It is clear from the above that it is not only the duty of the SMT to lead and manage the process of WSD at school level, but also to ensure that all stakeholders are brought on board so that the process of WSD is inclusive of all relevant parties. Issues such as life-long learning and reflection are emerging from this exposition. There is also a clear link being established with systems theory. All of these issues are dealt with in the subsequent sub-paragraphs.

2.2.2 The school as a Learning Organization

WSD can only operate optimally in a milieu where constant reflection and learning are encouraged and practised. It is against this background that the concept of WSD can be directly linked to the view that an effective, self-managed institution needs to adopt the philosophy of becoming a learning organization.

Smith (2003:12) defines a learning organization as one that systemically, frequently and critically asks itself: "*How are things going?"* and *"How can we do better?"* He also emphasizes that apart from having the desire, courage and capacity to reflect, a learning

organization must have the capacity to adapt readily to rapidly changing environmental demands. He quotes the following five disciplines need to be mastered to create a learning organization, from Senge (1994:6 – 11):

- Personal mastery;
- Mental models;
- Building shared vision;
- Team building, and
- Systems thinking.

Thornton, Shepperson and Canavero (2007:51 – 53) expand on each of the above-mentioned disciplines as follows:

2.2.2.1 Personal mastery: Personal (individual) learning does not guarantee organizational learning, but organizations only learn through individuals. Successful organizations must therefore be populated with employees who are always learning. If institutions depend on individual learning, staff development becomes a key factor.

Applied to this research study, personal mastery means that each member of the CT and SMTs has to be an effective team member who is willing to make positive contributions towards WSD. There needs to be a continual quest for learning, and for sharing the insights gained with each other in order to grow to higher levels of performance and efficiency. It is therefore of utmost importance that the team members engage in reflection (par. 2.2.3 and 6.3.5) as well as action learning (par. 5.3.4 and 6.3.6). In addition, there has to be staff development programmes in place, based on a thorough needs-analysis, that will enhance the capacity to manage and lead the school or circuit. (As Chapter Five will point out, the issue of personal mastery was found lacking in all four schools, as well as the CT.)

2.2.2.2 Mental models: These are deeply ingrained assumptions, generalizations, and pictures (images) that influence how people understand the world, and determine the course of action they take. Mental models of what can (or cannot) be done in different management settings are no less deeply entrenched. Continuous adaptation and growth in a changing environment depends on institutional learning: the process whereby management teams change their shared mental models of the institution and the environment in which they operate.

This discipline links very closely with the previous one, as well as with the following discipline. Through the process of personal mastery, members of the SMT and CT have to

learn how to adapt in an ever-changing environment in order to be relevant and effective. However, without a clear vision (mental picture of the desired future) their efforts towards WSD will be futile: if they burden themselves with a mental picture that they cannot succeed and rid themselves from the state of underperformance they find themselves in, their situation cannot improve. This implies that, for mental models to be functional, SMT and CT members have to be able to size up situations and take action that leads to the desired outcome.

2.2.2.3 Shared vision: Without a common vision (defined by Thornton, Shepperson and Canavero (s.a.:52) as "the capacity to hold a shared picture of the future we seek to create") members of an organization will focus on personal agendas, resulting in limited productivity. Effective leaders have to facilitate a shared vision of the ideal future by providing quantifiable benchmarks which bring the organization closer to the ideal. It is therefore of great importance that members of an organization discuss, identify and agree on goals and share the vision for the common good. The authors also state that when accountability is supported by vision and leadership, schools can link student outcomes, instruction and decision-making to an overarching plan. They also stress the importance of feedback to all stakeholders – and describe effective feedback as a reciprocal flow of influence that helps to balance, change or reinforce the process.

My experience in working with underperforming schools has, amongst others, made me realize that WSD cannot take place in an environment where the staff is divided by cliques, which all have their own (and often destructive) agendas. I also found that these conditions were to a large extent caused by ineffective SMTs who were unable to facilitate a shared vision for the school. Until such a vision crafting exercise was undertaken with the involvement of all stakeholders schools remained in their state of underperformance because a shared vision creates a common identify among team members, and enables them to produce much higher levels of commitment, thereby enhancing performance and success.

2.2.2.4 Team learning: Organizations with the capacity to learn as a group are led by coaches, mentors and leaders who incorporate individual learning, help teams suspend ineffectual patterns, and collectively arrive at the desired results. Effective feedback encourages team learning by presenting information useful to the group once data is made available, understood, and used for decision-making. Schools benefit from increased distribution of findings in order to align with goals and guide the improvement of teaching and learning. Such responses often lead to increasing personal mastery, staff training and

team learning. Team learning is not only promoted by the results of program evaluations, but will promote improved program evaluations and better application of results.

The disciplines of personal mastery and shared vision (discussed above) connect strongly to team learning. Members of the SMT have to become the mentors for the members of staff at the school and explore avenues to enhance learning. In addition, members of the CT have to take on the role of mentors for the SMTs, and ensure that they are fully capacitated to lead and manage their schools. During my entire career I have learnt the importance of having an efficient mentor to guide, support and inspire people to higher levels of achievement, without which there can be no team learning. It is of greatest importance that learning be shared amongst fellow team members by means of dialogue and discussion so that empowerment and capacity building can take place. Sadly, the analysis of the data in Chapter Five will reveal that not one of the Principals of the four schools involved in the research had any mentors – this could be considered as an important factor for the state of underperformance of their schools.

2.2.2.5 Systems thinking: Organizations are composed of interdependent components that function together towards predetermined goals, driven by policies, strategies and realignments. Systems thinking requires that organizational components constantly review, re-evaluate, and stabilize in the short term so that the entire system plans strategically to align resources and identify highly effective functions. Systems thinking also drives continuous improvement and enables organizations to refrain from repeatedly making the same mistakes. The authors furthermore stress the importance of effective feedback to promote systems thinking by measuring the impacts of various interactions across the school. (Systems thinking is discussed in greater detail in par. 2.4.)

This discipline applies to the way in which a school functions internally, as well as the influence that the CT exercises over a school. If, for example, teachers do not arrive punctually for class, and are ill-prepared for their lessons, the quality of teaching and learning will suffer. Also, when a CT does not support the SMT of a school effectively, such a school will remain in its state of underperformance.

According to Moloi (2005:70 – 71) systems thinking allows the participants to see the bigger picture. People engage in systems thinking as they view their role in work teams, the roles of their work teams in the organization, and the organization's relationship to the larger environment. Systems thinking allows one to view the entire system while it is in motion so that participants can understand how each aspect interacts with and affects the others.

People begin to see how their actions lead to the results they get in their schools. Without systems thinking, changes often result in new problems and can have serious unintended consequences.

In concluding this discussion, I need to emphasize that learning organizations are characterized by converting information into action – when a gap in performance is detected, such an institution will facilitate the necessary change, so that continuous improvements take place (Thornton, Shepperson and Canavero, s.a.:54, Barnett and O'Mahony 2006:502). Ngubane (2005:18 – 19), referring to the explanation by Garratt (2000:102 – 103), adds that a learning organization has a higher chance of survival and development in a turbulent world than do other organizations.

2.2.3 The important role of reflection in Whole-School Development

Barnett and O'Mahony (2006:500) explain that there are four interrelated phases that occur when reflection as a problem-solving process takes place: (1) the problem is articulated, (2) the problem is analyzed, (3) a tentative theory for solving the problem is developed and tested, and (4) a way of resolving the problem (a preferred course of action) is decided upon. Against this background they define reflection as "a learning process examining current and past practices, behaviours, or thoughts in order to make conscious choices about future actions." This definition implies that reflection is the combination of hindsight, insight and foresight (2006:501).

These authors (2006:508) highlight the important role that reflection plays in building effective teams, which has implications for SMTs and CTs. They emphasize the importance of clear goals and expectations without which members of a team would flounder because of lack of direction and sense of accomplishment. To ensure that goals are clear and are being met, reflective activities can be used within the team, to pause and ask themselves the following reflective questions:

- What goals have we set for ourselves? *(What?)*
- Who else knows about our goals? *(Who?)*
- What evidence do we have that our goals are being met? *(So what?)*
- If we have achieved some of our goals, do we need to establish additional goals? *(Now what?)*

From the above, it becomes clear that meaningful school improvement can only take root when a culture of reflection focusing on teaching and learning exists. When individual and

collective reflection on issues such as learner achievement becomes part of the school culture, meaningful school improvement occurs. All of this implies that, in order for a school to develop holistically, change needs to take place. It is for this reason that the concept of change management in relation to WSD has to be explored.

2.2.4 Change management

The National Academy of Sciences (2005) states that development brings about change. This organization emphasizes the need for supporting people during processes of change, as they more often than not resist change. This statement also has implications for WSD: when schools focus on sustained improvement, changes will take place and people involved in the organizations would rather want to maintain their comfort zones, out of fear for the unknown. It is against this background that change management, as an integral aspect of WSD, warrants further discussion.

Van Der Merwe (in Van Deventer, Kruger, Van Der Merwe, Prinsloo and Steinmann 2009:42) identifies the following seven stages in the resistance to change:

- *Shock:* A person's first and natural reaction to change is an intense feeling of interference with his/her life.
- *Counter-reaction:* This is manifested in the immediate rejection of change. Related reactions are withdrawal from and avoidance of change, accompanied by escapism, which is a form of ignoring the necessity of change.
- *Grouping:* Individuals form themselves into groups, representing those in favour of and those against change. In these groups change is collectively discussed and explained.
- *Anxiety:* Anxiety that change is about to occur, develops. An inability to accept the proposed change may be projected onto someone else, who is then blamed for the change.
- *Rationalization:* A change in focus from the past to the future occurs during this phase. Those concerned try to understand what the change is all about.
- *Acceptance:* New situations and customs are tested, and support for the change starts to develop.
- *Internalization:* New relations, procedures and practices have been tested and insight gained into the new, changed working situation, which now becomes the norm.

Jones, Aquirre and Calderone (2004) present a ten-principle approach to deal effectively with change management in the organization. I specifically selected their model to discuss change management as it not only takes a holistic view of the institution during the phases of

change, but also places the human being, who is effected by the change processes, in the centre of the management process.

1. ***Address the "human side" systematically.*** Any significant transformation creates "people issues." New leaders are asked to step up, jobs are changed, new skills and capabilities need to be developed, and employees will, as a result, be uncertain and resistant. A formal approach for managing change — beginning with the leadership team and then engaging key stakeholders and leaders — should be developed early, and adapted often as change moves through the organization. This demands as much data collection and analysis, planning, and implementation discipline as does a redesign of strategy, systems, or processes. The change-management approach should be fully integrated into program design and decision making, both informing and enabling strategic direction. It should be based on a realistic assessment of the organization's history, readiness, and capacity to change.

2. ***Start at the top.*** Because change is inherently unsettling for people at all levels of an organization, when it is on the horizon, all eyes will turn to the leadership team for strength, support, and direction. The leaders must embrace the new approaches first, both to challenge and to motivate the rest of the institution. They must speak with one voice and model the desired behaviours. The management team also needs to understand that, although its public face may be one of unity, it, too, is composed of individuals who are going through stressful times and need to be supported. From this explanation, it is clear that this phase of change does not refer to a top-down (autocratic) management style, but rather that the management and leadership of the institution have to deal with the dynamics of change themselves, before the changes cascade to the lower levels of the organization.

3. ***Involve every layer.*** As transformation programs progress from defining strategy and setting targets to design and implementation, they affect different levels of the organization. Change efforts must include plans for identifying leaders throughout the company and pushing responsibility for design and implementation down, so that change "cascades" through the organization. At each layer of the organization, the leaders who are identified and trained must be aligned to the company's vision, equipped to execute their specific mission, and motivated to make change happen.

4. ***Make the formal case.*** Individuals are inherently rational and will question to what extent change is needed, whether the company is headed in the right direction, and whether they want to commit personally to making change happen. They will look to the leadership for answers. The articulation of a formal case for change and the creation of a written vision statement are invaluable opportunities to create or compel leadership-team alignment.

   Three steps should be followed in developing the case: First, confront reality and articulate a convincing need for change. Second, demonstrate faith that the company has a viable future and the leadership to get there. Finally, provide a road map to guide behaviour and decision making. Leaders must then customize this message for various internal audiences, describing the pending change in terms that matter to the individuals.

5. ***Create ownership.*** In cases where the change will be on a large scale, leaders must over-perform during the transformation and be the zealots who create a critical mass among the work force in favour of change. This requires more than mere buy-in or passive agreement that the direction of change is acceptable. It demands ownership by leaders willing to accept responsibility for making change happen in all of the areas they influence or control. Ownership is often best created by involving people in identifying problems and crafting solutions.

6. ***Communicate the message.*** Too often, leaders make the mistake of believing that others understand the issues, feel the need to change, and see the new direction as clearly as they do. The best change programs reinforce core messages through regular, timely advice that is both inspirational and practicable. Communications flow in from the bottom and out from the top, and are targeted to provide employees the right information at the right time and to solicit their input and feedback. This will require continuous communication to everybody in the organization.

7. ***Assess the cultural landscape.*** Successful change programs pick up speed and intensity as they cascade down, making it critically important that leaders understand and account for culture and behaviours at each level of the organization. Institutions often make the mistake of assessing culture either too late or not at all. Thorough cultural diagnostics can assess organizational readiness to change, bring major problems to the surface, identify conflicts, and define factors that can recognize and influence sources of leadership and resistance. These diagnostics identify the core values, beliefs, behaviours, and perceptions that must be taken into account for successful change to

occur. They serve as the common baseline for designing essential change elements, such as the new corporate vision, and building the infrastructure and programs needed to drive change.

8. ***Address culture explicitly.*** Once the culture is understood, it should be addressed as thoroughly as any other area in a change program. Leaders should be explicit about the culture and underlying behaviours that will best support the new way of doing business, and find opportunities to model and reward those behaviours. This requires developing a baseline, defining an explicit end-state or desired culture, and devising detailed plans to make the transition. Understanding that all institutions have a cultural centre — the locus of thought, activity, influence, or personal identification — is often an effective way to jump-start culture change.

9. ***Prepare for the unexpected.*** No change program goes completely according to plan. People react in unexpected ways; areas of anticipated resistance fall away; and the external environment shifts. Effectively managing change requires continual reassessment of its impact and the organization's willingness and ability to adopt the next wave of transformation. Fed by real data from the field and supported by information and solid decision-making processes, change leaders can then make the adjustments necessary to maintain momentum and drive results.

10. ***Speak to the individual.*** Change is both an institutional journey and a very personal one. Individuals (or teams of individuals) need to know how their work will change, what is expected of them during and after the change program, how they will be measured, and what success or failure will mean for them and those around them. Team leaders should be as honest and explicit as possible. People will react to what they see and hear around them, and need to be involved in the change process. Most leaders contemplating change know that people matter. It is all too tempting, however, to dwell on the plans and processes, which don't talk back and don't respond emotionally, rather than face up to the more difficult and more critical human issues.

The above discussion on WSD has brought a number of important issues that would concern the interaction between the CT members and SMTs in working together towards WSD, to the fore. Participative leadership, guided by a clear vision, and involving all stakeholders in the process, has been identified as essential components of the support to schools. The willingness to focus on continuous improvement of the institutions, along with

continuous learning and reflection has emerged as another key factor. The way in which the change process that accompanies WSD is managed, has been pointed out as a critical component of any intervention towards WSD. It is against this background that systems theory as the theoretical approach to WSD is discussed.

2.3 A SYSTEM'S THEORY APPROACH TO WHOLE-SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT

I selected systems theory as the theoretical approach to WSD as it specifically explains the interaction between the various components of the education system to reach a common goal. This has important implications for the school internally, as effective teaching and learning cannot be seen in isolation from dynamic management and leadership, effective governance and the physical environment in which the school finds itself. Furthermore, systems theory also adds to the interrelationship that the school finds itself on an external level, in the case of this study the Circuit and District Offices in particular – and emphasizes the roles that these structures play in supporting an institution towards WSD. In the following paragraphs the nature of systems theory will be explained and linked to the functioning of the education system.

2.3.1 Understanding the nature of systems theory

The German biologist, Ludwig von Bertalanoffy (1901 – 1972) developed the General System Theory (GST) which defined new foundations and provided an alternative to the conventional modes of organization. The work of his predecessors, Elton Mayo and his team, as well as that of Mary Follett, demonstrated that organizations were livings systems rather than machines. In 1966 Katz and Kahn applied the GST to organizations (Smith 2003:9).

The GST facilitates a holistic understanding of an integrated public management approach. Instead of splitting, dissecting and dissociating parts of a system, the move is towards the holistic view of organizations as subsystems of a larger world (Kaufman, Herman and Watters 2002:10). Systems thinking is a framework for seeing interrelationships rather than linear cause and effect chains, and for seeing processes of change rather than static snapshots. The practice of systems thinking starts with understanding the nature of feedback: how actions can reinforce or counteract (balance) each other (Senge, 1992, in Kennedy 2007:267).

Systems theory begins with the premise that the system is made up of interdependent parts that cannot be acted upon independently. A system may actually be a subsystem of a larger suprasystem. Systems are in a constant state of interaction with their environment. At a general level, all systems are impacted by laws, philosophy/culture, and economic conditions of the societies in which they exist. At a more specific level, this includes the suprasystems of which the systems are a part as well as other organizations and social institutions (Sylvia and Sylvia 2004:3 – 5). I therefore view the school as part of the system, as defined by Naidu *et al.* (2008:77) and Betts (1992:39): "A system is a set of interrelated elements that function as a whole (unit) to achieve a common purpose."

In literature, a distinction is also made between open and closed systems. Lunenburg (2010:1) and Naidu *et al.* (2008:77) explain that, according to open-system views, organizations are in constant interaction with their environments, and interact with the broader world within which they exist. According to Lunenburg (2010:1) a closed-systems theory views organizations as sufficiently independent to solve most of their problems through their internal forces, without taking forces in the external environment into account.

2.3.2 The school as an open system

In the context of the above, the education system can be described as an open organizational structure with specific aims/objectives, education policy, different components, relations, processes and programmes which are in constant interaction with its environment (Van Der Westhuizen 2002:4). The activities within an education system often place special emphasis on those aspects of education that a country needs (Van Der Westhuizen 2002:5).

A systems approach views education as the sum of the interdependent parts working together and individually to achieve a common (societal) purpose. A change in any part of the system changes all the other parts – a system is therefore dynamic. The interdependence of the different parts on each other also implies that if one component is changed, it will bring about changes in all other components of the particular system.

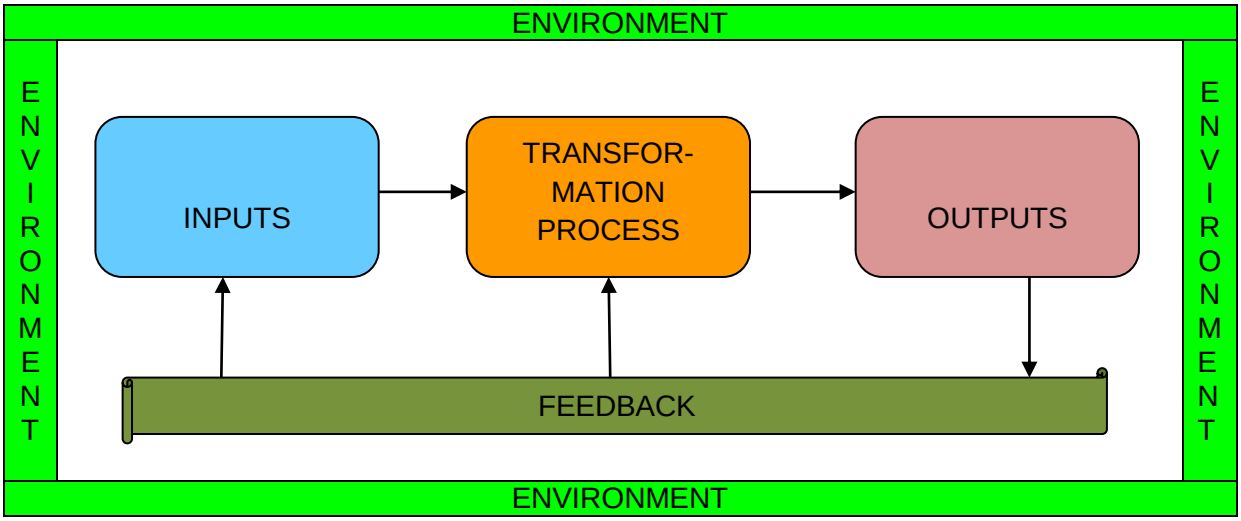
Betts (1992:38) emphasized that improvement (to the education system) must be sought through systemic change. Taking into consideration that his writings date from the last decade of the previous century, he hailed systems thinking as the new paradigm to address the failures that the education system experienced at that stage. He mentions five reasons for the limited success of the system during his time:

- The piecemeal (or incremental) approach;
- Failure to integrate solution ideas;
- A discipline-by-discipline study of education;
- A reductionist orientation, and
- Staying within the boundaries of the existing system (i.e. not thinking out of the box).

The above statement has important implications for this research study. Should a CT and SMT not see the education system as an integrated whole, they will not be able to understand how failure in certain aspects impact on the effective functioning of the other components of education. For example, they might only focus on low learner achievement results, but if they do not view the problem holistically, they will fail to realize how issues such as the socio-economic conditions of the learners, teachers being absent from school, and the poor quality of school management contribute to the poor results. It is therefore imperative that a holistic view of the education system is adopted, and that all aspects of school life have to be addressed if sustained improvement is sought – this aspect will be dealt with in par. 2.5 when WSE is discussed.

Lunenburg (2010:1 – 4) emphatically states that all schools are open systems, although the degree of interaction with their environment may vary. Taking his lead from Scott (2008) he depicts an open system as consisting of five basic elements: inputs, a transformation process, outputs, feedback and the environment. Figure 2.1 below captures these elements of the open system:

Figure 2.2: An open system (Lunenburg 2010:2, and Naidu et al. 2008:78)



According to Lunenburg (2010:2) there are four kinds of inputs from the environment: human resources (which include administrative and staff talent, labour, etc.), financial resources, physical resources (including suppliers, materials, facilities and equipment), and information resources (knowledge, curricula, data and other kinds of information utilized by the school).

The transformation process (Lunenburg 2010:2, 4) involves the internal operation of the organization and its system of operational management, which includes the technical competence of the school administrators and members of staff, their plans of operation and their ability to cope with change. Through technology and administrative functions the inputs undergo a transformation process: in schools the interaction between the learners and teachers is part of the transformation or learning process by which learners become educated citizens capable of contributing to society.

According to Lunenburg (2010:2) it is the Principal's task to ensure that the inputs to the school eventually produce the desired outputs. In social systems outputs are the attainment of goals or objectives of the school district, and are represented by the products, results, outcomes or accomplishments of the system. Outputs usually include one or more of the following: growth and achievement levels of the learners and teachers, learner drop-out rates, employee performance and turnover, school-community relations and job satisfaction.

Lunenburg (2010:3) considers feedback as being crucial to the success of the school operation. Negative feedback can be used to correct deficiencies in the transformation process or the inputs, or both – this will in turn have an effect on the school's future outputs. He sees the environment surrounding the school as the social, political and economic forces that impinge on the organization.

The following scenario can develop when the input-transformation-output process described above is applied to an underperforming school: the input could take on the form of support by the CT to the school (by e.g. brining in Curriculum Advisors to assist teachers with effective curriculum delivery). The transformation process could involve issues such as the empowerment of the SMT, the SIP being developed, implemented and monitored, and the school become more and more basically functional, such as decrease in absenteeism levels. The output following such a process could entail that the underperforming schools develops into a self-managing institution.

Zmuda, Kuklis and Kline (2004:42 – 45) embrace systems thinking as a core element of what they call the "competent system". In a competent system teachers and administrators

constantly ask the question: "*Is this the best way to achieve our purpose as a school"* and are committed to actively seeking out the answers through conversation and action research. (This fundamental question emphasizes the importance of continuous reflection, as discussed in par. 2.2.3 and stresses that qualitative improvement has to be sought through constant self-examination.) These authors come to the conclusion that a competent system requires constant conversation among trusted colleagues about how to improve the system's purpose. The intent is to get to the root of the problem and to consider how solutions to a particular problem could inform instructional practices of other teachers.

Zmuda *et al*. (2004:45 – 46) stress the importance for administrators and teachers to see that each school is a unique and complex living system with a purpose. For this reason, these people need to apply systems thinking: to constantly examine the elements of a system to contemplate the whole, interrelate the various elements, discern the patters and think through how to redesign the patters for learning and growth. In a competent system assumptions are short-lived as there is constant critical examination of established practices to determine how and if they serve the core beliefs. The viewpoint of these authors strengthens the concept of the school as a learning organization (see par. 2.2.2).

2.4 MODELS FOR WHOLE-SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT

In this section I will discuss two models for WSD. I do recognize that other models on WSD exist within South Africa, but not all such sources can be included in a literature review. I selected these two as they have been developed and implemented in South Africa, and therefore take the South African landscape as a developing nation into consideration. Furthermore, both of these models have been tested and tried within the South African context, and have proven to assist in uplifting and developing dysfunctional schools, schools in impoverished areas, as well as those in rural settings. In addition, these models are also rooted in the WSE approach (see par. 2.5 – which ties up with WSD), and take SSE, SIP as well as District support into consideration.

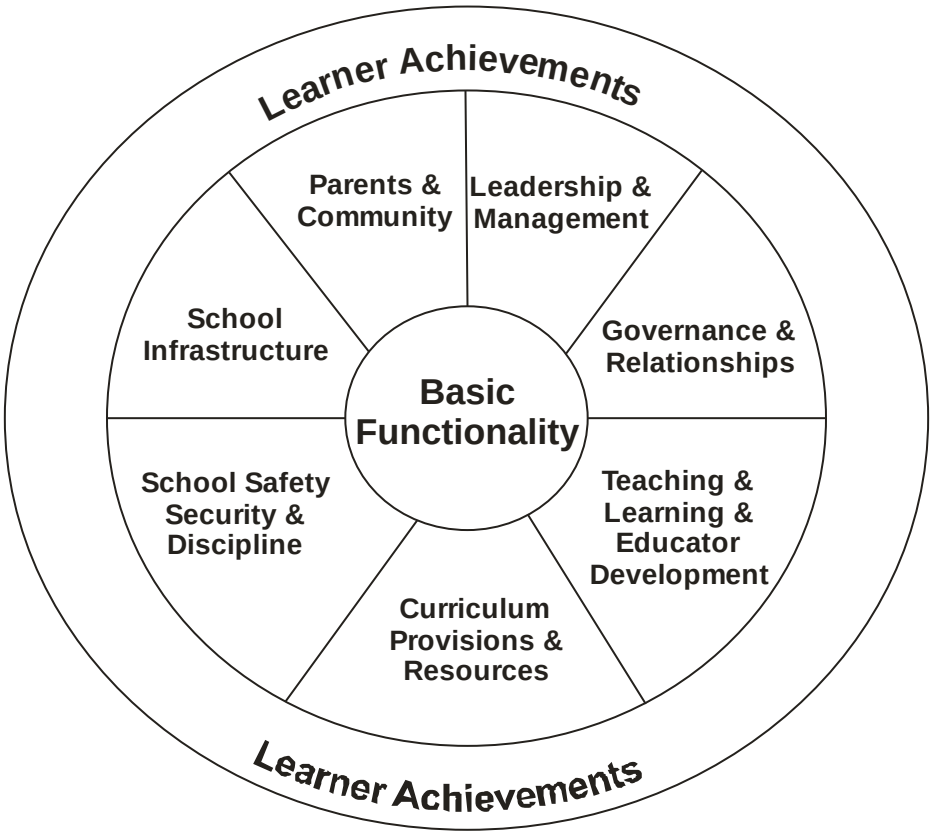
2.4.1 The General Motors South Africa Foundation's model for whole-school development

The General Motors South Africa Foundation (GMSAF) launched the *Learning Schools Initiative* in 2003 in Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape Province, against the background of school engagement, school transformation and improvement, as well as approaches and possibilities in these regards. These efforts culminated in a model they developed for WSD

and WSE, trusting that it would contribute to a deepened understanding of school development in South Africa (Westraad 2011:10). The model also attempted to address the gap between the abundance of literature on the "*what"* of WSD, and the very limited research on the *how* thereof, particularly within the South African context (Westraad 2011:11).

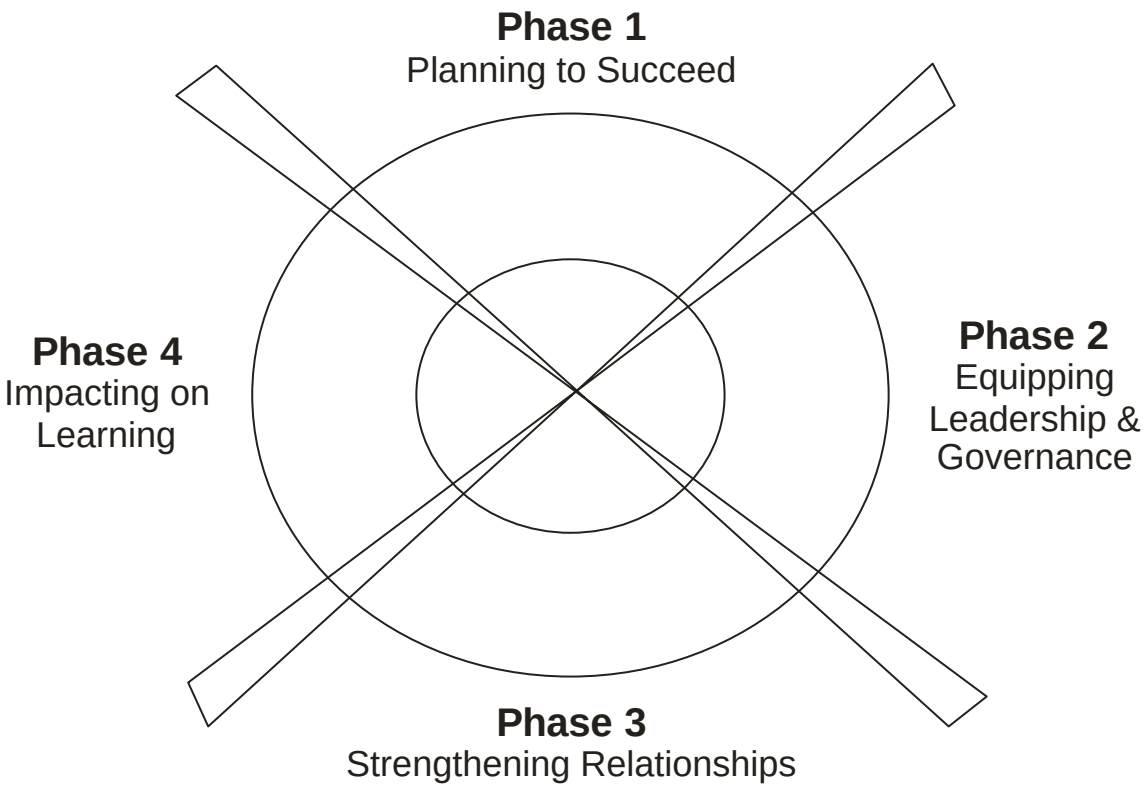
During the initial phase of the *Learning Schools Initiative* the GMSAF team structured the nine areas identified in the National WSE Policy as a wheel, as depicted in figure 2.3. In this diagram basic functionality is situated in the cog as the driving force of WSD. Their argument was that if a school is not functional, everything needs to be investigated in making sure that the bare essentials would be in place before focusing on other key areas of development. The outer rim of the wheel indicated the ultimate effect of all school improvement initiatives: improved learner achievement (Westraad 2011:11)

Figure 2.3: The nine focus areas of whole-school evaluation (Westraad 2011:11)



Based on what was piloted at school level, GMSAF's model for WSD structured itself around four different phases of evaluation and development: planning to succeed; equipping leadership and governance; strengthening relationships, and impacting on learning. These phases provided guidelines for schools and those working with them to obtain greater clarity on what needed to be undertaken at various stages to allow WSD to take root. While it was found that a model structured on phases provided guidelines to schools and agencies, interventions from different phases could be undertaken simultaneously. For example, teaching and learning interventions could be introduced at the same time as leadership training (Westraad 2011:12).

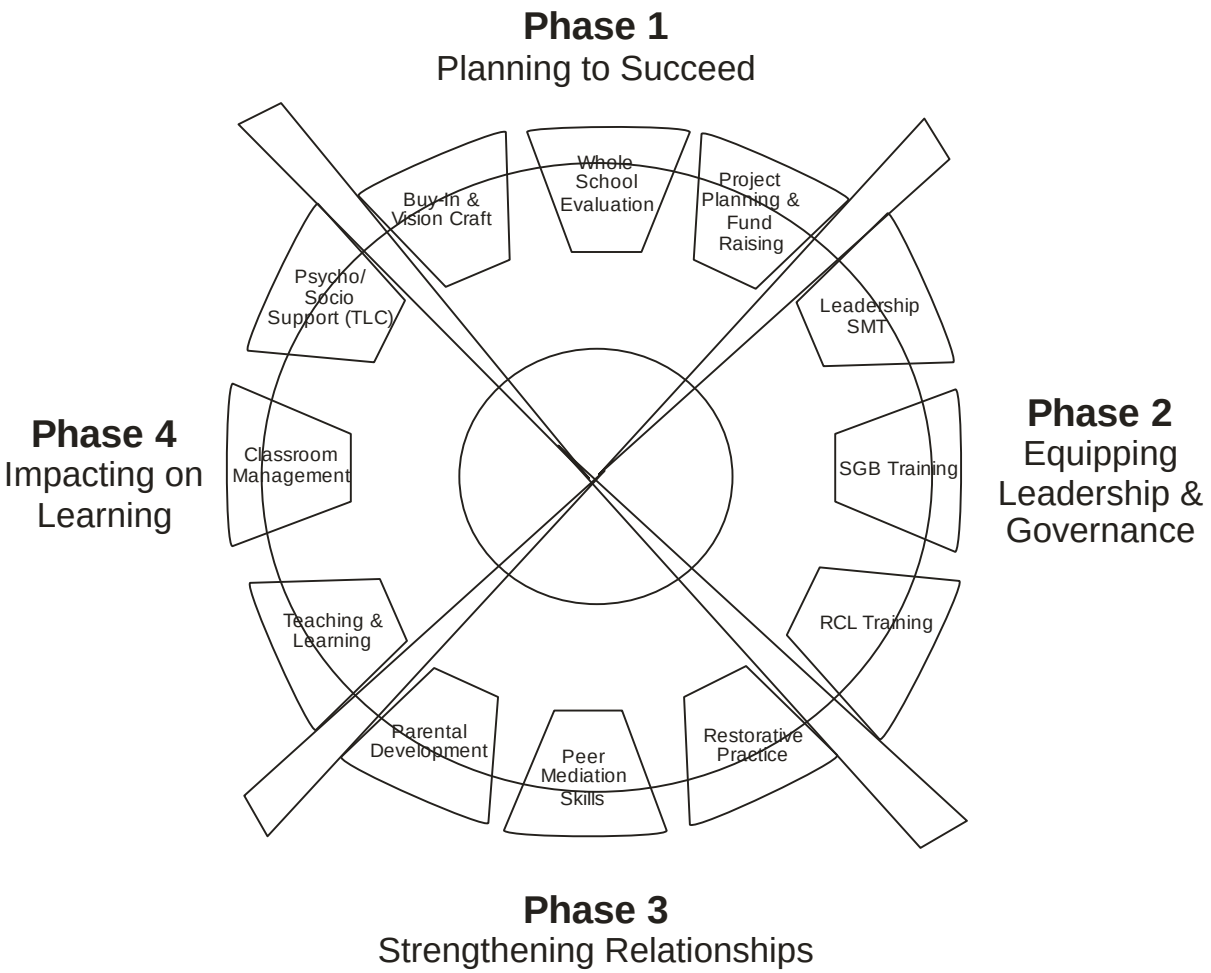
Figure 2.4: The different phases of the GMSAF school development model (Westraad 2011:12)



The above diagram depicting the four phases of the GMSAF's school development model was further refined by identifying particular interventions that could occur in each phase of the school development model. Westraad (2011:13) made it explicit that these interventions were specific programmes and/or initiatives that GMSAF developed in response to identified needs in particular areas across a range of schools which they supported under the

programme. She further emphasized that these interventions were not set recipes that had to be implemented at all schools, but they needed to be implemented according to a needs-based response.

Figure 2.5: Interventions within each phase of school development (Westraad 2011:13)



Westraad (2011:14) summarized the explanation of the GMSAF's model for school development by linking the phases and interventions with the nine areas of WSE and the SIP: She stated that the SIP needed to include both the WSD areas identified through the School Self-Evaluation (SSE) process [par. 2.5.2] and the teacher development areas identified through the Performance Measurement Assessments. In addition, she highlighted the fact that the SIP had to be a working document that clearly guided the school in its development, rather than being just a plan compiled for the sake of compliance. According to her, a well-structured SIP needed to show mechanisms that would sustain initiatives over time, and indicate the person(s) responsible for driving each component.

The GMSAF model for WSD underlines the necessity for schools to undertake SSE based on the 9 focus areas of WSE, and to incorporate this with the Performance Measurement

Assessments of the staff when developing the SIP. The discussion also points out the importance to "tailor-make" the interventions at specific schools, and to refrain from the "one-size-fits-all" approach. However, the model stresses the importance to attend to basic functionality as a first priority when intervening at underperforming schools, as all other forms of support and development will be impaired if a school is not basically functional.

2.4.2 Joint Education Trust's Systemic School Improvement Model

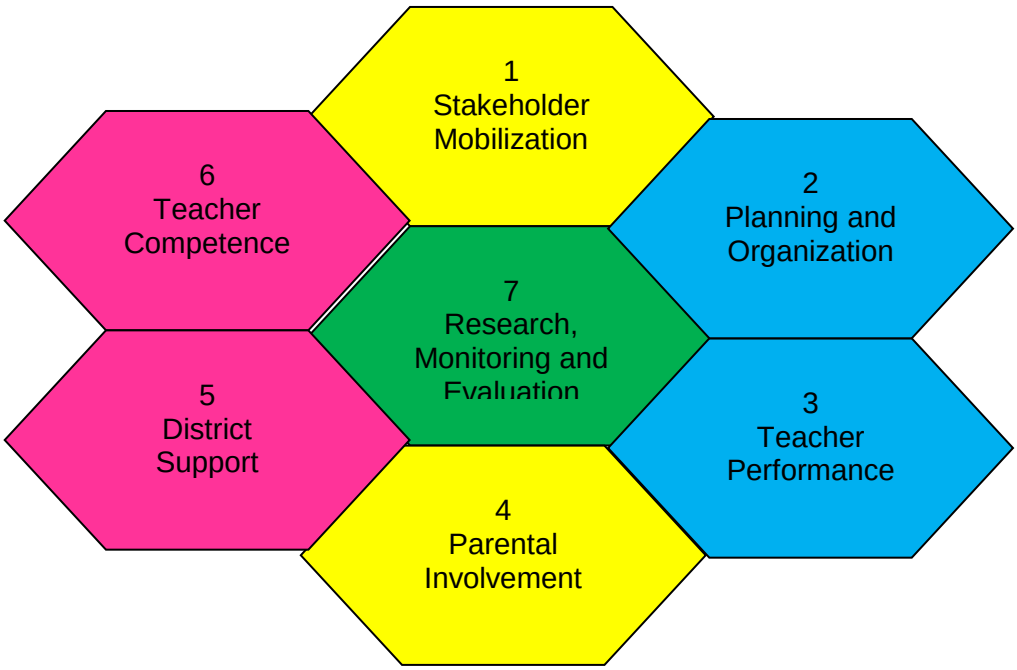
Flowing from lessons and experiences gathered from their interventions with school improvement projects in South Africa, Joint Education Trust (JET) devised a systemic school improvement model which has been implemented in 856 schools in Limpopo, and in 63 schools in North West and the Eastern Cape. The key assumption underlying the model is that educational outcomes will improve if teachers are effective and the teaching and learning environments are supported by effective school organisation, community involvement, and district support and monitoring.

There are five outcomes that the project aims to achieve:

- Improved support and monitoring of schools by districts;
- Increased community involvement;
- Improved functionality of schools as organizations;
- Increased teacher competence and performance, and
- Increased learning and educational outcomes (Khosa 2010:9).

The model has seven components, which are discussed in detail below (Khosa 2010:9):

Figure 2.6: Joint Education Trust's Systemic School Improvement Model (Khosa 2010:9)



- *Stakeholder mobilisation*

According to the Development Bank of Southern Africa [DBSA] (2009), it is vital to forge a coalition of community and development practitioners in order to shift development processes from planning for people to planning with people. To this end, it advocates a participatory process involving all stakeholders in planning and implementing projects (2010:9).

Flowing from this, the model employs a Development Charter (DC) developed by the DBSA to identify school improvement challenges through the eyes of the relevant communities, and mobilise community stakeholders into supporting the improvement programme. The DC process is based on the notion of risk divestment, i.e., passing the responsibility for development from government to the signatories of the development agreement, and committing leaders of various participating organisations and groupings to binding agreements. The DC incorporates a set of project-aligned agreements and commitments over and above the traditional tenets of community participation.

The envisaged outcomes of the DC process are:

- Educational Social Compacts among the various stakeholders;
- A DC for each school community (teachers, management, parents, local authorities, shop stewards and learners);
- A Circuit DA developed and adopted by the education officials (circuit, district and the province), representatives of school communities, councillors and teachers' unions, and
- Implementation and monitoring of the Social Compact process by Social Compact forums (Khosa 2010:10).

- *Planning and organisation*

This component seeks to improve the functioning of schools as organisations. In underperforming school environments, effective teachers and talented learners have no chance of engaging in meaningful learning. This component targets the school management team, which is viewed as the hub of curriculum delivery activities in the school and the broader social developmental elements outside the school. It is thus concerned with the technical operation of the school (Khosa 2010:10). In the JET intervention model, this component is further divided into three subcomponents: curriculum management, strategic planning, and financial management.

- The curriculum management subcomponent is designed around the following outcomes:
  - ✓ regular monitoring of curriculum delivery by school management teams (SMTs);
  - ✓ building an SMT educator development and support mechanism;
  - ✓ identifying the gaps and deficits in schools, and providing support by districts and SMTs, and
  - ✓ curriculum delivery targets formulated by districts and SMTs, based on common assessments.

- The school strategic planning subcomponent is concerned with crafting a clear improvement plan for the school. It also starts by auditing challenges in the schools, but is restricted to internal stakeholders (teachers, heads of department, and principals). The anticipated outcomes of this subcomponent are:
  - ✓ Individual school improvement profiles outlining successes, challenges, and proposed solutions;
  - ✓ Individual school improvement plans, including targets, monitoring plans, and agreements between the schools and the district;
  - ✓ Cluster-level support systems for implementing the school improvement plans, with SMTs helping to compile school-specific progress reports with a view to taking advantage of peer and expert support, provided by the district and JET;
  - ✓ School monitoring reviews by district and circuit officials which monitor implementation of the strategic plans; and
  - ✓ Education dialogue programmes, including seminars at cluster level, newsletters and action research by teachers among project and non-project schools (Khosa 2010:11).

- The financial management component of the programme is aimed at improving budgeting, expenditure controls, and reporting. Schools are gradually gaining spending authority either by becoming Section 21 schools or no-fee schools. The envisaged outcomes of this component are:
  - ✓ Proper financial management;
  - ✓ Adequate budgets that cover the key programmes in the schools;
  - ✓ Acceptable financial reporting;
  - ✓ More schools acquiring Section 21 status, and
  - ✓ Increasing the number of schools with unqualified financial statements (Khosa 2010:11).

- *Teacher performance*

Teacher performance is a complex issue as it is influenced by factors such as teacher characteristics (knowledge, skills, ethos and motivation), classroom characteristics, learner characteristics, and school features. This component of the intervention model seeks to ensure that teachers:

- ✓ are aware of the teaching goals which they need to pursue;
- ✓ embrace their agency in the learning process;
- ✓ focus teaching on learning outcomes;
- ✓ have access to efficient curriculum delivery systems and resources, and
- ✓ are excited about teaching. (Khosa 2010:11)

Maths, Science and English teachers are provided with curriculum planning and delivery materials, school support visits and cluster-level activities. The curriculum materials include learning programmes, work schedules, lesson plans and assessment tasks. The envisaged outcomes are that:

- ✓ All teachers implement an effective curriculum delivery system including the full implementation of annual work schedules and common assessments;
- ✓ All schools cover the curriculum for each year as well as the required amount and quality of written work;
- ✓ Teachers reflect daily on the effectiveness of their teaching, and
- ✓ Teachers monitor and assess learner performance as per the curriculum policy (Khosa 2010:12).

- *Teacher competence*

Teacher competence refers to teachers' subject knowledge and teaching skills. Without these attributes, teachers cannot teach effectively, even if all the required school, classroom and learner factors are in place. A series of seminal studies conducted in the United States found that students taught by an effective teacher make three times as much progress than students taught by ineffective teachers. These effects are cumulative, with learners taught by effective teachers moving further and further ahead while those taught by ineffective teachers lag further and further behind.

In South Africa, not much research has been done on teacher competence, particularly content knowledge. Sample studies indicate that the subject knowledge of many teachers is deficient. Their project model requires teachers to play an active role in monitoring, planning

and facilitating their own professional development. In line with this goal, the envisaged outcomes of this subcomponent are to:

- ✓ Compile subject knowledge profiles of teachers and subject advisors in maths, science and languages;
- ✓ Compile teacher allocation plans for all schools;
- ✓ Develop circuit-level teacher development plans;
- ✓ Devise a long-term teacher development strategy for the circuit, and
- ✓ Design and implement responsive teacher development projects (Khosa 2010:13).

- *District support*

The role of districts in provincial education systems is to support schools with resources, systems, and professional development, and monitor their utilisation of inputs and achievement of targets. However, the understanding of this role and how to discharge it differs from one province to the other, and among various districts within the same province. There is no common framework for staffing, resourcing and programming districts. Despite these variances, districts have a vital role to play in sustainable systemic school improvement programmes.

District support is provided at two levels: the district office and the circuit involved in the project. It is aimed at providing additional capacity for planning and programming school support and monitoring activities, and co-ordinating and integrating project activities with those of the district. The support also enables district directors to devote more time to the projects (Khosa 2010:14)

To achieve these objectives, the projects engage full-time education development facilitators who:

- ✓ Serve as a counterpart to district director in implementing the project;
- ✓ Plan and oversee the implementation of the project;
- ✓ Work with the District Director to co-ordinate the inputs of district officials, teachers' unions, and technical assistants;
- ✓ Conduct research and manage knowledge relevant to the project, and provide educational inputs to the schools;
- ✓ Work with the DD to report back to funders and stakeholders, and
- ✓ Work with provincial departments to raise additional funds.

The anticipated outcomes of the district intervention are:

- ✓ Improved school support and monitoring;
- ✓ Improved communication and co-operation among stakeholders in the circuit;
- ✓ Effective implementation of the project;
- ✓ Mobilisation of additional financial and non-financial resources from the project partners, and
- ✓ Achievement of the project outcomes.

- *Parental involvement*

Parent involvement has diminished since the introduction of SGBs and the consolidation of 'community schools' into state schools. Before the passing of the Schools Act in 1996, parents used to help build schools and provide other resources which reinforced their involvement. In the new democratic era, there has been much talk about parents' inability to contribute to their children's education due to high levels of illiteracy. New ways have to be found of increasing parents' involvement in schools, particularly in rural areas. There is no doubt that effective parental involvement in Model C and private schools makes a major contribution to their children's educational performance. Rural and township parents need to become interested and involved in their children's education. To this end, the JET schooling improvement model includes a parent mobilisation programme, which includes setting up home study groups monitored by parents and developing a practical guide on how parents should support their children's learning (Khosa 2010:15).

The envisaged outcomes of this component are:

- ✓ An evidence-based improvement in the involvement of parents in their children's education, demonstrated by increased monitoring of home study, number of completed homework exercises, school visits by parents, and parents' interest in school reports, and
- ✓ Improved learner behaviour at school and after school, including their management of after-school time, homework, study, and reading for enjoyment (Khosa 2010:16).

- *Monitoring and evaluation*

This is a vital component of the project model. It serves as the compass and gauge of the programme, and therefore a major lever for change. It has two main imperatives: learning from the implementation of the project, and accounting for progress made towards achieving

the project outcomes. The learning imperative is achieved through on-going monitoring conducted by the project schools and district officials (Khosa 2010:16).

In summary, the JET Systemic School Improvement Model has significant implications for the research study. As with the GMSAF model, it refers to a *plan* (which in the context of the text implies the SIP, but is not called by that name). It also emphasizes the importance of learning (refer to par. 2.2.2). The document also distinguishes the Circuit Office as a sub-component of the District Office. However, when referring to support that the District provides to schools, the concept of the CIP does not form part of the discussion at all. Furthermore, there is no reference to how the support should be undertaken – once again, leaving a gap in literature, which this research intends to address.

In the above discussion, WSE has been referred to numerous times. The following section introduces this concept and explains its relevance and importance towards WSD.

2.5 WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION

The National Policy on WSE (Republic of South Africa, Department of Education 2001:24) explains that WSE is "a collaborative, transparent process of making judgements on the holistic performance of schools that is measured against agreed national criteria." Naidu *et al.* (2008:50) elaborate on this, explaining that

> Whole-School Evaluation is an external accountability system. It evaluates the effectiveness of the whole school on a continuous basis. At the core of the evaluation criteria is the quality of teaching and learning. The evaluation is conducted by officials from the Regional/District/Area Office who are experts in general school management, leadership, governance, curricula, staff development and financial planning. It is conducted at any time of the year after the first phase of internal evaluation has been implemented.

The implications of the above for WSD and how WSE links to WSD are explained in the following discussion.

2.5.1 Understanding the National Policy on Whole-School Evaluation

In the South African education context the National Policy on WSE has been designed to ensure that school evaluation is carried out according to an agreed-upon national model. The policy sets out the legal basis for school evaluation, its purposes, what is to be evaluated, who can carry out evaluations and how the evaluation process should be

administered and funded. It also provides guidance on how evaluation should be conducted (Van Der Westhuizen 2002:318).

The Policy is aimed at improving the overall quality of education in South African schools. The main purpose of the Policy is to facilitate improvement of school performance through approaches characterized by partnership, collaboration, mentoring and guidance. (This approach underlines the importance of participation, inclusion and valuing all relevant stakeholders, as discussed in par. 2.1.1.) The same guidelines, evaluation criteria and instruments used by the accredited WSE supervisors can by carried out by schools to perform SSE (Republic of South Africa, Department of Education 2001a:7).

There are nine key areas of evaluation that every institution of learning in South Africa is subjected to during WSE (Republic of South Africa, Department of Education 2001a:13):

- Basic functionality;
- Leadership, management and communication;
- Governance and relationships;
- Quality of teaching and learning, and educator development;
- Curriculum provision and resources;
- Learner achievement;
- School safety, security and discipline;
- School infrastructure, and
- Parents and community.

According to the document, *"Evaluation guidelines and criteria for whole-school evaluation policy"* (Republic of South Africa, Department of Education 2001b) each of the nine key areas of evaluation listed above has a specific purpose it aims to address, certain criteria against which it measures a school's performance in relation to the specific key area, and various sources of information that would supply the information for making the evaluation. During my period of employment as Circuit Manager, I developed the following table based on this information, which summarizes the nature of each of the key areas of evaluation. This table, based on Department of Education 2001b, integrates what the purpose of each focus area is, and lists the critical questions that whole-school evaluators ask in order to make a judgement on how well a school is doing in relation to a specific focus area. It also mentions specific sources of information which need to be consulted and examined in order to support the judgement made by the evaluators.

Table 2.1: A breakdown of the nine areas of Whole-School Evaluation (based on Republic of South Africa, Department of Education 2001b)

CRITERIUM 1: BASIC FUNCTIONALITY OF THE SCHOOL		
PURPOSE	**CRITICAL QUESTIONS**	**SOURCES OF INFORMATION**
To judge whether the school can function effectively and efficiently and realize its educational and social goals.	➢ Does the school have sufficient policies and procedures in place to allow it to run smoothly? ➢ Does the school have effective procedures in dealing with absence, lateness and truancy? ➢ Do the learners respond to the school in a positive way, contributing to an ethos that is orderly and work oriented? ➢ How well behaved are learners?	▪ School policies and procedures ▪ Staff job descriptions ▪ Responses from parents & learners ▪ The principal's statement ▪ Attendance records ▪ Discipline register ▪ School self-evaluation form ▪ Discussion with parents and learners ▪ Observations in classrooms and on playgrounds
CRITERIUM 2: LEADERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION		
PURPOSE	**CRITICAL QUESTIONS**	**SOURCES OF INFORMATION**
To assess the effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school	➢ Does the school have clear direction? ➢ Are the policies and procedures helping the school attain its aims?	▪ School's vision and mission statements ▪ School's aims ▪ School's policies ▪ School's management structure ▪ School's organogram ▪ School budget ▪ Financial reports ▪ Auditing processes ▪ School's statistical information ▪ School's development plan ▪ Procedures for communication with stakeholders ▪ Minutes of staff meetings ▪ Minutes of SGB meetings ▪ Minutes of SMT meetings ▪ Minutes of RCL meetings ▪ Minutes of LAC meetings ▪ Discussions with learners and staff ▪ Job descriptions of SMT members ▪ Logbook of school visitors

CRITERIUM 3: GOVERNANCE AND RELATIONSHIPS		
PURPOSE	**CRITICAL QUESTIONS**	**SOURCES OF INFORMATION**
To assess the effectiveness of the SGB in giving the school strategic direction.	➢ Is the SGB fully constituted and operational? ➢ Does the SGB provide the school with clear strategic direction? ➢ Are the policies of the SGB helping the school to attain its aims and contributing to learners' learning? ➢ What systems does the SGB have for monitoring and evaluating the quality of education provided by the school?	▪ Schools' mission statement ▪ School's aims ▪ Minutes and reports of SGB meetings ▪ Minutes of RCL meetings ▪ School's budget ▪ School's financial plan ▪ Discussion with SGB members ▪ Discussion with RCL members ▪ School Development Plan ▪ Discipline record book ▪ SGB Constitution ▪ Year/ Term plan ▪ Annual Financial report
CRITERIUM 4: QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING AND EDUCATOR DEVELOPMENT		
PURPOSE	**CRITICAL QUESTIONS**	**SOURCES OF INFORMATION**
To estimate the quality of teaching and the educator development	➢ How well do educators plan and do they have high enough expectations? ➢ Are the educators knowledgeable about the subject? ➢ Do the educators employ appropriate teaching strategies for all learners? ➢ Do the educators manage the class well and create a good working environment? ➢ Do the educators assess the learners in such a way as to help their teaching to be effective? ➢ Do the educators make good use of homework? ➢ Have the educators any means of evaluating the success of the lesson?	▪ Lesson observation ▪ LA policies and programmes ▪ Educators' plans ▪ Educators' preparation books ▪ Educators' time tables ▪ Assessment policy ▪ Educator's record of learners ▪ Learners' notebooks ▪ Examples of homework ▪ Displays of learners' work ▪ Record of educators' qualifications and subsequent training ▪ School development plan ▪ Learners' portfolios ▪ Educators' portfolios ▪ Evaluation records of school
CRITERIUM 5: CURRICULUM PROVISION AND RESOURCES		
PURPOSE	**CRITICAL QUESTIONS**	**SOURCES OF INFORMATION**
To evaluate the quality of the curriculum and how closely it	➢ Does the school curriculum follow any national and local curriculum guidelines?	▪ The school curriculum ▪ The school's management plan

matches the needs of the pupils and any national or local requirements. *A judgement has also to be made on the range and quality of other activities that enhance the curriculum.*	➢ Is planning for the curriculum well-structured and effective? ➢ Do the tests and assessments grow naturally from the curriculum and are they used to aid planning? ➢ Is the curriculum supported by appropriate resources?	▪ The whole-school curriculum plans ▪ Learners' notebooks ▪ Learners' tests ▪ LA meeting minutes ▪ LA reports ▪ Assessment policies ▪ Analysis of learners' achievements ▪ Discussions with principal ▪ Discussions with learners ▪ Discussions with educators ▪ Discussions with parents ▪ School Development plan ▪ School mission statement
CRITERIUM 6: LEARNER ACHIEVEMENT		
PURPOSE	**CRITICAL QUESTIONS**	**SOURCES OF INFORMATION**
To assess the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that learners have acquired?	➢ Are the learners reaching the expected outcomes for their age and ability in the different learning areas and different phases of the school system? ➢ Are the pupils learning effectively and making as much progress as could be expected in the light of their known prior achievements?	▪ Samples of learners' work ▪ Sample of learners' reading (primary school) ▪ Educator assessment records ▪ Records of learners' self-assessments ▪ Interviews with learners about their work ▪ Wall display of learners' work ▪ Results from competitions entered into ▪ Results from extra-curricular activities ▪ Evidence collected from classroom observations ▪ School's public examination results ▪ School's test results ▪ School's CASS results ▪ Discussions with staff members ▪ Discussion with parents ▪ Learner portfolios ▪ Leaner class work ▪ Learner homework ▪ Learner assignments

		▪ Learners projects ▪ Educator portfolio ▪ Educator achievement records
CRITERIUM 7: SCHOOL SAFETY, SECURITY AND DISCIPLINE		
PURPOSE	**CRITICAL QUESTIONS**	**SOURCES OF INFORMATION**
To evaluate the extent to which the school knows about legislation and implements it; to check that the school is secure and the learners are safe; to evaluate the effectiveness of the school's disciplinary procedures	➢ Does the school have appropriate regulations and procedures designed to protect learners? ➢ Does the school have appropriate procedures and regulations to ensure the health and safety of the learners? ➢ If learners need to board are the arrangements for boarding satisfactory?	▪ School policies on welfare and safety of learners ▪ Procedures for dealing with learners in difficulty ▪ Procedures for dealing with learners causing difficulties ▪ Records of accidents ▪ Records of breaches of security ▪ Records of emergency practices ▪ Sanctions used in relation to learners ▪ Code of Conduct for learners ▪ Health and safety measures ▪ Regulations re the supervision of learners on school visits ▪ Regulations re child protection ▪ Regulations re boarding (if applicable) ▪ Discussions with educators ▪ Discussions with learners ▪ Discussions with parents ▪ Discussions with welfare services ▪ School security systems ▪ Pastoral care for learners ▪ Class rules
CRITERIUM 8: SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE		
PURPOSE	**CRITICAL QUESTIONS**	**SOURCES OF INFORMATION**
To assess to what extend the school has sufficient and appropriate staff, resources and accommodation for its purpose.	➢ Has the school sufficient resources, e.g. finance, staff, accommodation, learning materials, equipment and access to support services? ➢ Are the above used efficiently? ➢ What systems are there for monitoring and evaluating the use of the school's total resources and the quality of education provided?	▪ School's records of educators ▪ School budget, income & expenditure ▪ Number and range of books in library and elsewhere ▪ Amount and suitability of

		equipment ▪ Observation of accommodation and premises ▪ School Development Plan ▪ School Self-Evaluation form
	CRITERIUM 9: PARENTS AND THE COMMUNITY	
PURPOSE	**CRITICAL QUESTIONS**	**SOURCES OF INFORMATION**
To gauge the extent to which the school encourages parental and community involvement in the education of the learners and how it makes use of their contributions to support learners' progress	➢ How effectively does the school communicate with parents? ➢ Are parents involved in the management of the school in any way? ➢ Does the school provide any education for parents? ➢ How well do parents respond to and do they contribute to learners' learning? ➢ What does the school do to improve links with the community? ➢ To what extend does the school encourage its learners to respect the local environment? ➢ To what extend does the school serve the needs of the local community?	▪ Discussion with departmental officials ▪ Discussion with other people who have contact with the parents ▪ Discussion with parents ▪ Responses to questionnaires ▪ School documentation relating to contact with parents ▪ Recent information from parental committees ▪ Learners' work sent to parents ▪ Guidance issues to parents ▪ Written evidence of school's links with the local community ▪ Other evidences showing links with the parental community

2.5.2 School Self-Evaluation

The concept of SSE has been raised in the discussion above and warrants further elaboration for the purpose of the theoretical framework of this research study. SSE means that the school (internally) undertakes the process of WSE, using the same instruments and criteria contained in the official documentation of the Department. According to Van Der Westhuizen (2002:319) SSE forms an integral part of the WSE process, and is a function that is carried out by the school itself. The WSE Policy states that SSE also has to be carried out as a preparation for external WSE (Republic of South Africa, Department of Education 2001:20).

On the other hand, Naidu *et al.* (2008:49) explain that SSE must also be executed to "*develop a school plan … in order to grow a culture of self-improvement…"* – which refers to the annual SIP (see par. 2.6). This statement makes a strong link to the discussion in par. 2.2.2, where the importance of the school as a learning organization within the context of WSD, was highlighted. It emphasizes that the SIP forms the basis for continuous school improvement, as well as serving as a monitoring instrument to measure progress towards specific areas of WSD. Westraad (2011:4) concurs with this, explaining that the WSE Policy provides the framework for schools to conduct SSE on an annual basis, and the results thereof have to feed into the SIP which the school has to action and monitor.

2.5.3 The link between whole-school evaluation policy and systems approach

The National Policy on WSE (Republic of South Africa, Department of Education 2001a:14 – 15) explains the various inputs, processes and outputs that are undertaken at school level, and for which schools have to account. The mention of "inputs, processes and outputs" brings the discussion of the school as an open system in par. 2.3.2 to the fore, and highlights the stance of the National Department of Education that WSE indeed strengthens the view of the school as an open system. The following paragraphs, taken from the Policy, indicate which issues are respectively viewed as inputs, processes and outputs:

Inputs are those resources with which the school has been provided to execute its task, and include the main characteristics of each grade of learners, the infrastructure, funding and staffing. In this regard, the Policy mentions issues such as physical resources (e.g. classrooms), human resources (professional and support staff) and various forms of funding provided to schools.

Processes describe how the school seeks to achieve its goals. Included in this category are the effectiveness with which schools try to ensure effective governance, leadership and management, safety and security, and the quality of teaching. One such aspect mentioned in the Policy is how the leadership and management is directed to achieve the goals of the school, i.e. how well the school is managed and whether the school has set clear goals towards which it is working. This criterion places specific emphasis on the quality of management and leadership. It also implies that there has to be a plan that the school has set for itself, and which it is pursuing – this plan related to the SIP.

Outputs refer to what the school achieves in terms of academic standards, standards of behaviour and rates of punctuality and attendance. Specific examples in this regard that are highlighted in the Policy are the quality of the learners' responses to teaching (i.e. do the learner achievement results confirm that quality teaching and learning prevails in the school), the standard of learners' behaviour (i.e. how well-mannered and disciplined the learners are), and the safety and security measures the school has in place.

2.6 SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The SIP has been extensively referred during Chapters One and Two, and is a central concept to this research study. In this section the SIP is defined, and sequential steps in developing the document are introduced.

2.6.1 Defining the School Improvement Plan

Naidu *et al.* (2008:66) distinguish between two types of whole-school planning:

- A SIP which they describe as a programme of action that the school develops in responses to findings and recommendations made in the evaluation report, (referring here to the external WSE done by the accredited evaluators from the Department) with a view to effecting improvements in the school's areas of need. They argue that the SIP has to be a year-to-year continuous strategic improvement plan derived from the findings of the evaluation.
- A School Development Plan (SDP) which they describe as a longer-term plan. This plan follows from the school's stated vision and mission and must be reviewed annually to ensure that the school remains "on track".

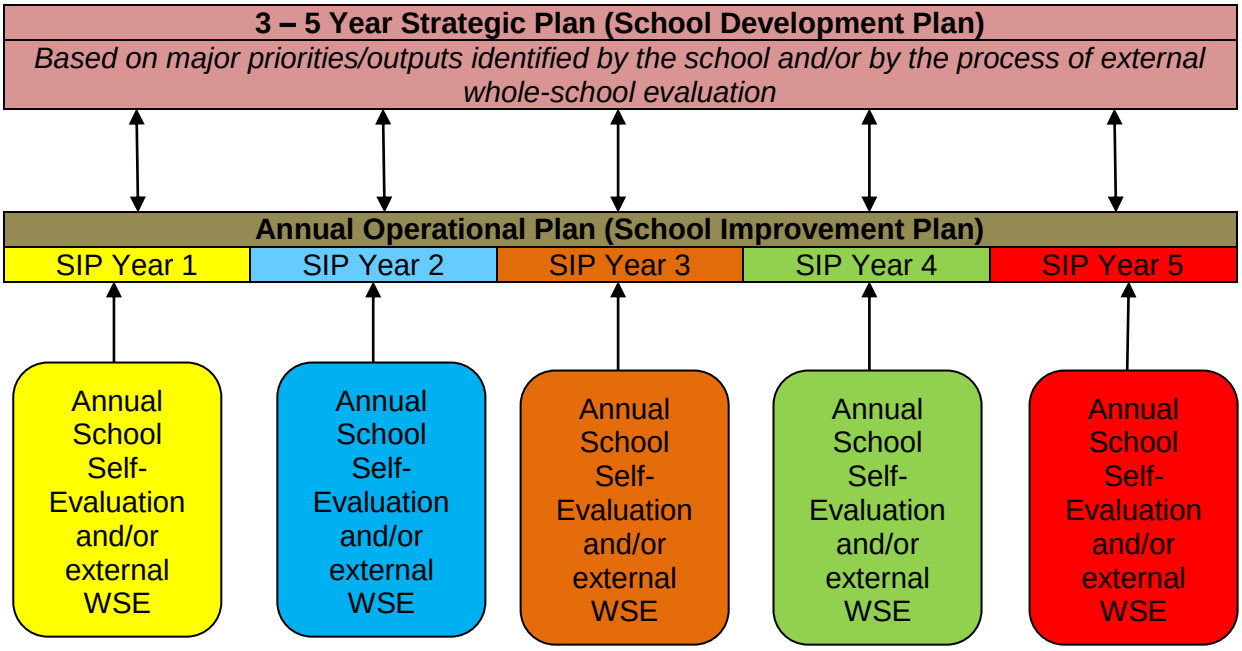
The problem I have with the definition of the SIP based on my involvement in school planning and as a whole-school evaluator is that the definition is limited to addressing the

outcomes of the external WSE process only. The implication of their statement is that the SIP would only be developed if external WSE took place at a school, and that the construction of the SIP would be dependent on external WSE taking place at a school. When one considers that external WSE takes place at high schools once every three years and at primary schools once every five years, it is not possible to define the SIP as a year-to-year improvement plan based solely on the outcomes of the external evaluation.

In addition, their definition does not include the process of SSE (par. 2.5.2) which they did discuss in their book (2008:49). There is also no sound interconnection between the external WSE, internal SSE and the construction of the SIP in their writings. Based on my experience as a trained whole-school evaluator, I would be more comfortable in explaining the SIP as *"a school's annual operational plan based on the findings of the external WSE and/or the school's internal SSE process".*

I agree partially with Naidu *et al.'s* definition of the SDP, in the sense that it refers to a longer-term strategic plan, which ideally would cover a period of three to five years. In such a plan main strategic priorities have to set out, and these need to be translated into specific objectives that have to be addressed by the annual SIPs. Diagram 2.5 below visually depicts how these issues interact with each other to produce a coherent SIP:

Figure 2.7: The interrelationship between the School Development Plan, School Improvement Plan, School Self-Evaluation and Whole-School Evaluation



2.6.2 Developing the School Improvement Plan

A number of models on how to develop/write up a SIP exist in literature. I analysed those of the Department of Education, Kwa-Zulu Natal (2007) and Naidu *et al.* (2008) as these have been written for the South African situation. Although there are a significant number of overlaps between these models, there are also distinctive differences between them. Based on the findings of the analysis, I combined their approaches to construct a guideline that schools in South Africa could use in constructing their SIPs. There are ten distinctive steps that emerged from the analysis, and that need to be followed to ensure that a comprehensive document is developed:

Step one: Establish a committee to oversee the development of the SIP

The Department of Education, Kwa-Zulu Natal (2007:35) refers to this structure as the School Development Committee (SDC) and suggests that it should consist of the Principal (who has to take the lead in this crucial development), a member of the SMT, a representative of the SGB (preferably the chairperson), and an enthusiastic educator. It is the responsibility of this committee to manage and lead the process of SIP development, in conjunction with all relevant stakeholders.

Step two: Identify all stakeholders

The SDC has to ensure that all relevant stakeholders are identified, and ensure their participation in the development of the SIP. There has to be a plan to actively involve them in the event, and to ensure that their inputs are taken into consideration. Such stakeholders would include the teaching and administrative staff at the school, parents, learners and community members.

Step three: Develop a vision, mission and core values

If the school does not have a vision and mission statement in place, the process of developing the SIP would be an ideal opportunity for this aspect to be addressed. The same applies for core values. Should these statements be in place, they need to be studied and analysed as they will provide the strategic direction for the school when undertaking the process of developing the SIP.

Step four: Conduct an audit

The term “audit” has been used in the documents consulted as the traditional “SWOT” analysis, where the stakeholders would do an analysis of the school’s internal strengths and weaknesses, as well as the external opportunities and threats. An aspect I find missing in this discussion, and with which I made considerable progress in developing SIPs (both in my role as Circuit Manager and Principal) is to also base the audit on the nine areas of WSE, which is nothing short of conducting a SSE (as has already been discussed in this chapter).

Step five: Establish priorities

The audit would highlight areas of need that the school would have to address through its SIP. From this list of needs, the school has to identify the most critical challenges it faces, which would constitute priorities that will be planned for in the SIP. The Department of Education, Kwa-Zulu Natal (2007:59) correctly advises that there should be a limited number of priorities – they indicate three per annum.

Step six: Develop a plan of action

In this research study, the “plan of action” has become known as the SIP (although none of the documents consulted explicitly refer to it as such). The literature indicates that the following components need to form the structure of the SIP:

- Action steps to be taken;
- Targets to be met (where applicable);
- Resources needed (in this regard: physical resources such as a fire extinguisher);
- Person(s) responsible (for overseeing the particular action step);
- Deadline (for completion of the particular action step), and
- Budget (the costs involved to enable the action step to be implemented).

Step seven: Implementation of the plan

Once the SIP has been constructed and agreed upon, the various activities (action steps) have to be performed by the person(s) responsible for the task, ensuring that it is dealt with by the due date (deadline).

Step eight: Monitor the plan

Roger (1994:72 – 74) describes monitoring as "*reviewing how well things are going".* As the SIP is being implemented the SDC has to monitor that the plan of action is being adhered to, and that the targets set, tasks allocated to people as well as the proper utilization of resources are achieved according to the plan. Naidu *et al* (2008:70) stress the importance that the SDC should deal with deviations and problems experienced with implementation of the SIP immediately. They also highlight the importance of reporting on progress to the relevant structures, such as the SGB.

Step nine: Evaluate the implementation of the plan

The evaluation of the SIP would take place towards the end of the academic year in which it was implemented. The Department of Education, Kwa-Zulu Natal (2007:72) refers to this event as the "*annual review of the action plan".* A judgement has to be made in terms of what worked and how well it worked, and lessons have to be drawn from the experience for future implementation.

Step ten: Plan for the following year

Once an evaluation of the implementation of the SIP has been completed, the SDC has to initiate the planning for the following year. In this regard they will need to be guided by the outcomes of the evaluation, the priorities of the school as well as lessons learnt from the implementation of the SIP.

My enquiries with key persons in the profession on what takes place in practice often point to the fact that the most basic issues raised in the discussion above, are not adhered to. According to Smit (interview 2012) there is more often than not no steering committee and consultation with stakeholders. This is usually the trend when the SIP is developed for compliance sake, and assigned to one or two individuals to prepare the document on behalf of the school.

Smit further states that clear priorities are often lacking. Action steps, targets and deadlines are not specified and contribute to what MacMaster (2010) describes as *"a nightmare when it comes to implementation*." The fact that there is (either nationally or provincially) no clear template available, adds to the problem. However, from my own experience I made the discovery that, in cases where the SIP was either non-existent or done for compliance's

sake, there is no insight by school managers and teachers that the SIP can indeed be the most powerful resource available to the school to assist them in taking the school to greater heights and continuous improvement. This statement also confirms the importance of systems thinking – if there is no understanding of how all the interrelated parts of the school have to function as a whole to achieve quality learner achievement as its core outcome, all attempts towards WSD will be in vain.

The above discussion on the nature and construction of the SIP begins to give direction to this document as a management tool for continuous school improvement. One aspect that needs to be emphasized is that the discussion revealed the importance of not only focusing on the SIP alone, but to see it within the bigger context of strategic planning for the school, which necessitates the development of the SDP. The SIP as an annual operational tool for the school has to fit into a bigger picture of holistic school development that is derived from a strategic analysis over a longer period of time, such as a five-year plan, the content of which is then translated into annual action plans that contribute towards the desired future the school is aiming for. Against the stated background, the role of the District and Circuit Offices in relation to WSD can now be explored.

2.7 THE ROLE OF THE DISTRICT AND CIRCUIT OFFICES IN RELATION TO WHOLE-SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT

I purposefully combined these two sub-structures of the education system into the title, because, as the following discussion will bring to light, there is limited literature available on these (especially with regard to the Circuit Office), and as they are extensions of each other in the sense that both deal with support to schools, I decided to integrate them in this sub-paragraph.

2.7.1 A general lack of clarity regarding the role of the district office

Having undertaken an intensive search on literature related to the role of the district office (with particular reference to the South African context), I fully agree with Chinsamy (2002:5) that the “education district office has not been researched much, and hence very little has been written on the matter”. It is true that an abundance of literature is available on school management and leadership. However, the role of the district office, and particularly how it interfaces with schools for the purpose of WSD, is a topic that is rarely found in academic writings. The fact that I could draw on only a few authors for the discussion in this sub-paragraph, bears testimony to this statement.

The same author (2002:3) also describes the education district office as “a largely neglected level of the system.” He makes this statement in the context of the failure of the system to successfully implement initiatives aimed at enhancing school improvement. He puts forward the argument that the national and provincial departments of education are successful in formulating policies, but the implementation of such policies by schools have been disappointing. He attributes this failure to the district office, which he correctly places between the provincial department of education and the school, and concludes that “this (the district office) is where the answers seem to be pointing to.”

Taylor and Prinsloo (2005:8) add to the above by stating that in their Quality Learning Project (QLP) the majority of the seventeen districts participating in the project were unsure about what exactly their role was, and add that there is sufficient evidence that the same applies to the majority of districts in the South Africa. They further state that more often than not district offices have not been given the required authority to fulfil their functions, and were also handicapped by the lack of resources required to interact effectively with schools.

2.7.2 District support to schools

It is clear, from international research on school improvement, that once-off initiatives directed at bringing about meaningful and sustainable change, do not work (Chinsamy 2002:2). A holistic view of the school is needed to bring about significant improvements – compare to par. 2.3.2 on the systems theory approach. Furthermore, schools cannot redesign themselves, and districts have an important function to play in establishing the conditions for continuous and long-term improvements at schools.

Chinsamy (2002:4) discusses a two-prong approach for the district to sustain successful school improvement project: (1) putting pressure on schools to perform and (2) balancing maintenance with support to schools.

Regarding the former, Chinsamy (2002:4) emphasizes that a school has to be held accountable for the quality of learning and teaching it offers. He takes the low learner achievement levels into consideration, coupled with the fact that more than a quarter of the country’s budget is allocated to education, and argues that schools are not pressured enough by the departments of education to take responsibility for the performance of their learners. According to him, such pressure can take on various forms, such as calling on

school management to explain poor learner results and demanding school measures for improvement.

However, Chinsamy (2002:4) also argues that if these accountability measures are to be put in place, the Department has an equal obligation to ensure that schools are properly supported to deliver the required quality of learner achievements. He specifically mentions capacity building in the form of training workshops and seminars for SMTs and educators as one of the most significant areas of supporting schools to perform more optimally. This responsibility, according to him – and I fully agree with this statement – has to be undertaken at the level of the district and the circuit office.

The second approach that Chinsamy (2002:4) puts forth for district offices to sustain successful school improvement is balancing maintenance with support which refers to supporting schools in their day-to-day operations, but also assisting them towards WSD. [This also refers to the discussion in par. 2.6.2 about the importance of strategic planning and the development of the SDP.]

My experience with underperforming schools highlighted the importance of the above statements. Any attempt to assist underperforming schools to transform themselves into self-managing institutions is doomed to failure if no accountability systems have been agreed upon and put in place. Should either the CT or SMTs not be fully committed to the transformation agenda and accept responsibility for improvement, WSD cannot take place. The issues of co-accountability and commitment feature so strongly in the development of the model that these are two of the “5 Cs” that underpin the construction of the model – see par. 6.3.6 in this regard.

2.7.3 The role of the district office in school improvement

Chinsamy (2002:6 – 7) identified the following ways in which District Offices in South Africa can contribute towards WSD:

(a) For successful school development and school improvement, there is a need for multiple innovations at the level of the school at the same time, managed in a coordinated and coherent way. The *co-ordination* is beyond the capacity of individual schools, and lies with the District. The District Office needs to control and coordinate all development projects implemented in its schools.

(b) For the District to play the role of initiating and sustaining school improvement, it needs to have a certain degree of *functionality and effectiveness*. A functioning and effective district

has certain basic (minimum) systems, policies and procedures in place to support its schools meaningfully, and in a sustainable way.

(c) The District Office must have a clear *plan for supporting its schools*, a meaningful system of prioritising and sharing the limited resources to enable its schools to have access to relevant officials, resources and facilities, and proper follow-up mechanisms.

(d) The District Office has to be easily *accessible* to, and maintains regular contact with, its schools.

(e) Both *pressure and support* by the District are essential for sustainable school improvement.

(f) School improvement initiatives that make a positive impact on learners' performance are those which are supported by the District Office through the necessary *capacity building* of school level personnel, regular follow-up through classroom and school support visits, systematic monitoring of the implementation of planned programmes, application of appropriate pressure and use of appropriate data.

(g) School improvement initiatives focused on improving learner performance is most effective and sustainable when the District and school leaders see and conduct themselves as *instructional leaders* as opposed to merely administrators.

(h) The District Office needs to value *data* of its schools, continuously updating and managing data and using it to improve learning and teaching in its schools.

(i) The District needs to organize all its activities around its primary function: supporting schools in the *delivery of the curriculum*.

All of the above strategies to support schools imply that the District officials need to be capacitated to perform their responsibilities optimally. Verbeek and Xinwa (2008:8 - 9) list four ways in which the capacity of district and circuit officials can be improved:

- Support and training in basic office procedures and systems, especially with regard to planning and human resource management;
- Computer hardware and software, as well as training in the optimal use of computers, with specific reference to assist them with the monitoring of schools;
- Training of EDOs (the Eastern Cape term for IMGMs in the Western Cape) in organizational development, as well as school monitoring and support, and
- Training in subject content and curriculum leadership to subject and learning area specialists.

The discussions in Chapters Five, Six and Seven point to the fact that CT members (including other District Officials as well) are in urgent need for capacity building. It is required from these officials to lead the process of WSD, and therefore special attention has

to be given to developing them in this regard. The areas identified by Verbeek and Xinwa above represent some of the important topics that need to be addressed in the empowerment of these officials.

Kruger (in Van Deventer, Kruger, Van Der Merwe, Prinsloo and Steinmann 2009:7) puts forth the following plan of action to support and develop schools that are struggling to create a culture of teaching and learning:

(a) There has to be recognition of the importance of building these schools into functional institutions, and this could be achieved by providing support to leadership and administration, keeping close contact with the schools, being consistent in dealing with these schools, helping them to clarify roles and responsibilities, and creating a safer environment.

(b) Schools have to be assisted in recognizing the importance of teaching and learning as their core function.

(c) Organizational capacity has to be strengthened and school leadership enhanced by assisting them with issues such as timetabling and budgeting, as well as hosting workshops for the SMTs.

(d) A sense of urgency and responsibility has to be built at school level. This can be undertaken by e.g. conflict resolution and team building exercises to assist the various stakeholders to work together, and by assisting with schools' development planning so that the stakeholders can be brought together to work on common aims.

I strongly agree that the clarification of the roles and responsibilities of the CT members is very important, as the discussions in the last three chapters of the thesis will point out. Effective leadership from the CT (and District Office) is critical within the context of WSD, and therefore the emphasis on the capacity-building of these officials in the paragraph above. My experience as Circuit Manager has also been that on-site support to institutions that are underperforming is non-negotiable, and is a valuable means of keeping continuous contact with the schools. Whilst I realize and acknowledge that teaching and learning is the core function of schools, I need to stress the importance of assisting underperforming schools in terms of basic functionality, as highlighted by Westraad (2011:11), as a high priority in dealing with these institutions.

2.7.4 The lack of reference to the School Improvement Plan and Circuit Improvement Plan

While the above discussions provide clearer direction for the interaction between the District and Circuit Offices and the schools under their jurisdiction, the role and position of the SIP as a mechanism for the schools to make their needs for development and support explicit, so that the differentiate approach advocated by Taylor and Prinsloo (2005:8) is given meaning and direction, is not addressed at all. Unless each school develops its SIP based on its specific needs and hands this to the District Office for intervention, the District can easily end up dealing with generic issues at schools, and not be involved in assisting schools to make a qualitative improvement (MacMaster, interview 2010). Sister (2004:68) emphasizes this by stating that "In order to succeed in the implementation process, planning by the District needs to be influenced by the needs at school level."

In addition, there is no mention of the CIP as an overall coordinating mechanism to ensure differentiated support to the schools. The only reference I came across that links the improvement plans at the various levels of the education system, was by Westraad (2011:4 – 5) who states that SSE has to take place annually, and result in a SIP that the school puts into action and monitors the implementation thereof: "Once this plan (SIP) is submitted to the school's circuit manager, it is integrated into a CIP, which is in turn integrated into a District Improvement Plan (DIP), and culminates in a Provincial Improvement Plan (PIP)."

Westraad's exposition is useful for this study, as it clearly explains the interaction between the SIP and CIP, and bases the outcomes contained in these improvement plans within the context of WSE and SSE. However, she does not provide any explicit guidelines on how the CIP has to be structured, what information should be contained in it, and how the implementation thereof needs to be conducted. It is in this regard that this research study aims to address these shortcomings and offer explicit recommendations on how CIPs can be developed and implemented.

Coupled with the above is the fact that when one undertakes a search for the term "Circuit Improvement Plan" on the WCED's website (http://wced.wcape.gov.za), there is no specific mention of this document, apart from isolated words such as "improvement" or "circuit" or "circuit team" that appear in the search. If the fact is considered that the WCED is at the time of completing this research study the only Province in the country that has implemented the CT approach [see more detail in Chapter Four], the absence of an official intervention

plan at this level of the system is cause for concern when service delivery to schools, aimed at WSD, is considered.

The issues raised above reveal the relevance of this research study in the context of developing a model for CTs to support SMTs towards WSD. The argument is put forward that the CIP has to be both a management and support tool for CTs to assist SMTs towards WSD. Concern is also raised that without a CIP, schools cannot be supported and developed to higher levels of competence. All these matters underline the urgency to undertake this research project, in order to address the gaps, and contribute towards effective WSD.

2.8 THE ROLE OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAMS WITH REGARD TO WHOLE-SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT

In the previous section the role of the District and CTs in relation to WSD was discussed. This final section of Chapter Two places the role that the other partner – the SMTs – needs to play in relation to WSD, by comparing and discussing the various leadership and management functions and concluding with the roles of SMTs in relation to WSD.

2.8.1 The leadership and management functions of the School Management Team

In the first instance it is necessary to point out that there is a general agreement in literature that the SMT [and especially the Principal] is tasked with the responsibility to lead and manage a school. The difference between these two roles, as well as the functions, tasks, roles and responsibilities assigned to each, are examined in the following paragraphs.

2.8.1.1 Leadership functions

Many authors have written extensively on the difference between leadership and management. The following distinction between the natures of these functions is taken from Clarke (2009a:2):

Table 2.2: A comparison between the functions of leaders and managers (Clarke 2009a:2)

The leader …	The manager …
▪ Innovates ▪ Is an original ▪ Develops ▪ Focuses on people ▪ Inspires trust ▪ Has a long-range view ▪ Asks what and why ▪ Keeps an eye on the horizon ▪ Originates ▪ Challenges the *status quo* ▪ Obeys when appropriate, but thinks ▪ Does the right thing ▪ Learns **Leaders *create* the culture**	▪ Administers ▪ Is a copy ▪ Maintains ▪ Focuses on systems ▪ Relies on control ▪ Has a short-term view ▪ Asks how and when ▪ Has an eye on the bottom line ▪ Imitates ▪ Accepts the *status quo* ▪ Obeys orders without question ▪ Does things right ▪ Is trained **Managers *operate* with the culture**

Van Deventer summarizes the difference between a leader and a manager as follows: Leadership relates to the mission, direction and inspiration, whilst management involves designing and carrying out plans, getting things done and working effectively with people. She concludes that the quality of leadership and management determines the success of failure of a school, and stresses that the School Principal has to be both a leader and a manager.

The same author (2009:71) lists the following tasks that a leader has to perform: A vision of how things could be done better must be created, and such a vision has to be translated into workable agendas or projects. These agendas and projects have to be communicated to generate excitement and commitment in others and the execution of the agendas must be performed in a climate where problem-solving and learning is nurtured. Finally, the leader must persist until the agendas and projects have been accomplished.

The essential tasks that leaders have to perform, according to Maxwell (2002: 49 – 52), are:

- They must define direction;
- They must decide on priorities;
- They must acquire, develop and align resources;
- They must inspire innovation;
- They must drive action;
- They must foster learning, and
- They must build confidence.

The aspect of vision and linking it to leadership abounds in literature on the subject. Nuku (2007: 44 – 45) describes a vision as a shared image of the fundamental purpose of a school and an image of the future state thereof, and as such provides strategic direction for school improvement. He lists three main functions that the vision seeks to achieve: it encourages, enables, empowers, inspires and develops educators to execute their duties effectively and with the necessary professional ethics; it is a cornerstone for decision-making that enables educators to know where they are going to, and it enables educators to focus their energies in achieving sustainable and quality results.

Manning (2002: 79) states that the essence of leadership is influence: the ability to draw followers. Looch *et al.* (2003: 8) view leadership as the determining factor in the quality of desired outcomes. Manning (2002: 26, 39) mentions that integrity is inseparable from leadership – one has to face up to who one is. He emphasizes that leaders need to be skilled relationship-builders and that the followers need to know what the leader expects of them. He underlines the importance of life-long learning as the key to successful leadership, and stresses that leaders have to reflect often on situations, in order to remain successful (2002:32, 78, 86 - 87).

2.8.1.2 Management functions

Members of the SMT as leaders in the school are also charged with specific management tasks that have to be performed in order for development to take place. There is general agreement in literature that SMTs have four management responsibilities: planning, organizing, guiding (leading) and control. These management functions are briefly discusses in the following paragraphs – the discussion being based on Van Deventer 2009: (72 – 77), Nuku (2007:43 – 88), Sister (2004:14 – 16), and Van Der Westerhuizen (2002:164 – 166).

- *Planning:*

Nuku (2007:28) explains that planning is what a manager does to master the future, and that a sequence of activities has to be structured in an orderly fashion to allow effective implementation of the plan. This management task is coupled to the setting of a vision, mission, aims and outcomes (Van Deventer 2009:75). The essential features of planning are the reflection about goals that are set, the consideration of alternatives, utilization of resources, and anticipation of problems that might occur. Management functions such as

policy-formulation, decision-making and problem-solving are central to planning (Van Der Westhuizen 2002:164).

A distinction is made in literature between strategic and operational planning. The former is a long-term plan spanning a period of three to five years, covering all aspects of the school, and is linked to the achievement of the school's vision statement. The role of the Principal in being the driving force for the development and implementation of the strategic plan is strongly emphasized. (Naidu *et al.* 2008:59, Nuku 2007:48, and Flanagan and Finger 2003:305 – 307). The operational plan is a short-term plan, spanning normally a period of one year and includes specific targets for implementation, a budget, performance indicators, and a means of evaluating progress. Naidu *et al.* (2008:66) are the only authors who link the operational plan to the SIP and state that "it should be taken as a year-to-year continuous strategic improvement plan derived from the findings of the (external) evaluation."

- *Organizing:*

McKenna (2000) defines organizing as the planned coordination of the activities of a group of people for the achievement of some common and explicit goal. Such coordination involves the division of labour and function through a hierarchy of authority and responsibility. This management task has three essential features: grouping of tasks, assigning duties, authority and responsibility to people, and determining the relationship between people in order to attain the goals (Van Der Westhuizen 2002:164). Organizing includes the establishment of an organizational structure, delegating and coordinating (Van Deventer 2009:75).

- *Leading (Guiding)*

This management task includes the establishment of relationships, leadership, motivation and communication. Leadership is the personal ability by which the leader stimulates, directs and coordinates group interactions and activities in a given situation to achieve certain goals. A positive organizational climate depends on motivation in the interaction between the manager and the followers (Van Der Westhuizen 2002:165). Conflict management and negotiation skills also resort under this management function (Van Deventer 2009:75).

At this point of the discussion I have to emphasize that although the discussion in par. 2.8.1.1 made a distinction between the roles of a leader on the one hand, and that of a

manager on the other, this third management function (Leading) brings to one's attention the truth of Van Deventer's (2009:68) discussion that the School Principal has to be both a leader and a manager. While leading might be involved with the more "softer issues" of management such as motivating, inspiring and influencing, it is nevertheless recognized as one of the four basic functions that a manager has to perform to achieve the required results.

Manning (2002: 28) argues that both management and leadership involve the same basic thing: the achievement of a specific purpose through other people. This implies that an effective manager should possess leadership skills and an effective leader should demonstrate management skills. Management is therefore a kind of leadership in which the achievement of organizational goals is paramount.

Looch *et al.* (2003: 2) also align themselves with this by stating that management is synonymous with leading and guiding. They maintain that that leading and guiding are universal activities carried out by a person in control of other people's activities, including decision-making and directing activities to achieve set goals. Therefore, management is the all-encompassing activity of leadership.

- Controlling and Evaluating

The fourth and last management function is that of exercising control which involve the formulation of prescriptions of control, observing and evaluating work, and taking corrective action. Assessment, supervision and disciplinary measures are, according to Van Deventer (2009:75) aligned to this management function. Van Der Westhuizen (2002:165-166) states that the exercise of control measures presupposes an analysis of the efficiency of the first three management tasks.

2.8.1.3 A critique of the management functions

The above explanation of the four basic management functions and their sub-categories assisted me as a Principal and Circuit Manager to perform my management responsibilities optimally. However, as I progressed and developed in the management roles I had to perform, I increasingly found the above exposition limiting, and began to realize the need for additional management functions that an education manager needs to be equipped with in order to deal effectively with the modern-day challenges presented to a person holding such an office.

This route of discovery, critical reflection and self-study brought me to the realization that, in order to be an effective education manager in the second decade of the twenty-first century, the following management functions need to be added to the list, and provided for not only in capacity-building workshops, but also in academic literature:

- Information management;
- Project management (my personal view, based on my management experience, is that the SIP and CIP require high-level project management skills to be implemented successfully, and very little reference is made in literature to underline the importance of this statement. I also firmly believe that the SIP and CIP are nothing more than specific projects within the education spectrum – therefore the need for this discipline to be formally recognized in the training of education managers, as explained in greater detail in par. 4.4);
- Time management;
- Management of teaching and learning;
- Change management (already discussed in par. 2.2 of this research study), and
- Stress management.

My second point of critique concerns the location of communication in the traditional view of management functions. This sub-function is always mentioned when Leadership is discussed. The concern I have is that communication has to be placed at the centre of all management functions, starting with planning. If that which is planned is not properly communicated from the very start of a specific project, the entire management process may suffer. In order for everybody to know what will happen, when things will take place, and what the specific duties of specific persons will be, communication has to take place right from the very onset.

My third and final point of critique relates to the fact that authors write comprehensively about the four management functions, but very seldom state *what* is to be managed: what the specific plans are all about. In this regard, I once again raise one of the most central themes of this research study: the SIP. With the exception of Naidu *et al.* (2008:66) – as mentioned in par. 2.8.1.2 above – no other author I came across explicitly linked the formulation of plans to a SIP. Within the context of this chapter focusing on WSD, I am of the strong opinion that any plan at school level, needs to be aimed at the continuous improvement of all aspects of the school, and therefore linking planning (and the other management functions) to the development and implementation of the SIP is a core requirement for the SMT.

2.8.2 The role of the School Management Team with regard to Whole-School Development

The Department of Education, Kwa-Zulu Natal Province (2007:74 – 75) discusses specific functions that the SMTs need to undertake in planning for WSD:

- *Knowledge:* The SMT has knowledge of all facets of the school and are familiar with the directives from the Department. They have to be willing to share such information with the other stakeholders.
- *Experience:* The experience of SMT members *inter alia* in implementing plans should be invaluable to the SDC. The management skills of the SMT will also benefit the process.
- *Expertise:* Very often SMT members have become experts in particular fields and are therefore in a position to share their expertise.
- *Skills:* SMT members need to avail their skills that were developed in specific fields, to the development and implementation of WSD.
- *Encouragement:* SMT members have a key role to play in maintaining a positive atmosphere and provide vision to the SDC and other stakeholders.
- *Communication:* The SMT is the body that needs to communicate the plan to the whole school, and also regularly inform the SDC of progress made in the implementation of the plan.
- *Operational planning:* It will be up to the SMT to work out the details needed to put plans into operations (such as venues, learner involvement, key performance determination).
- *Cooperation:* The SMT can smooth the path of other stakeholders when it comes to accessing resources, information and documentation.
- *Monitoring:* As plans are implemented, progress must be monitored. The SMT is often the link between theory and practice and is in a good position to recommend any changes that are needed.

In addition to the above, the Republic of South Africa, Department of Education (2008:14) stresses that it is one of the duties of the School Principal to lead the process of establishing the school development/management plan, and that the SMT must support and guide the educators in elaborating the school's development/ management plans. Furthermore, the SMT has to ensure responsibility and accountability by adhering to the comprehensive planning to improve the school, use data to understand situations, identify root causes of problems, propose solutions, and validate accomplishments by monitoring based on a clear set of indicators.

The discussion in par. 2.8.2 is of great importance for this research study as it explains and simplifies the specific roles and responsibilities of SMT members with regard to WSD. My experience as Circuit Manager has been that SMTs of underperforming schools are not aware of the concept of WSD, and do not realize that it is indeed their core function to develop the school to greater heights. The content of par. 2.8.2 also lays the framework for the training of SMTs of underperforming schools to capacitate them in this regard.

2.9 SUMMARY

This chapter dealt with the theoretical framework for the research project, and taking the research question into consideration, gave reasons for structuring this chapter according to theme (or construct). The central theme of the research question was WSD and a number of associated themes were taken from literature to form part of the discussion: models of WSD, Systems Theory, WSE, SIP, and the role of the CT/District Office and SMTs in relation to WSD. Chapter Three focuses on a theoretical discussion of the research design and methodology.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL DISCUSSION OF THE RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter the literature study that underpins this research study was presented, and focused on whole-school development, with specific emphasis on the roles that the CTs and SMTs play in this regard. This chapter deals with issues related to the research design and methodology that form the foundation of this study. The chapter outlines the details and specifications of the "architectural design/blueprint" of the study and the systematic, methodical and accurate execution of the design using various methods and tools to perform the different tasks (Mouton 2001:55 – 56).

In this chapter the following issues are explored in depth: A distinction is made between the quantitative and qualitative research approaches, and the reasons for choosing the latter for this research study are provided. Thereafter, the main issues relating to research design, approach and methodologies are introduced. This is followed by an exposition of the issues related to research methodology: sampling, data collection, data analysis and measures of trustworthiness. The chapter concludes with a brief discussion of the ethical considerations.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

Mouton (2001:55 – 56) explains that a research design is the blueprint or plan for conducting the research. It focuses on the end product, i.e. the type of study being planned and the type of results desired. The research design takes the research problem (question) as its point of departure.

3.2.1 Constructivist-interpretative paradigm

Patton (2002:96) explains that Constructivism began with the premise that the human world is different from the natural, physical world and therefore must be studied differently. According to him, human beings have evolved the capacity to interpret and construct reality through linguistic constructs. He quotes Thomas and Thomas's (1928:572) theorem: "*What is defined or perceived by people as real is real in its consequences."* In the light of this constructivists study the multiple realities constructed by people and the implications of

those constructions for their lives and interaction with others. The foundational questions of social construction are: "How have the people in this setting constructed reality? What are their reported perceptions, 'truths', explanations, beliefs, and world-view? What are the consequences of their behaviours and for those with whom they interact?" (Patton 2002:96, 132).

Mackenzie and Knipe (2006) explain that the interpretivist-constructivist paradigm grew out of the philosophy of Edmund Husserl's phenomenology and Wilhelm Dilthey's (and other German philosophers') study of interpretive understanding called hermeneutics. The interpretivist-constructivist approaches to research have the intention of understanding the world of human experience. According to Creswell (2003:8) the interpretivist-constructivist researcher tends to rely upon the participants' views of the situation being studied. He also recognizes the impact on the research of the researcher's own background and experiences. Constructivists do not generally begin with a theory (as with the post-positivists), but they generate or inductively develop a theory or "pattern of meanings" throughout the research process (Creswell 2003:9).

Mackenzie and Knipe (2006) indicate that in the intepretivist-constructivist paradigm qualitative methods are predominately used, although the researcher may also utilize quantitative methods. The data collection tools are interviews, observations, document reviews and visual data analysis.

The reasons for selecting the constructivist-interpretative paradigm in this research study are:

- In order for me to construct the model which is the outcome of this research, I need to find out what the different aspects of the interaction between the CTs and SMTs are by directly involving these participants in the research study and allowing them to relate their experiences;
- The experiences they share with me will enable me to gain insight into their life-world, with its multiple perspectives that I will need to consider;
- At the basis of this research is the interaction between the CTs and SMTs – and it is at this level where their realities are constructed, and
- My professional background is critical in understanding the dynamics which interact in the development of the model. As stated in Par. 1.1 I am experienced in School Management issues (being a Principal of a large high school), but I also worked at a District Office as Circuit Manager, involved in the MFTs. I am therefore in the optimal

position to understand "both sides of the story": the world in which the CTs have to operate, and the perspectives of the SMTs.

3.2.2 Critical theory paradigm

The research question states: *"How can CTs effectively support …"* and therefore implies that the CT members in the selected WCED Circuit play an active part in the roll-out of the research programme. The research study therefore focuses on empowering the CT members to become agents of change as well as action-learning team members. This statement is made against the facts presented in par. 1.2 of the thesis which *inter alia* stated that more than 80% of the schools in South Africa can be described as underperforming, that Principals complained that they did not get the opportunity to discuss strategic management issues (PSC 2006:12) and the problems that their schools experienced with their Circuit Managers (PSC 2006:21). Taking the implications arising from the research question into consideration, I decided to also adopt the *critical theory paradigm* as the epistemological foundation for my study.

Neuman (2006:94) defines Critical Social Science as one of the three major approaches to social research that emphasizes the need to combat surface-level distortions, adopt multiple levels of reality, and embrace value-based activism for human empowerment. This approach can be traced back to Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud, and was elaborated on by Theodor Adorno, Erich Fromm and Herbert Marcuse (Neuman 2006:94). Critical Social Science is also tied to critical theory, first developed by the Frankfurt School in Germany in the 1930s. Critical Social Science criticized Positivist Science as being narrow, undemocratic, and non-humanist in its use of reason. The well-known living representative of the school, Jurgen Habermas, advanced social critical science in his "*Knowledge and human interests"* (1971).

The paradigm of critical education research is heavily influenced by the earlier work of Habermas, and to a lesser extent his predecessors in the Frankfurt School, most notably Adorno, Marcuse, Horkheimer and Fromm. In this case, the expressed intention is deliberately political: the emancipation of individuals and groups in an egalitarian society (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2007:26).

Critical theory is explicitly prescriptive and normative, entailing a view of what behaviour a social democracy should entail. Its intention is not merely to give an account of society and behaviour, but to realize a society that is based on equality and democracy for all its members. Its purpose is not merely to understand situations and phenomena but to *change*

them. In particular it seeks to emancipate the disempowered, to redress inequality and to promote individual freedoms within a democratic society. Critical theory seeks to uncover the *interests* at work in particular situations and to interrogate the legitimacy of those interests, identifying the extent to which they are legitimate in their service of equality and democracy (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2007:26). Its intention is transformative: to transform society and individuals towards social democracy. In this respect the purpose of critical theory is intensely practical, to bring about a more just, egalitarian society in which individual and collective freedoms are practiced, and to eradicate the exercise and effects of illegitimate power (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2007:26 – 27).

MacIsaac (1996) explains that Habermas differentiated between three primary generic cognitive areas in which human interest generates knowledge: work knowledge, practical knowledge and emancipatory knowledge.

Work knowledge refers to the way one controls and manipulates one's environment, in which area knowledge is based upon empirical investigation – in fields such as Physics, Chemistry and Biology. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007:27) it is of technical interest, characterized by the scientific, positivist method, with its emphasis on laws, rules, prediction and control of behaviour, with passive research objects – instrumental knowledge (which they also term: prediction and control).

Practical knowledge, according to MacIsaac (1996), identifies human social interaction of which the validity is grounded in the inter-subjectivity of the mutual understanding of intentions. Fields of study such as social science and history belong to this domain. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007:27) state that practical knowledge is characterized by understanding and interpretation, and state that in this knowledge interest research methodologies seek to clarify, understand and interpret the communication of speaking and acting subjects.

The third domain is *emancipatory knowledge*, which is self-knowledge, involving interest in the way one sees oneself, one's roles and social expectations. Knowledge gained by self-emancipation comes through reflection. It is in the latter domain that the issue of emancipation therefore comes strongly to the fore. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007:28) indicate that emancipatory knowledge subsumes the previous two paradigms. It requires both of them, but goes beyond them. It is concerned with *praxis* – action which is informed by reflection with the aim to emancipate. The twin intentions of this interest are to expose the operation of power and to bring about social justice as domination and repression act to

prevent the full existential realization of individual and societal freedom. The task of this knowledge-constitutive interest is to restore to consciousness of those suppressed, repressed and submerged determinants with a view to their dissolution.

What we have here, in effect, is an attempt to conceptualize three research styles: the scientific, positivist style, the interpretive style and the emancipatory, ideology critical style. Not only does critical theory have its own research agenda, but it also has its own research methodologies, in particular ideological critique and action research (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2007:28).

I selected the critical theory paradigm as the philosophical framework for my study for the following reasons:

- Critical theory paradigm deals with issues such as change, transformation, emancipation, empowerment and taking action, issues that are central to the nature of my research question;
- Authentic change and improvement in the underperforming schools can only be possible when the participants are actively involved in the intervention strategies and take ownership of the process;
- Success breeds success: therefore, when particularly the SMTs experience and witness the desired changes in their schools, they will be able to manage and lead their institutions to greater heights;
- The experience, knowledge and skills acquired by the particular CT involved in the research will be shared with the entire District Office under which they resort – the Top Management of this District has already indicated their desire to see the outcome of the research study, which implies that other CTs in the District (and hopefully in the entire WCED) will benefit from the research and be able to establish best practices that can serve the rest of the country as well, and
- The issue of reflection (linked to emancipatory knowledge) would be of great assistance to break new ground on an issue which still requires a lot of exploration and research within the South African context.

3.3 RESEARCH APPROACH

Neuman (2006:13), and Grbich (2004:28) distinguish between quantitative and qualitative research as the two approaches to research. In this section I will briefly describe and contrast these approaches and provide reasons for choosing the qualitative approach for the research study.

3.3.1 The quantitative research approach

According to O'Leary (2004:7) the quantitative researcher sees the world as knowable, predictable and being of single truth. The nature of the research is mainly empirical, whilst the researcher takes an objective stance towards the research object. The research methodology is driven by hypotheses and research findings are regarded as highly reliable and reproducible under similar circumstances. Research findings are quantitative, generalisations can be made and they are made relevant through the use of statistics.

Gillham (2000:52) notes that quantitative research also distinguishes itself by being analytic and categorical with a strong emphasis on the observed behaviour. The research is formal and disciplined in character and data collection is highly structured. In addition, Neuman (2006:13) points out that the quantitative approach is free of values with the researcher detached from the context in which the research takes place. Grbich (2004:28) stresses that another distinctive feature of quantitative research is that it is large-scale research which involves many research participants.

3.3.2 The qualitative research approach

Qualitative research has a number of distinctive characteristics which differentiates it from quantitative research. Naturalistic inquiry (Patton 2002:39 – 40), an approach to research which studies real-world situations as they unfold naturally, is one such characteristic. It enables the researcher to develop a level of detail around the individual or place and to be highly involved in the actual experiences of the participants (Creswell 2003:181). Because naturalistic inquiry allows the researcher to become intimately involved in the research it can be said to be driven by the researcher's passion to understand the world in all its complexities, a view supported by Denzin and Lincoln (2005:3).

Welman, Kruger and Mitchell (2005:188) describe the qualitative research approach as an "umbrella" phrase, covering an array of interpretive techniques which seek to describe, decode, translate and coming to terms with the meaning of naturally occurring phenomena in the social word.

Creswell (2003:181) emphasizes that qualitative research uses multiple methods that are both interactive and humanistic. Qualitative researchers involve their participants in data collection, and the actual methods of data collection which were traditionally based on open-ended observations, interviews and document analysis, now include a vast array of other

materials, such as sounds, e-mails and scrapbooks. This means that the data collected involve text (word) as well as image (picture) data.

Creswell (1998:27) also outlines five different qualitative strategies that the qualitative researcher needs to consider when designing a strong inquiry procedure: biography, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography and case study. He refers to these five as strategies of inquiry (Creswell 2003:183) stating that they focus on data collection, analysis and writing which originate from disciplines that flow through the processes of research, such as types of problems and important ethical issues. It needs to be pointed out that other valuable strategies of inquiry do exist, but, for research in the humanities, these five may be regarded as the most important.

Another feature of the naturalistic inquiry is that the data collected comes from the fieldwork where the researcher spent time in the particular setting being researched (Patton 2002:4). Creswell (2003:182) adds that the qualitative researcher has to analyse the data gathered and look for themes or categories before interpreting or drawing conclusions from the data. He stresses that qualitative research is, in essence, interpretative research, with the inquirer typically involved in a sustained and intensive experience with the participants (2003:184).

Neuman (2006:13) mentions that qualitative research aims to construct a social reality and that it focuses on the interactive process between all the parties involved. Where quantitative research purports to be value-free, the qualitative approach makes the values of the researcher explicit. Because qualitative research uses fewer cases (smaller samples), focusing on in-depth phenomenological investigation (Grbich 2004:28), the findings are constrained to the specific situation (context) in which the research takes place, and thus generalizations cannot be drawn. Contrary to the quantitative researcher, the qualitative researcher is actively involved as participant in the roll-out of the research.

In addition to the above Creswell (2003:182 – 183) states that the qualitative researcher views social phenomena holistically. He emphasizes the importance of reflection and introspection on the part of the researcher, and concludes by saying that the qualitative researcher has to use complex reasoning that is multi-faceted, iterative and simultaneous. This is mainly achieved through inductive reasoning, as well as iterative thinking with an alternating between data collection and analysis to problem reformulation and back again.

Coleman and Briggs (2002:20) concur with the above. They emphasize that qualitative researchers pay a lot of attention to detail. Therefore, the essence of a qualitative researcher's work is "rich" and "deep" in description.

3.3.3 Reasons for choosing a qualitative approach to this research study

Based on the nature of my research topic I decided to select a qualitative research approach. In support of my choice I present the following:

The roll-out of the support and intervention to the underperforming high schools will involve fieldwork (a distinctive characteristic of qualitative research) where I will be working with members of the CT and the selected schools. The fieldwork will also involve the element of naturalistic inquiry as I will be studying the participants in their real-world situations where issues will unfold naturally. My field notes will describe the feelings and experiences of the participants from their point of view.

Furthermore, the feedback and inputs received from the CT members and the SMTs will greatly assist me in generating meaning from their experiences – this will enable new knowledge to come to the fore on a research topic that, at the time of writing, has been relatively unexplored by researchers and educationalists in South Africa. The data generated from these interactions will be presented through the medium of words. As this is a small-scale research, it will not be possible to make generalisations. Furthermore, due to the fact that education is a social issue, the qualitative research approach is, according to Flick (2006:11), specifically relevant to the study of social relations.

My choice of the qualitative approach is also enhanced by eight very valuable reasons that Creswell (1998:17 – 18) proposes for conducting qualitative research:

- Qualitative research needs to be selected on the nature of the research question, which often begins with a *"how"* or a *"what"*. In the case of this research study, the research question, "*How can CTs effectively support SMTs towards whole-school development?"* ensures that this research study adheres to this criterion.
- The second reason for selecting qualitative research is that the topic needs to be explored. As was made explicit in Chapter One, the issue of CTs and their role in supporting SMTs has not yet been fully investigated by other researchers and therefore warrants the necessary investigation.
- The third criterion of Creswell is that there has to be a need to present a detailed view of the topic. The discussion in Chapter Two strongly indicated that a holistic view of the

education system is needed to understand the nature of the research question that informs this research study.

- Fourthly, individuals need to be studied in their natural settings. The necessary adherence to this criterion is fulfilled as CT members are observed in interacting with the SMTs of the underperforming schools at the schools themselves.
- Fifthly, a qualitative approach is necessary because of the interest in writing in a literary style – by which Creswell means that the writer has to bring him/herself into the study. This is accomplished in this research study by the fact that I became an active participant in the roll-out of the research through constant interaction with the CT members and SMTs.
- A qualitative approach has to be employed when time and resources have to be spent on extensive data collection in the field. The nature of this research study necessitates that I spend a lot of time not only in working with the CT members, but also in empowering them to carry out the task of supporting the schools. Where necessary, the CTM will have to make arrangements for additional human and physical resources through the official channels of the WCED.
- When the audience is receptive, a qualitative approach has to be used. In the case of this research study, not only the CT members were keen to become involved in the pilot project, but the communities of the selected schools have also welcomed the initiative to support the schools towards higher levels of achievement.
- The last criterion of Creswell states that a qualitative approach must be employed to emphasize the researcher's role as an active learner who can narrate from a participant's point of view rather than as an expert who passes judgement on participants. I have long ago adopted the practice of being a life-long learner and therefore want to see myself as well as the members of the CT grow professionally through our interaction with and understanding of the situation of the selected schools.

3.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Action Research (AR) is the specific methodology applicable to this research study. In the course of this sub-section I will briefly investigate the nature of AR. An overview of the models of AR concludes the discussion of this section.

3.4.1 Defining Action Research

A variety of definitions of AR abound in literature. According to O'Leary (2004: 10) AR is a research strategy that pursues action and knowledge in an integrated fashion through

cyclical and participatory means. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007: 297) regard AR as a powerful tool for change and improvement at the local level. These authors (2007: 297) quote Ebburt (1985: 156) who regarded AR as a systemic study that combines action and reflection with the intention of improving practice. Cohen and Manion (1994: 186) define it as a small-scale intervention in the functioning of the real world and a close examination of the effects of such an intervention.

Patton (2002: 224) constructs an overall description of AR when he states that the purpose of AR is to solve problems in a programme, organization or community. The focus of the research is problems within an organization or community and the desired results are immediate action geared towards solving these problems as soon as possible. The key assumptions are that people within the setting can solve problems by studying themselves. Coleman and Briggs (2002:123) take this issue further and emphasize that, whilst in traditional research the researcher was not required to influence the situation being studied, in AR the researcher intentionally sets out to change the situation being studied.

Welman, Kruger and Mitchell (2005:28) explain that AR is characterized by the following: the people being studied in the research process participate in it. The research focuses on power with a goal to empowerment, and seeks to raise consciousness or increased awareness on a particular issue. The primary goal of this form of research is to facilitate social change, or bring about a value-oriented political-social goal. For that reason, AR can be directly linked to political action.

For me the definition by Kermmis & McTaggert (1988: 5) as quoted by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007: 298) is all-encompassing:

> Action research is a form of collective self-enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own social and educational practices, as well as their understanding of these practices and the situations in which these practices are carried out. The approach is only action research when it is collaborative, though it is important to realize that the action research of the group is achieved through the critically examined action of individual group members.

The above definition is best suited to the nature of this research study as it places emphasis on the roles of both the individual and the group in the research, where each member of the CT will, on the one hand, have to work together as members of the team, while on the other hand, (as an individual) take personal responsibility to support the schools within the area of their expertise. The need for improvement of officials' own practices is strongly highlighted. Furthermore, critical reflection on the interventions made at schools forms the foundation for "life-long-learning" in the context of exploring a relatively new field within the education

sector in South Africa. This means that the team will have to reflect on and evaluate the actions taken to support schools and use the lessons from such reflection and evaluation as the point of departure for further interventions.

In concluding this section of the discussion, I include the following table from Coleman and Briggs (2002:137) which effectively summarizes the criteria for judging AR. I found the content to be an excellent guide to use through the various stages of the AR process (par. 3.3.3.4). In par. 5.4.5 of the thesis I used these criteria to evaluate the success of the AR I undertook in this study, and found it to be a powerful tool for reflection.

Table 3.1: Criteria for judging action research (Coleman and Briggs 2002:137)

Attribute	Outcome	Criteria for judging
Purpose	Action for improvement	▪ How can I improve my practice so that it is more effective? ▪ Have I improved my understanding of this practice so that it is more just? ▪ Have I used my knowledge and influence to improve the situation – at local, institutional and policy levels?
Focus	Doing it oneself, on one's own practice	▪ Have I taken responsibility for my own action? ▪ Have I looked objectively and critically at the part I played? ▪ Have I learned from my own practice and made changes where necessary?
Relations	Democratic	▪ Have I incorporated others' perspectives on the action into my explanation? ▪ Have I involved others in setting the agenda of the research and in interpreting the outcomes? ▪ Have I shared ownership of the AR with others?
Aim	To generate theory	▪ Have I explained my own educational practice in terms of an evaluation of the past practice and an intention to create an improvement, which is not yet in existence? ▪ Have I described and explained my learning and educational development that is part of the process of answering the (research) question? ▪ Have I integrated my values with the theories of others as explanatory principles?
Method	Critical, iterative	▪ Have I monitored what was happening? ▪ Have I found sound evidence to support my claims about action? ▪ Have I made good professional judgements that will inform subsequent action?
Validation	Peer	▪ Have I tested the strength of my evidence and the validity of my judgements with other teachers and academic peers?
Audience	Professionals, policy makers, users, academics	▪ Have I influenced the situation?

3.4.2 Steps involved in Action Research

In as far as the steps involved in AR are concerned Welman, Kruger & Mitchell (2005: 205) and McTaggart (1989) describe the process as "*cyclical*" or "*spiral".* These authors describe a cycle that progresses through the phases of (1) tentative planning, (2) acting, (3) observation, (4) reflection, and (5) evaluation of the primary results – the latter step providing feedback for the first phase (tentative planning) for a following cycle of action.

Dickens and Watkins (1999:132 – 133) use the following steps in their cycle: (1) identification of problem: work within the particular context, (2) collect data: sources may include interviews and surveys, (3) data analysis: possible solutions are generated and meaning is attributed, (4) implement solutions, and (5) test the effects of changes implemented, evaluate results and reformulate thoughts.

The Centre for Technology in Education (CTE) provides another variation to the above: (1) Identify an issue and develop a research question, (2) learn more about the issue – what does research say, (3) develop a strategy for the study, (4) gather and analyse data, (5) take action and share your thoughts, and (6) personal reflection. (http://www.sitesupport.org/actionresearch/ses3_act1_pag1.shtml)

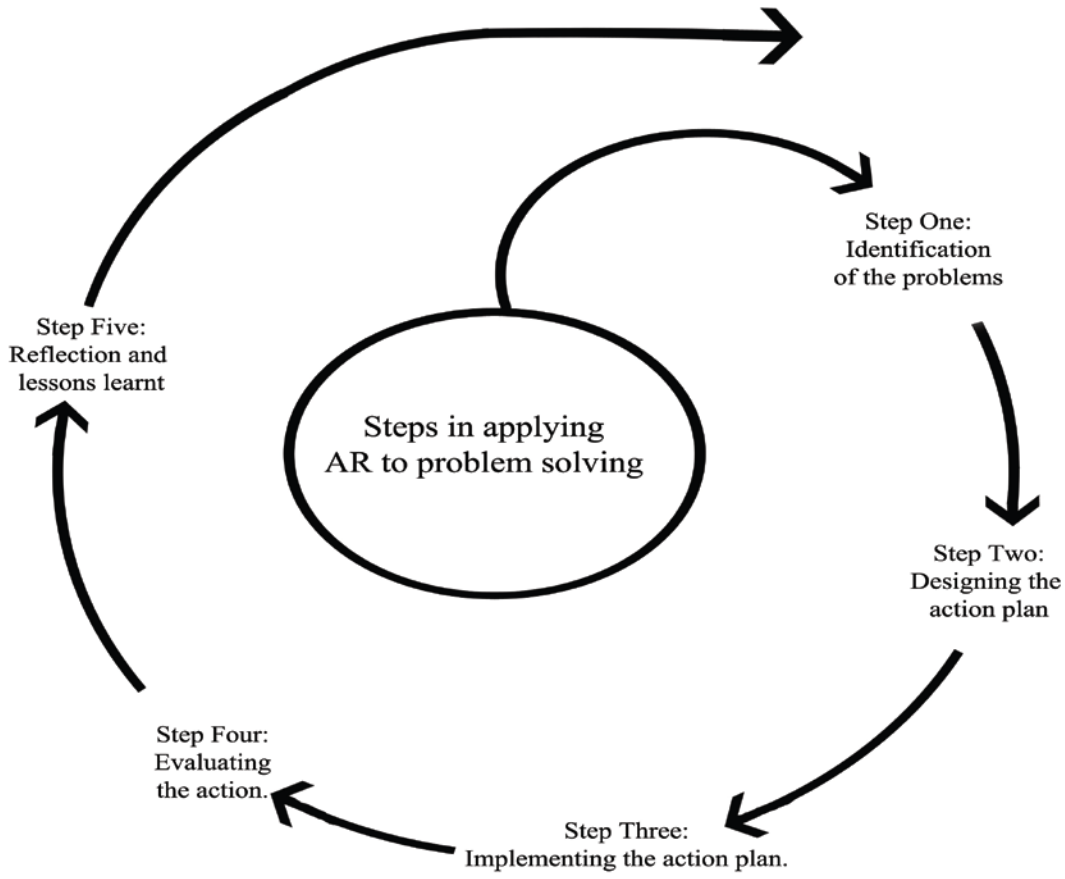
The examples quoted above show considerable flexibility in the approach to conducting AR. However, it is important to note that the elements of planning, taking action and reflecting on what happened, are central to the nature of AR. Taking the above into consideration, I decided to adopt the following working model for this research study:

- Step 1: Identification of the problem. Without clarity on what the essence of the problem is, no authentic research can take place. The problem originates from the problem statement of the thesis, and is supported by the literature review.
- Step 2: Deciding what to do. This step coincides with the "planning" referred to in other AR models. A plan of action is constructed to address the problem identified in step 1.
- Step 3: Implement the action plan. This refers to the "acting" in other AR models and refers to the full-scale implementation of the action plan to address the identified problem.
- Step 4: Evaluate the action plan. Evaluate the outcome to see how well it has addressed and solved the problem.

- Step 5: Reflection and lessons learnt. Critically think about and consider what went well, and why, as well as what did not go well and why not. The lessons learnt from this are taken into consideration to plan another cycle of intervention.

Figure 3.1 below summarizes the five steps set out in this research study:

Figure 3.1: The Action Research Process



During the fieldwork two AR cycles developed: the first dealt with assisting the schools and CT with the construction of their improvement plans and the second focused on support needed from the other pillars of the District Office to assist with the implementation of the improvement plans. Against this background, the steps outlined above were applied as follows:

- Step 1: Identification of the problem: In the first cycle the literature study and experience confirmed that if SIPs and CIPs were not in place, there would be no meaningful agenda for the CT to assist the schools. In the case of the second cycle the participants identified the need for the other pillars of the District Office to be brought on board of supporting the implementation of the improvement plans.
- Step 2: Deciding what to do: For the first action research cycle I conducted a baseline study by means of interviews and document analysis on the status of the SIPs and CIP. For the second action research cycle a special meeting with officials from the District Office was organized so that I could make a formal presentation to them.
- Step 3: Implement the action plan: In both cycles, this step took on the form of a workshop. In the case of the first cycle, the workshop aimed at assisting the participants to develop their SIPs and CIP, whilst in the second workshop the outcome was for the participants to identify their needs for support.
- Step 4: Evaluate the action plan: In both AR cycles the participants were given the opportunity to reflect on their newly acquired knowledge, skills, insights and experiences.
- Step 5: Reflection and lessons learnt: In both cycles I reflected on the events that took place, and highlighted the successes (and the possible reasons for it) and matters that did not work out well (and what I would do differently a following time around).

3.5 RESEARCH METHODS

Mouton (2001:56) states that research methodology focuses on the research process and the kinds of tools and procedures used. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007:83) refer to specific instruments used for the purposes of data collection, which are determined once the issue of methodology has been finalized. In the following paragraphs the three major issues related to research methodology will be discussed and introduced: sampling, data collection and data analysis.

3.5.1 Sampling

Neuman (2006: 219) states that the primary purpose of sampling is to collect specific cases, events or actions that can clarify and deepen the researcher's understanding of the phenomenon being studied. The main concern for qualitative researchers as far as sampling is concerned, is to find cases that will enhance what the researchers want to learn about the processes of social life in a specific context. Qualitative researchers therefore focus less on a sample's representativeness than on how the sample illuminates social life.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007:110) identified two main methods of sampling: probability (also known as random) sampling and non-probability sampling. In the latter the selection of the sample is derived from a researcher targeting a specific group, in the full knowledge that it does not represent the wider population. The selected group simply represents itself. This is frequently the case in small-scale qualitative research, where no attempt to generalize is desired. Non-probability samples are far less complicated to set up, are considerably less expensive, and can prove perfectly adequate where researchers do not intend to generalize their findings beyond the sample in question (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2007:113). Since I was adopting a qualitative approach a non-probability sampling strategy was suitable for this research study.

A number of different forms of non-probability sampling are found in literature. *Convenience sampling* (or as it is sometimes called, accidental or opportunity sampling) involves choosing the nearest individuals to serve as respondents and continuing that process until the required sample size has been obtained or those who happen to be available and accessible at the time (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2007:113 – 114). A *quota sample* sets out to represent significant characteristics (strata) of the wider population and seeks to give proportional weighting to selected factors which reflects the weighting in which they can be found in the wider population (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2007:114).

In *purposive sampling* researchers handpick the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of their judgment of their typicality or possession of the particular characteristics being sought. In this way, they build up a sample that is satisfactory to their specific needs. In many cases purposive sampling is used to access “knowledgeable people” who have an in-depth knowledge of particular issues. Another variant of purposive sampling is the boosted sample: the need to include those who may otherwise be excluded from or under-represented in a sample because there are so few of them. A further variant is negative case sampling, where the researcher seeks those people who might disconfirm the theories being advanced, thereby strengthening the theory if it survives such disconfirming cases (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2007:114 - 115).

I decided to adopt a purposive sampling approach to this research study. In addition to what has already been mentioned about purposive sampling, I consider purposive sampling to be relevant to this study because it enables me to select unique cases that are especially informative to the research question and to identify particular types of cases for in-depth investigation (Neuman 2006:222). Purposive sampling also describes the process of selecting research participants on the basis that they possess the necessary characteristics,

roles, opinions, knowledge, ideas or experiences that may be particularly relevant to the research (Gibson & Brown 2009:56).

This research study draws on a sample of four under-performing high schools in a large township area in the Cape Town Metro. These schools were selected on the basis that their characteristics are representative of the majority of under-performing high schools in the Western Cape, but also in the country at large: There are serious management problems at the schools. In addition the communities that they serve are poverty-stricken, and the unemployment in the area is high. The various social problems that these communities face, such as gangsterism and substance abuse, are also typical of many township areas of the country. However, these schools were also selected on the basis that the management and teachers were willing to fully participate in the research. The only issue which could cause these schools not to be fully representative of the country is the fact that they are geographically in an urban area, whereas the majority of schools in the country are in rural areas.

The following table summarizes the biographic detail of the research participants:

Table 3.2: Biographic detail of the research participants:

POSITION	SUBJECT TAUGHT	GENDER	QUALIFICATIONS	YEARS' EXPERIENCE	HOME LANGUAGE
CIRCUIT TEAM MEMBERS					
CTM (**)	NOT APPLICA-BLE	Male	BSc, BEd, HED, DSRO	27	Afrikaans
IMGM 1 (**)		Female	B.A, HED, DIP	39	Afrikaans
IMGM 2 (**)		Male	BA, BA (Hons), MEd	28	Xhosa
School Psychologist		Male	BA, BEd, MEd, Ed Diploma	27	Afrikaans
Social Worker		Female	MA (SW)	0 years teaching experience	Afrikaans
CA: FP (**)		Female	BEd (Hons)	18	Afrikaans
CA: IP (**)		Female	BA (Hons)	34	Xhosa
K HIGH SCHOOL SMT MEMBERS					
Principal	English	Male	BA, HDE	17	Xhosa
Deputy 1	History	Male	BA, HDE, BEd	18	Xhosa
Deputy 2	Geography	Female	BA, HDE, BEd	23	Zulu
HOD	Maths	Male	BTech	12	Xhosa
HOD	History	Female	HDE, BEd	18	Xhosa
HOD	English	Female	BA, HDE	18	Xhosa
HOD	Accounting	Male	BComm(Ed)	17	Xhosa
HOD	Xhosa	Female	MA	26	Xhosa
HOD	Maths	Male	Dip Educ	13	Xhosa

POSITION	SUBJECT TAUGHT	GENDER	QUALIFICATIONS	YEARS' EXPERIENCE	HOME LANGUAGE
S HIGH SCHOOL SMT MEMBERS					
Principal	Life Science	Male	BEd (Hons) STD, ACE	25	Xhosa
Deputy 1	English	Female	BA, HDE, ACE	14	Xhosa
Deputy 2	Xhosa	Female	BA, HDE	20	Xhosa
HOD	Geography	Female	BA, HDE	10	Xhosa
HOD	English	Female	STD	22	Xhosa
HOD	Maths Lit	Female	Nat Dipl, BTech, ACE	10	Xhosa
HOD	History	Male	BA (Ed)	8	Xhosa
HOD	Maths	Male	BSc, PGCE	9	Xhosa
HOD	Life Orientation	Male	BA, HDE	10	Xhosa
HG HIGH SCHOOL SMT MEMBERS					
Principal	Physical Sciences	Male	BSc, FDE	16	Xhosa
Deputy 1	Accounting	Female	STD, BEd, BCompt	22	Xhosa
Deputy 2	Xhosa	Female	BA, HDE, BEd	17	Xhosa
HOD	English	Male	BA, HDE	12	Xhosa
HOD	Accounting	Female	BCom	15	Xhosa
HOD	History	Male	BA, HDE, BEd, MEd	18	Xhosa
HOD	Life Orientation	Female	BA, HDE	11	Xhosa
HOD	Life Sciences	Male	SPTD	20	Xhosa
HOD	Physical Sciences	Male	BSc, FDE	16	Xhosa
E HIGH SCHOOL SMT MEMBERS					
Principal	Maths	Male	STD, BTech	22	Xhosa
Deputy 1	Life Sciences	Female	HDE, BSc (Hons)	18	Xhosa
Deputy 2	Business Studies	Female	STD, BComm (Hons)	17	Xhosa
HOD	Life Orientation	Male	HDE, BA	17	Xhosa
HOD	History	Male	HDE, BA	18	Xhosa
HOD	Maths	Female	ND, ACE	13	Xhosa
HOD	Physical Sciences	Female	STD	19	Xhosa
HOD	Maths	Male	STD, BTech	22	Xhosa

(**) Note: a full explanation of the meanings of these titles, as well as the areas of operation of these officials is provided in Chapter Four.

3.5.2 Data Generation

As indicated in par. 1.8.2 I used the following methods of data generation: participant observation, interviewing, and document analysis.

3.5.2.1 Participant observation

Observational research in general is very often part of a keen interest in understanding what people do and why (Gibson & Brown 2009:100). Observation consists of three main issues: watching what people do, listening to what they are saying and asking them clarifying questions from time to time, within the context of the particular study (Gillham 2000:45). He describes participant observation as a method where the researcher is actively involved as a participant in the research and contrasts it from detached (or structured) observation where the researcher observes a phenomenon "from the outside" (2000:46).

According to Gillham (2000:52) participant observation is undertaken in an informal way, is flexible in gathering information, puts greater emphasis on the meaning and interpretation that participants give to their situation, and analyse the data in an interpretative way. Qualitative researchers do not follow a tightly defined schedule of observation, but work in a more iterative fashion to determine a particular setting or set of practices. The aim is very often to gain an insider's understanding of how the setting works. As the data is produced, the researcher thinks through the relevance of that data by, for example:

- trying to understand why things happen the way they do;
- thinking about which aspects are particularly interesting and relevant to their research;
- comparing the unfolding data with other data they may have generated, and
- reflecting on the relationship between what they observe and their research questions and interests (Gibson & Brown 2009:101).

Flick (2006:220) summarizes the above by stating that participant observation is a field strategy that simultaneously combines document analysis, interviewing of respondents and informants, direct participation and observation, and introspection. This took place during my fieldwork as well, where I triangulated the information I obtained through observation with the other two methods, interviewing and document analysis, and constantly reflected on the pattern that was unfolding in front of me. Flick (2006:220) also lists seven features of participant observation which have been implemented as part of this research study:

1. A special interest in human meaning and interaction as viewed from the perspective of people who are insiders or members of particular situations and settings;
2. Location in the here and now of everyday life situations and settings as the foundation of inquiry and method;
3. A form of theory and theorizing stressing interpretation and understanding of human existence;

4. A logic and process of inquiry that is open-ended, flexible, opportunistic, and requires constant redefinition of what is problematic, based on facts gathered in concrete settings of human existence;
5. An in-depth, qualitative case study approach and design;
6. The performance of a participant role or roles that involve establishing and maintaining relationships with natives in the field, and
7. The use of direct observation along with other methods of gathering information.

The above also applied to my research study. I gave serious attention to the meaning that the people involved in the research study attached to their everyday life. The fieldwork took place in the natural settings of the participants – at their schools as well as the District Office. Many of the questions posed to the participants were open-ended so that they could provide me with as much information about the problems they experienced in their daily operations. From the commencement of the research I placed high emphasis on establishing positive working relations with the participants. In retrospect, this enabled me to win their trust and respect, and it also contributed significantly to the excellent cooperation I experienced.

The overpowering validity of observation is that it is the most direct way of observing data. It is not what people have written on the topic, it is not what they say they do – it is what they actually do (Gillham 2000:46). Another positive feature of observation is its multiple uses. It can be used as an exploratory technique, as an initial phase where other methods will take over, as a supplementary technique to give the illustrative dimension or as part of a multi-method approach by collecting different kinds of evidence, gathered in different ways, but bearing on the same point (Gillham 2000:48 – 49).

During the entire fieldwork I observed what people were doing, how they did things, and how they communicated. Observation was integrated into all other aspects of the fieldwork: I used it when I did the initial presentations regarding the nature of the research to the CT members, and later to the four Principals. It was part of the interviews, in my informal interaction with the participants, and also during the workshops I conducted.

A major problem with observation is that it is time-consuming. Getting to know one's case (whether individual or institutional) is necessarily a slow process. Observing people is slower than asking them about what they do. The data from observation is also troublesome to collate and 103nalyse, and difficult to write up adequately. However, if one writes up one's observations as soon as possible they will be easier to recall and also more accurately recorded (Gillham 2000:47 – 48). During the fieldwork, I normally wrote up my observations

immediately after I interacted with individuals or groups of people, as I purposefully tried not to intimidate them by making notes in their presence during my contact with them. However, in the times when I conducted the workshops, I had the time and opportunity to note my observations whilst the participants were involved in group activities, which made it less obvious that I was noting their actions.

According to Flick (2006:220 – 221) there are three phases of participant observation:

1. Descriptive observation which takes place at the beginning of the research and serves to provide the researcher with an orientation to the field under study. It provides non-specific descriptions and is used to grasp the complexity of the field as far as possible, and to develop more concrete research questions and lines of vision. This aspect pertained to my research as well, as my first sets of notes relating to observation were rich in description about the settings in which the various participants found themselves, and how they interacted with me and other participants. Some of the issues I observed at the beginning could later be formulated into questions, so that triangulation could take place on a continuous basis.
2. Focused observation which narrows one's perspective on those processes and problems, which are more essential for one's research question. When my interviews with the SMTs made it evident that their SIPs were not in place, I could immediately sense the tension and uncertainty amongst the members, and their body language revealed that they were caught off guard.
3. Selective observation which takes place towards the end of the data collection and is focused on finding further evidence and examples for the types of practices and processes, found in the second step. Taking the observation referred to in number 2 above further: after the first workshop was conducted which enabled the participants to write-up their SIPs a huge sense of relief and positive optimism characterized the reactions of the SMT members, as they reached a point of breakthrough in which they experienced success.

When participant observation is carried out in the field, the first requirement for the participant observer, according to Gillham (2000:53) is to identify him/herself: who he/she is, where he/she is from, and what he/she is trying to do or find out. The latter is very important as it will not bias members of the group. A researcher will only bias the people if he/she says what answers or results he/she expects to find. Telling them one's purpose is part of one's openness and much of one's integrity. It also helps to establish trust. Helpfulness and disclosure from members of the group or individuals will depend on building confidence with the researcher as a person: knowing that he/she is reasonable, straightforward and

sympathetic to their endeavours. People will be willing to disclose a great deal if they feel that they can trust the researcher.

I found that I had no problem in the above regard. Before the actual fieldwork took off, I made presentations to the CT members, as well as the four Principals about the nature of the research. After the first round of interviews, when I met the SMTs of the schools for the first time I did exactly the same. Looking back at the situation, I feel that this *modus operandi* enabled me to establish a trust relationship with these people that largely contributed to the good working relations I had with them throughout the fieldwork.

Gillham (2000:53 – 54) cautions that a researcher has to be wary not to form (or appear to be forming) relationships with particular members of a group as this will alienate the researcher from the rest of the group. He further advises that the researcher should start with descriptive observation: the setting, the people, the activities, events and apparent feelings – a general picture of what is on the surface. Gradually (without losing sight of the overall picture) he/she can focus on and seek out those elements which are particularly related to the research aims. He stresses that the maintenance of field notes is essential and that these need to include running descriptions of events, things one remembered later, ideas and provisional explanations, personal impressions and feelings (even if one cannot explain things as these might be the first hints of more important things), and things to check up on or find out about.

During my fieldwork I made a concerted effort to mix with all the participants, and not to give the impression that I e.g. favoured the relationship with the CT members above that of the SMTs. As indicated in a paragraph above, my initial field notes were very descriptive at the beginning. I found that the field notes enabled me to keep track of all the events that took place, and assisted me in following up on issues I felt needed further investigation, such as the ways in which the CT members followed up on their promise of support after their initial visits to the underperforming schools.

Gibson and Brown (2009:104) state that the researcher's field notes are records of observational work. These can take a variety of forms: highly structured records of the event, loose analytic notes, or a combination of the two. Field notes may be produced during an observation or afterwards, depending on the pragmatics of the setting and on whether or not other forms of data collection are being used, such as audio or video recorders. In the case of this research study, I used the combination method: when I interviewed that CT members and Principals, as well as when I conducted the workshops for

the participants, the field notes were highly structured. However, when I had casual interactions with some of the participants e.g. after the workshops, the content of the notes were much less structured.

These authors (2009:107) emphasize that observational work is data analysis as it involves thinking through what is being observed, why it is interesting, how it is to be categorized, what its relevance is to the problems at hand, how it might be thought through in relation to other data, which aspects of it are unintelligible or confusing, how it contrasts with or supports existing ideas/propositions/data and assumptions. They also emphasize that the purpose of research is not to end up with a body of unified data materials, but to understand an empirical domain for some motivated reason or other.

The above was particularly useful to me during the workshops I conducted. I was struck by the intensity of the conversations that took place around the tables where each SMT was interacting with the workshop content of discussing their priorities for whole-school development. They were totally engrossed in their interactions, and repeatedly asked for more time to complete an assignment. It gave me the impression that this form of dialogue was the first they had on the topic, which was later confirmed by one of the IMGMs. This enabled me to understand the way in which they reacted, and to realize that these people were for the first time truly motivated to plan for success at their institutions of learning.

In summary, I decided to use participant observation as one of the key research methods in this study because it afforded me the opportunity to become an active participant in the search for knowledge on a research topic which is largely unknown and un-used by the education fraternity in South Africa. My observations focused on the reactions of individual team members and the interaction between the CTs and SMTs. I kept record of my field notes in a reflective diary. Due to the threats to trustworthiness I also incorporated interviews and document analysis as means to triangulate what I've witnessed from the observations.

3.5.2.2 Interviewing as a data generation method in Qualitative Research

Patton (2002:340 – 341), as well as Gibson and Brown (2009:86), agrees that researchers interview people to find out from them the issues that they cannot observe directly. Interviews allow the researcher to enter into the other person's perspective. Qualitative interviewing begins with the assumption that the perspectives of other people are meaningful, knowable and able to be made explicit. According to Gillham (2000:62) interviews are best used when small numbers of people are involved, these people are

accessible, the people that the researcher has to interview are “key” and cannot be afforded to be lost.

During my interaction with the participants I found that interviewing was extremely valuable not only to triangulate what I observed, but also to allow the participants to inform me of their hopes, successes and frustrations, and to allow them to provide their input on how service delivery to their schools could be enhanced. For that reason, I also started off on a small scale: with individual CTM members initially, then I brought the individual school principals on board, and later expanded the participants by involving the SMT members. The inputs of all of these people were necessary to generate data that would inform the development of the model.

Interviewing, on any scale, is enormously time-consuming. The time cost is a major factor in deciding what place interviewing should have in one’s study. (Gillham 2000:61). As a simple rule of thumb, a 1-hour interview (assuming that one has tape-recorded it) takes ten hours of transcription and almost as many hours of analysis (Gillham 2000:65). It is therefore important to control the number of interviews and their length: the latter being particularly important. The researcher needs to control the interview and must prune the list of questions to those that are really essential for the research project and which cannot be answered satisfactorily in any other way. For this purpose, I relied a lot on structured interviews for the first part of the fieldwork so that I could guide the participants to provide me with specific information. A copy of the initial questions aimed at various groups of participants appears in Appendix D.

The following table taken from Gillham (2000:60) lists the various types of interviews by categorizing them according to those which are very unstructured (to the extreme left of the table) and those which are highly structured (to the extreme right of the table):

Table 3.3: Highly unstructured and highly structured types of interviews (Gillham 2000:60)

Unstructured						Structured
Listening to other people’s conversation	Using “natural” conversation to ask research questions	“Open-ended” interviews: just a few key opening questions	Semi-structured interviews, i.e. open and closed questions	Recording schedules: in effect, verbally administered questionnaires	Semi-structured questionnaires: Multiple choice and open questions	Structured questionnaires: simple, specific, closed questions

Gibson and Brown (2009:86 – 97) as well as Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007:353) distinguish three most used types of interviews taken from the above continuum:

Structured interviews: The wording of questions and the order in which questions are asked are predefined and non-variable. All participants are asked the questions with exactly the same wording and in the same sequence. The advantages of this type of interview are that respondents answer the same questions, thus increasing the comparability of responses, and data are complete for each person on the topics addressed in the interview. It also reduces interviewer effects and bias when several interviewers are used and facilitates organization and analysis of data. The disadvantages of using this type of interview are that it allows little flexibility in relating the interview to particular individuals and circumstances, and the standardized wording of questions may constrain and limit naturalness and relevance of questions and answers.

As indicated above, I relied strongly on structured interviews during the first part of the fieldwork as I realized the necessity to gather responses around the same issues I felt at that stage would be important for me to develop a baseline of where the schools and CT found themselves. It made it easy for me to begin drawing comparisons and to organize the data.

Semi-structured interviews: Interviewers prepare a list of questions, but these can be asked in a flexible order and with a wording that is contextually appropriate. The aim is to ask all the questions on the list with sensitivity to the developing conversational structure, but not necessary in a particular order. The outline in this type of interview increases the comprehensiveness of the data and makes data collection somewhat systematic for each respondent. Logical gaps in data can be anticipated and closed. Interviews remain fairly conversational and situational. The main weakness of this interview approach is that important and salient topics may be inadvertently omitted. Interviewer flexibility in sequencing and wording questions can result in substantially different responses, thus reducing the comparability of responses.

After adopting a very structured approach to interviewing the participants at the commencement of the fieldwork, I gradually started to utilize semi-structured questions because at that stage I had already built a relationship of trust with each of the participants, and knew where they stood in relation to whole-school development. Semi-structured interviewing also allowed me to follow up on aspects that the participants mentioned during the structured sessions, which I felt warranted further investigation and probing.

Unstructured interviews: No pre-defined questions are created and the interview is treated an as occasion to have a conversation about a particular topic or set of topics. Participants are given the conversational space to address the issues that they see as relevant to those topics in the manner that they desire. This form of interview increases the salience and relevance of questions, is built on and emerges from observations, and can be matched to individuals and circumstances. However, different information is collected from different people using different questions. This mode of interview is less systematic and comprehensive if certain questions don't arise "naturally" and it can make data organization and analysis quite difficult. I used this approach more towards the middle and end of the fieldwork, after I felt that I had uncovered the most salient points of the research through structured and semi-structured interviews, and was following up on some last issues on which I needed clarity.

In addition to the above, literature also mentions *group interviewing*. According to Gillham (2000:78) this source of information is particularly useful for getting an early orientation on the research topic – asking simple open questions and then noting the range and kind of responses one receives. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007:373) indicate that group interviews are useful where a group of people have been working together for some time or common purpose or where it is seen as important that everyone concerned is aware of what others in the group are saying. The group interview can generate a wider range of responses than in individual interviews. Group interviews might be useful for gaining insight into what might be pursued in subsequent individual interviews. Group interviews are often quicker than individual interviews and hence are timesaving.

I used group interviewing in two ways during my fieldwork: (1) when I interacted with all the members of the SMTs of each school and (2) during and after I conducted the workshops. The latter also took on the form of the reflection sessions I built into the workshop agendas where I allowed them to provide me with their feedback on what the workshops meant to them – see Chapter 5.

These authors (2007:374) advise that it could be beneficial to have more than one interviewee present for the purposes of cross-checking and to complement one another with additional points, leading to a more complete and accurate record. The involvement of a co-interviewer also helps to strengthen trustworthiness during interviews. In my research an IMGM from another circuit who completed his PhD in education management assisted me during the group interviews mentioned above.

It also makes it easier to detect how participants support, influence, complement, agree and disagree with one another. The authors caution that antagonisms may also be stirred up in a group interview setting. Group interviews may also produce “group think” in which individuals are discouraged from holding a different view or from speaking out in front of the other group members. It must be borne in mind that the unit of analysis during group interviews is the view of the whole group and not the individual member. A collective group response is being sought, even if there are individual differences within the group. I was fortunate that “group think” did not occur in my interactions with the SMT members and that they allowed each other the space and opportunity to voice their inputs.

Flick (2006:190) also stresses that the interviewer must prevent single participants or partial groups from dominating the interview and thus the whole group with their contributions. Furthermore, the interviewer should encourage the more reserved members to become involved in the interview and give their views, and should try to obtain answers from the whole group in order to cover the topic as far as possible. During the group interviews I found at times that one or two would be the “leading spokesperson”. When this prevailed for a certain time, I would identify a SMT member or two who were very quiet to provide me with their perspective on the issue under discussion.

In summary, the main advantages of group interviews include that they are low in cost and rich in data, that they stimulate the respondents and support them in remembering events and that they can lead beyond the answers of the single interviewee.

The following important issues regarding the researcher’s preparation for conducting interviews are set out in Gillham (2000:62 – 69):

He cautions against rushing into an interview and stresses the importance of getting to know the people and working on earning their trust and credibility. The researcher has to spend a much time looking and listening to others, before asking questions. The researcher’s first question should be of a natural occurring kind. As the researcher gets to know the setting, and focuses on the aims and research questions, he/she will begin to see what they have to find out and what will best be answered by asking questions; and at a later stage what will best be answered in an interview setting. However, it is possible to ask questions systematically without setting up an interview. The fact that I was afforded the opportunity to interact with the CT members and the four Principals prior to the commencement of the fieldwork greatly assisted me in approaching the terrain I would be working on in an unrushed manner.

To begin with, the researcher can decide on a small number of questions to which he/she wants answers, and ask one or two of them to people as the opportunity naturally arises. The people in the setting will know that the purpose is one of research enquiry, so they will expect the researcher to ask questions (and find that acceptable once he/she has "earned his/her place"). An added advantage may be that as the people are not being formally interviewed they may give particularly revealing answers. It would be advisable at this stage not to record the answers, but to write the responses down as soon as possible and as verbatim as possible. I utilized this approach during my presentation to the CT members and the four Principals prior to the official commencement of the fieldwork.

In preparing for the interview the researcher has to identify key topics (there may be more than one question for some of these); frame questions (between five to ten); check that these questions are genuinely open (i.e. that they allow the interviewee to determine the answer and do not indicate a preferred answer); decide on prompts (things that the researcher may need to remind the interviewee about); the use of probes, (getting the interviewee to tell more about a particular aspect), record the interview (taking verbatim notes stalls everything and involves on-the-spot selection that may be doubtful, and writing up afterwards can also miss key elements) and keep things moving.

It is for the above purpose that I started the fieldwork by focussing on structured interviews. I purposefully also did not include any specific questions re the improvement plans for the first round, but worked around getting as much information from the participants on what their successes were and which main challenges they faced – this information would then be triangulated with the content of the SIPs and CIP at a follow-up stage. By preparing this first round of questions ahead of time, I was able to quality assure them and ensure that they were open-ended and would allow me to begin developing a baseline of the situation in each school, as well as the circuit office. Kindly refer to Appendix D for these initial questions.

Gillham (2000:69) suggests the following key points for explaining to interviewees why it is necessary to use a voice recorder during the interview:

- It is impossible to get a complete account any other way – and the researcher does not want to miss any points of importance;
- If the researcher is writing things down during the interview it may distract him/her from what the interviewee is saying and will interrupt the flow (as interviewing requires a great deal of concentration);
- If the researcher writes things down he/she will have to be selective and it is difficult to decide on the spot what is really important;

- Writing down can inhibit the interviewee. Besides, they usually appear to forget about the recorder when they are in full flow, and
- If the interviewer records the interview, it allows him/her to listen to the interview several times and he/she can discern more each time they listen to the recording.

In summary: in order to generate as much information from the research participants as possible I used structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews so that the strengths of each of these types of interviews could be utilized to draw the maximum information from participants. For example, unstructured interviews were an ideal way to understand where the participants are coming from, such as just asking them what their experiences regarding SIPs have been. Semi-structured interviews again enabled me to ask the questions at appropriate times, bringing the conversation around to participants' own topics of interest without disrupting the natural flow of the conversation, sensing when a topic has been exhausted, helping the participants to make links between the topics being discussed, managing the duration of the interview and evaluating the analytic relevance of the information as it is being produced (Gibson & Brown 2009:88). In addition, group interviews were also utilized where appropriate, e.g. conducting a group interview with the SMTs of each of the four schools.

3.5.2.3 Document Research as a data collection method in Qualitative Research

According to Gibson and Brown (2009:65) documentary research refers to the process of using documents as a means of social investigation and involves exploring the records that individuals and organizations produce. The same authors (2009:65) as well as Flick (2006: 246) list the following types of documents that can be considered suitable for the purposes of document research: letters, diaries, maps, minutes from meetings, social registers, governmental reports, emails, websites, posters, wikis, blogs, notes, case reports, contracts, drafts, remarks, statistics, annual reports, certificates, judgements and expert opinions.

Through documents, researchers can gain detailed insights into people's lives, and to the workings of organizations (Gibson and Brown 2009:65). Records, documents, artefacts, and archives constitute a particularly rich source of information about many organizations and programmes. These kinds of documents provide the evaluator with information about many things that cannot be observed. They may reveal things that have taken place before the research began (Patton 2002:293).

Flick (2006:248) quotes Scott (1990:6) who suggested the following four criteria for a researcher to use in deciding whether or not to make use of a specific document (or set of documents) for the purposes of document research:

- Authenticity: Is the evidence genuine and of unquestionable origin? This addresses the question of whether the document is a primary or secondary document.
- Credibility: Is the evidence free from error and distortion? This refers to the accuracy of the documentation, the reliability of the producer of the document, the freedom from errors.
- Representativeness: Is the evidence typical of its kind, and, if not, is the extent of its untypicality known?
- Meaning: Is the evidence clear and comprehensible?

A key issue in gaining access to documentary sources is the matter of building trust. The overall aim of gaining trust is to assure one's participants that the research is ethically sound and that any documentary sources will be used with sensitivity in respect of the ways that they may affect the community or individuals being researched (Gibson and Brown 2009:69).

Documents can be used to compare, for example, how some people explain an issue and how they document it. This may be used to "cross validate" or triangulate data. By combining documents with other data sources, researchers can explore their research setting in a comparative way, and help them to look at their setting from more than one perspective (Gibson and Brown 2009:70).

Gibson and Brown (2009 71) compiled a number of important questions that any researcher has to answer when undertaking document research. These questions are grouped in the table below:

*Table 3.4: Questions to be answered when studying documents (*Gibson and Brown 2009:71)

Time	When was the document produced? How long did the document take to be produced? How does that timing relate to other key events?
Author	Is there a single author or multiple authors? Is the author operating independently or as a member of an institution or organization? Is the document produced through sponsorship or funding from other bodies, or in association with other bodies? Has the author produced other documents that are of relevance, and how does this document compare/relate to them? Does the author have some public notoriety/ institutional role/ relation to

	other people that may be relevant?
Purpose	What is the document used for? Why is it structured in the way it is? Why was it produced when it was? Does/did the document achieve its aims?
Audience	Who is the document for? Is the audience diverse or homogenous? Did the document reach its audience? How did the audience respond to it?
Relation to other documents	Is the document part of a collection of documents? Does the document develop something that was started previously or is it a new document? If the document is a stand-alone object, why is that the case?
Ownership	Who owns the document? Has the ownership changed, and if so, who owned it previously and why did it change? Are the owners the same people as the producers or the audience?
Alteration	Has the document been changed at any point? If so, who changed it and why? Does the alteration reflect some changes in function/role/status?

I used two types of documents for collecting data in this research study:

The primary documents on which I focused were the School Improvement Plans of the individual schools participating in the research, as well as the Circuit Improvement Plan developed by the CT. The reason for this was that they formed the basis for the interaction between the CT and SMTs. These documents determined the agenda for the intervention that the CT provides to the schools. The analysis of the SIPs and CIPs was augmented by other official documentation, which included the annual reports of the schools, learner achievement reports and minutes of various meetings (e.g. staff meetings, SMT meetings and Phase/Learning Area/Subject meetings).

The second category of documentation I used in this study was the keeping of journals (also termed research diaries). Apart from my own writings in this regard, I encouraged the members of the CT and SMTs to keep such documents for their own reflection, study and growth. According to Flick (2006:287) these can be used to document the experiences and problems experienced in the field. Gibson and Brown (2009:77) also mention that these are aides to record particular events or to capture one's feelings at a particular point in time, in relation to specific interventions. My approach was to use them in an unstructured way (to enable the team members to discover things of interest about the lives of people) rather than following a rigid, structured approach.

3.5.3 Data Analysis

Gibson and Brown (2009:4 – 5) quote Marshall and Rossman (2006:154) who define qualitative data analysis as "a search for general statements about relationships and underlying themes" and state that analysis involves using generalized themes to look at the relationships between components of a data set. They also quote Wolcott (1994:24) who said that "analysis refers quite specifically and narrowly to systemic procedures followed in order to identify essential features and relationships." In this context, description means producing an account that stays close to the original data. The general aim in producing descriptions is to create a narrative that presents the original in a motivated way (i.e. that operates as a description for a particular purpose). Analysis involves going beyond these largely descriptive iterations and systemically producing an account of "key factors and relationships among them". Interpretation involves trying to make sense of the data by creatively producing insights.

In this regard Creswell (2003:191 – 195) incorporates the eight steps identified by Tesch (1990:142 – 145), which are the steps that I used in analyzing the data:

- Get a sense of the whole by reading through the transcriptions and jotting down thoughts and ideas. Each interview will be transcribed and then read several times;
- Ask questions about the meaning of the dialogue and write thoughts in the margin;
- Make a list of all topics and group them into major topics, sub-topics and unique topics;
- Assign codes to the topics and write them in on the text. Scrutinize unmarked text to see if new topics emerge;
- Each code should be listed on an index card and quotations from the text should be linked to each category. Categorization and coding of data also serve to reduce it to relevant information, and the writing up of themes, categories and relationships on index cards or tables is equivalent to displaying the data, before conclusions can be drawn. Categories should be developed in terms of their properties and dimensions which means that the researcher has to analyze the specific characteristics of a category (properties) and how these characteristics vary along a continuum or range (dimension) in terms of frequency and intensity;
- Make a final decision on how to code each category and arrange these codes in alphabetical order;
- Group all data belonging to one category together and undertake a preliminary analysis, and
- If necessary, recode data.

In undertaking the analysis of the data I gathered from my fieldwork and interactions with the CT and SMTs, I immediately transcribed each interview as it took place, and kept my field notes up to date. I continued to read through the data, and continuously reflected on how the content was directing me to see a possible model of how CTs can support SMTs towards whole-school development, unfold. I used an A3 sheet to write down all the main thoughts that emerged from the readings. Using another A3 sheet, I began to classify these initial thoughts into themes and sub-themes which I presented to my supervisor. However, on receiving the initial feedback, I realized that my coding was at some places out of line. The feedback provided to me assisted me in developing another, more suitable structure for presenting the data.

3.6 TRUSTWORTHINESS OF DATA

One of the features of qualitative research is that the researcher has to deal with a certain amount of subjectivity. Flick (2006:15 – 16) states that the qualitative researcher has to start the research process from the level of the participants' subjectivity and the social meanings related to it. This can raise concerns as to whether the research findings in qualitative studies are valid, credible and trustworthy. It is therefore important that a researcher put measures in place to ensure that the data can be considered trustworthy. However, it needs to be pointed out that, according to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007:133), threats to validity and reliability can never be erased completely; rather, the effects of these threats can be attenuated by giving attention to issues that promote trustworthiness. Krefting (1992:212) mentions that trustworthiness refers to truth value, applicability, consistency and neutrality of the research.

3.6.1 Truth value

LaBanca (2010) defines trustworthiness of data in a qualitative study as a demonstration that the evidence for the results reported is sound, and when these can stand up to an argument. The trustworthiness of a qualitative study can be increased by maintaining high credibility and objectivity. Jones and Barlett (Not dated) emphasize that truth value in qualitative research stems from putting control measures in place to minimize threats to a research's interval validity. In order to ensure the trustworthiness of the data in this research study, I implemented the following measures:

- Triangulation: Applied to social science, triangulation means it is better to study a phenomenon from several angles than to look at it in only one way. By looking at something from multiple points of view accuracy is improved (Neuman 2006:149). By

using a combination of observations, interviewing and document analysis, the fieldworker is able to use different data sources to validate and cross-check findings. Each type and source of data has strengths and weaknesses. Using a combination of data types increases validity as the strengths of one approach can compensate for the weaknesses of another (Patton 2002:306).

Denzin (1978) quoted by Patton (2002: 247) identified four basic types of triangulation:

(1) Data triangulation: the use of a variety of data sources in a study
(2) Investigator triangulation: the use of several different researchers or evaluators
(3) Theory triangulation: the use of multiple perspectives to interpret a single set of data
(4) Methodological triangulation: the use of multiple methods to study a single programme or problem

In this study, methodological triangulation was used by employing participant observation, interviewing and document research. Investigator triangulation was also employed where an observer worked hand in glove with me during observations, interviews and document research:

- Peer briefing was done by regular meetings with other people who are not involved in the research in order to disclose my blind spots and to discuss working results with them (Flick 2006:376);
- "Member checks" in the sense of communicative validation of data and interpretations with members of the fields under study (Flick 2006:376). This means that the findings were checked with the members of the Circuit Team and the SMTs;
- Avoidance of inferences and generalizations beyond the capacity of the data and support statements;
- Avoiding the selective use of data, and
- Authority of the researcher, which describes as the researcher's credentials. I strongly regard my working years as a Circuit Manager in the WCED (where I experimented with establishing a CT in my circuit) to be extremely valuable in guiding the research process towards the development of the model to enable CTs to support SMTs towards whole-school development.

3.6.2 Applicability/ Reliability

Coleman and Briggs (2002:60) define applicability (reliability) as the probability that repeating the research procedure or method would produce identical or similar results, and that it provides a degree of confidence that replicating the process would ensure

consistency. In this regard, Krefting (1991:216) indicates that if the data is rich in description, it should be possible to make comparisons to other research. In this study, applicability is enhanced by providing a dense description of findings and research methods to help other researchers decide if data can be transferred, and to compare the findings with literature in an attempt to see whether other research supports the findings emanating from this research study.

3.6.3 Consistency

Jones and Barlett *(samples.jbpub.com/9780763780586/80586_CH03_Keele.pdf)* explain that a study is consistent when another researcher can follow the "decision trail" used by the study's researcher. Consistency therefore refers to the degree to which the data would be replicated if the research were to be repeated using the same subjects, i.e. whether the procedures and methods used adhere to qualitative research practices. In this research study consistency is achieved through a solid explanation of the philosophical and theoretical assumptions of the research, employing investigator and methodological triangulation, and using definite code and re-coding procedures. In addition, I did everything humanly possible to remain objective at all times and not release research results either too soon or too late.

3.6.4 Neutrality

According to Poggenpoel (1998:380) neutrality means freedom from bias in research procedures and results. Measures put into place in this research study to increase neutrality were triangulation, literature control (comparing the findings to other research), "member checks" and the keeping of field notes throughout the period that the action research was undertaken.

3.7 ETHICS OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

According to Flick (2006:45) ethics in research is extremely important and a researcher needs to be sensitive to ethical issues due to scandals. For this reason codes of ethics have been formulated over the years to regulate the relations of researchers to the people and field they intend to study.

Mauthner, Birch, Jessop and Miller (2005:14) explain that ethics is concerned with the morality of human conduct. In relation to social research it refers to the moral deliberation,

choice and accountability on the part of the researchers throughout the research process. These authors stress that ethical decisions arise throughout the entire research process, from conceptualization and design, data gathering and analysis, and report (2005:19).

Orb, Eisenhauer and Wynaden (2000:93) highlight the fact that ethical issues are present in any kind of research. The research process creates tension between the aims of research to make generalizations for the good of others, and the rights of participants to maintain privacy. Harm can be prevented or reduced through the application of appropriate ethical principles. The protection of human subjects or participants in any research study is therefore imperative. The nature of ethical problems in qualitative research studies is subtle and different compared to problems in quantitative research. For example, potential ethical conflicts exist in regard to how a researcher gains access to a community group and in the effects the researcher may have on participants.

These authors (2000:94) stress the importance that the researchers are ultimately responsible for protecting the participants. In qualitative studies, researchers rely heavily on collecting data through interviews, observations, written materials, and audio-visual material. While in the field, researchers should negotiate access to participants to collect data; thus the quality of social interactions between researchers and the participants may facilitate or inhibit access to information. Once access to the field has been granted and the first steps of data collection are taken, researchers may experience ethical dilemmas that may not have been anticipated in the research plan.

Halai (2006:5) concludes that research is mostly undertaken to generate knowledge and contribute to scholarship, policy, practice and generally to the well-being of the people who participate in it. Sound research is therefore a moral and ethical endeavour and should be concerned with ensuring that the interests of those participating in a study are not harmed as a result of research being done. Certain qualitative research approaches such as action research, biography, phenomenology and ethnographic methods pose complex challenges to an ethical conduct of research.

Taking the above into consideration, I employed the following ethical considerations in my research, which are based on the exposition given by Neuman (2006:132 – 139):

- No physical harm was caused to the research participants;
- Participants were not be exposed to psychological abuse (by exposing them to gruesome photos, telling lies, asking them to hurt one another, requesting them to dent

their convictions or place them in any situation that may be considered stressful, embarrassing or highly anxiety-producing situations);

- No legal harm (e.g. placing participants in situations where they can face arrest) was done to any participant;
- All participants were requested to participate voluntarily in the research study;
- All participants were requested to give their informed consent to participate in the study, in writing, before the research took off (See Appendix A);
- The anonymity of participants was respected. They remained nameless and their identities were under no circumstances made known;
- Confidentiality was respected at all times, i.e. any information they provided to me was kept in confidence and secret from the public;
- I obtained permission from the Head of Department of the WCED to conduct the research in the four schools selected for this research study (See Appendix C, and
- I furthermore obtained the required clearance from the Ethics Committee of the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University to conduct the research (See Appendix B).

3.8 SUMMARY

This chapter started off by introducing the Constructivist-Interpretative paradigm, as well as the Critical Theory paradigm as the foundation for the research design. This was followed by a comparison between the quantitative and qualitative research approaches, and reasons for selecting the latter approach for this research study were provided. AR as the methodology for this study was explained followed by an exposition of the issues related to research methodology: sampling, data generation (through participant observation, interviews and document research) and data analysis. The chapter concluded with an overview of the trustworthiness of the data and a brief discussion of the ethical considerations. The following chapter focusses on the CT approach that was conceptualized and implemented in the WCED.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE CONCEPTUALIZATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CIRCUIT TEAM APPROACH IN THE WESTERN CAPE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The content of Chapter Three dealt with issues related to the research approach, research design, research methods, trustworthiness of data and ethics of qualitative research. Chapter Four forms a bridge between the research design and methodology and the discussion of the AR process and findings in Chapter Five. The reason for the inclusion of this chapter is to inform the reader of how the CT approach in the WCED operates, so that the discussions in the last three chapters of the thesis can be understood against this background. It has to be stated upfront that the explanations in this chapter are largely based on information obtained from WCED officials, WCED circulars and training material presented to CTMs.

4.2 THE NATURE AND RATIONALE OF THE RESTRUCTURING PROCESS

Following a major redesign process during 2006 – 2007, the WCED organized itself into eight education districts, which were sub-divided into forty-nine circuits (WCED 2008a). Africa Public Service Day, Monday, 23 June 2008, was chosen as the opportune time to announce the appointment of the CTMs because these appointments reflected the WCED's commitment to improving service delivery to all its schools and ultimately to all learners in its classrooms (Western Cape Provincial Government 2008).

The WCED launched its redesign project in 2007 to build the capacity it needed to implement the Human Capital Development Strategy (HCDS) of the Western Cape Province. The HCDS is a cornerstone of *iKapa Elihlumayo* [meaning: Cape Town that's still growing], the shared growth and development strategy of the Provincial Government of the Western Cape.

The WCED is the lead Department in the Provincial Government of the Western Cape responsible for the implementation of HCDS. The focus of HCDS is on every level of the education system in the Province, with the ultimate aim to ensure quality education for all. The HCDS identified a strong need for holistic development and support for learners, teachers and school managers, especially in those schools which are situated in poor communities. It is in this regard that the newly established circuit teams were specifically designed to provide holistic support to schools (Western Cape Provincial Government 2008).

Another key principle of the redesign process was to allocate the bulk of resources for education management and support to the Districts and Circuits. Districts and Circuits would receive 75% of the resources to enable effective service delivery to schools, whilst 25% of resources would be made available to the Provincial Head Office. The WCED also increased the number of their district staff members by 69% to make it easier for Districts to support schools via the CTs and other related services (Western Cape Provincial Government 2008).

4.3 THE ORGANIZATIONAL DESIGN OF THE WESTERN CAPE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

The redesign process that the WCED undertook emerged with three distinct layers of the organizational design, each with their specific roles and responsibilities: The Head, District and Circuit Offices (Western Cape Provincial Government 2008). Each of these three layers will be briefly explained in the following sub-paragraphs.

4.3.1 Organizational design at Head Office level

In terms of the redesign process the Head Office is responsible for research, strategic planning as well as policy development and coordination. In this regard, the revised organizational structure for Head Office created a new branch dedicated to research, policy development and planning that will ensure that service delivery to schools and colleges is well grounded in thorough research and development (Western Cape Provincial Government 2008). The Head Office corresponds with the level of "Provincial Education Department" depicted in Figure 1.2. At the Executive Management level of the WCED, the Superintendent-General (SG) is the Head: Education, and is supported by four branches, each headed by a Deputy Director-General (DDG):

Figure 4.1: The Executive Management of the Western Cape Education Department (http://wced.pgwc.gov.za)

HEAD: EDUCATION			
BRANCH: Education Planning (new branch)	**BRANCH: Curriculum and Assessment Management**	**BRANCH: Institution Development and Coordination**	**BRANCH: Finance**

4.3.2 Organizational design at District Office level

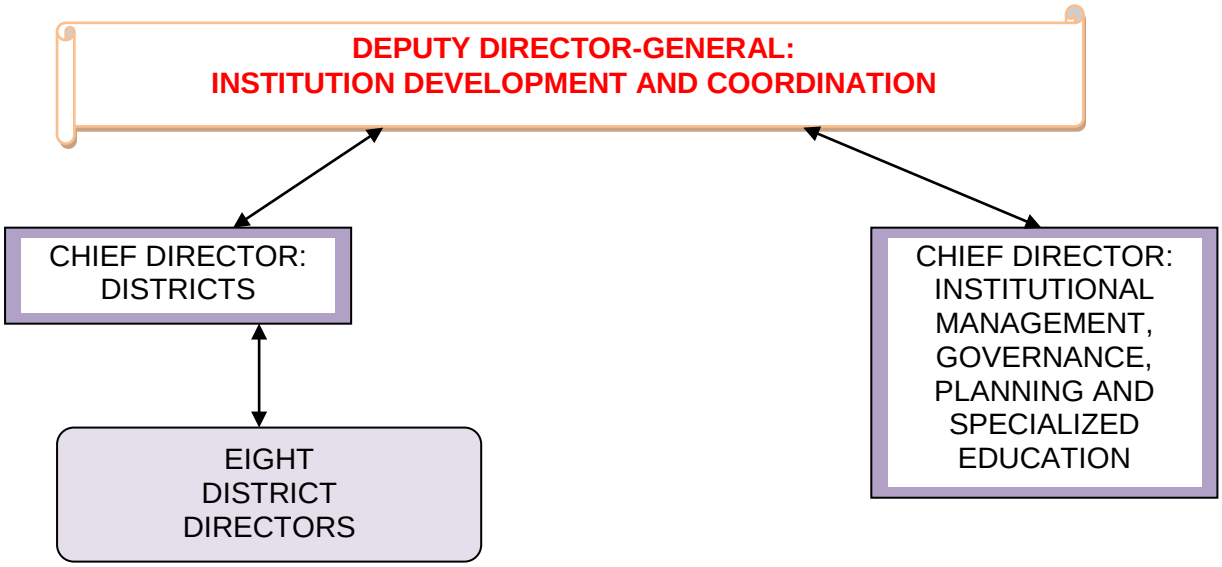
There are eight District Offices in the WCED, of which four are situated within the Cape Town Metro, and the other four are located in the rural parts of the Province. Figure 4.2 depicts the District Offices, also providing the suburb or town where each of these is located:

Figure 4.2: The location of the eight District Offices (adapted from http://wced.pgwc.gov.za)

Urban/Rural Districts	Name of District	Geographical location of District Office
Four Urban District Offices	Metro Central	Cape Town
	Metro South	Mitchell's Plain
	Metro East	Kuilsriver
	Metro North	Bellville
Four Rural District Offices	Eden and Central Karoo	George
	Overberg	Caledon
	West Coast	Paarl
	Cape Winelands	Worcester

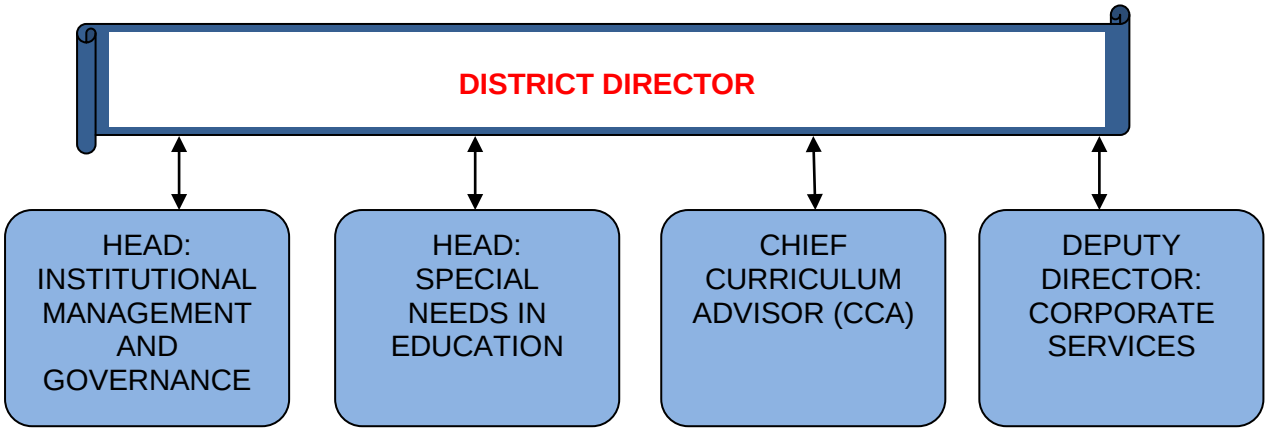
A District Director is in charge of each of these District Offices. This official reports directly to the Chief Director: Districts at the Provincial Head Office, who again reports to the DDG: Institution Development and Coordination. This hierarchy is visually displayed in Figure 4.3 below:

Figure 4.3: The line management between the District Directors and Head Office (adapted from http://wced.pgwc.gov.za)



Every District Office consists of four main pillars, each led by a head who reports directly to the District Director. These four pillars are: Institutional Management and Governance (IMG), Special Needs in Education (SNE), Curriculum and the Deputy Director: Corporate Services. This line function is depicted in Figure 4.4 below:

Figure 4.4: The top management structure within each District Office (Nduzo 2010):



The core functions of each of these pillars are briefly outlined in Figure 4.5 below

Figure 4.5: The core functions of the four pillars at District Office level (Nzuzo 2010; Pretorius 2010, Caroline 2010)

PILLAR	JOB PURPOSE	SPECIFIC ROLE WITHIN THE DISTRICT OFFICE
Institutional Management and Governance	To manage IMG advice within the District Office.	Train, develop and support SGBs, RCLs and SMTs. Support schools re SIPs. Support underperforming schools in the circuit. Facilitate recruitment and selection processes at schools. Mediate in labor relation issues.
Special Needs in Education	To manage Special needs education support, advice and development within the district.	Render psychological, social and learning support to learners, teachers and schools. Group intervention re study methods, intervention, etc. Crisis management: accidents, suicide, death and abuse. Trauma and counseling.
Curriculum Advisory Services	To manage the development and support functions that will ensure effective curriculum delivery.	Ensure that the curriculum is implemented according to National and Provincial guidelines. Support teachers with subject-related issues. Moderate teachers' and learners' work. Provide guidance relating to assessment and examination issues.
Corporate Services	To render a district level corporate service	Develop and support learning sites (including hostels), financial administration, provisioning administration, learner administration, and physical resource administration

4.3.3 Organizational design at Circuit level

4.3.3.1 The structure of a Circuit Team in the Western Cape Education Department

According to Western Cape Provincial Government (2008) each CT consists of a Circuit Team Leader (CTM), two Institutional Management and Governance Managers (IMGMs), one advisor on school administration (known as the Administrative Development Assistant [ADA]), one team member responsible for Foundation Phase curriculum support, one to two specialists in the Intermediate and Senior Phase education, a school psychologist, a school social worker and a learning support advisor (Western Cape Provincial Government 2008).

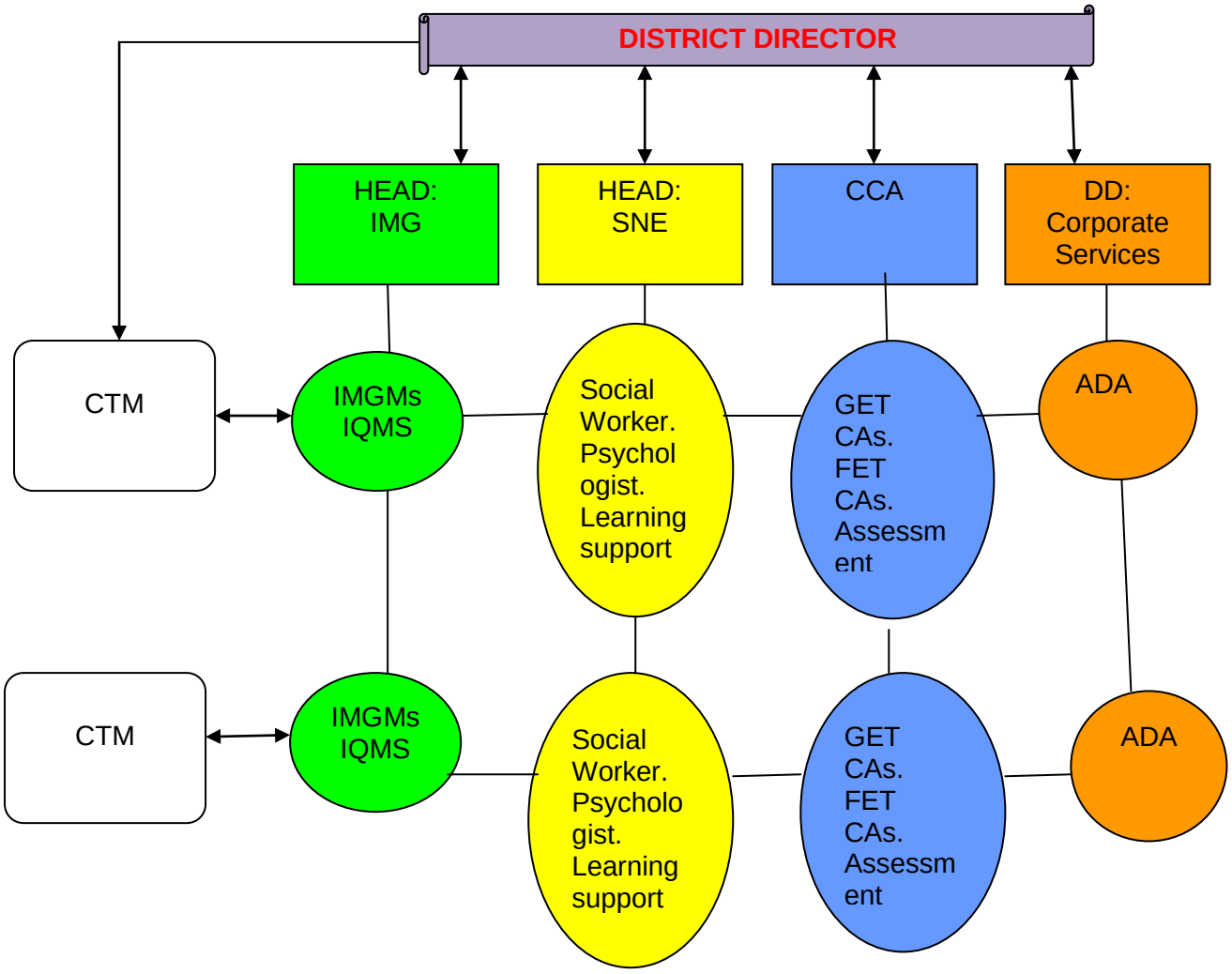
The organogram of a CT as portrayed in Figure 4.6 has direct implications when it comes to assisting high schools. It would be the responsibility of the CTM, two IMGMs and ADA to deal directly with high schools in the circuit. As it is explained in Chapters Five and Six of the thesis, the school psychologist and school social worker spend 95% of their time dealing with issues in the primary schools, and are called on an *ad hoc* basis to assist with extreme problems at high schools. As can be seen from the above, the CAs attached to the CT deal only with primary schools, as does the learning support advisor. It is therefore obvious that the majority CT members are not directly involved in high schools at all.

In addition, WCED (2008a) states that the FET CAs operate at District level only and are therefore not an integral part of the Circuit Teams. They work across the circuits within the District Office. This means that, when a high school is in need of curriculum support, the CTM has to make arrangements via the CCA for the FET CAs to come on board of any required subject intervention.

4.3.3.2 A matrix management model within the Circuit Team context

Ndzuzo (2010) introduces the following matrix management structure to illustrate how the interface between the CT and the four pillars of the District Office (as outlined in figure 4.6 above) works:

Figure 4.6: The matrix management model within the Circuit Team context (Ndzuzo 2010)



It was already indicated in Figure 4.4 that the heads of IMG, SNE, Curriculum and Corporate Services report directly to the District Director. Each of these four heads has officials under them who work under their jurisdiction and are portrayed in the second and third tiers of Figure 4.6 by means of the vertical lines of command:

- Officials reporting to the Head: IMG include the IMGMs and the IQMS coordinator (the green shaded shapes in Figure 4.6);
- Officials reporting to the Head: SNE include the school social workers, school psychologist and the learning support advisor (the yellow shaded shapes in Figure 4.6);
- Officials reporting to the CCA include the General Education and Training (GET) CAs (i.e. for Foundation Phase and for Intermediate and Senior Phases), the FET CAs and the Assessment Coordinator, and
- The ADA is one of the officials reporting to the Deputy Director: Corporate Services.

As far as the utilization of these officials within CT context is concerned, the horizontal lines of command portrayed in Figure 4.6 indicate that they also have to work within a CT context,

and for that purpose also report to the CTM. Taking the structure of the CT as outlined in par. 4.3.3.1 above into consideration, and viewing the horizontal lines in Figure 4.6, the situation starts to explain how officials from each of the four pillars of the District Office are also aligned to work with the CTMs within the CT context:

- The two IMGMs aligned to each CT emanate from the IMG pillar;
- The school psychologist, school social worker and learner support advisor in each CT emanate from the SNE pillar;
- The Foundation Phase CA as well as the Intermediate and Senior Phase CA emanate from the Curriculum pillar, and
- The ADA in each CT emanates from the Corporate Service pillar.

The structure unfolding here is referred to in literature as the matrix management structure. Daft (2008:318) explains that the matrix approach combines aspects of both functional and divisional structures simultaneously in the same part of an organization. This structure developed as a means to improve horizontal coordination and information sharing. One unique feature of the matrix model is that it has dual lines of authority: the functional hierarchy of authority runs vertically, and the divisional hierarchy of authority runs horizontally. The vertical structure provides traditional control within functional departments, and the horizontal structure provides coordination across departments. The matrix structure therefore supports a formal chain of command for both functional (vertical) and divisional (horizontal) relationships. As a result of this dual structure, some employees actually report to two supervisors simultaneously.

Daft (2008:319) also stresses that the success of the matrix structure depends on the abilities of people in key matrix roles. Two-boss employees (those who report to two supervisors simultaneously) must resolve conflict demands from the matrix bosses. They must confront senior managers and reach joint decisions. They need excellent human relation skills with which to confront managers and resolve conflicts. The matrix boss is the functional boss, who is responsible for one side of the matrix. The top leader (in the case of the District Office this is the District Director) oversees both the vertical and horizontal chains of command. His/her responsibility is to maintain a power balance between the two sides of the matrix.

Daft (2008:323 – 324) states that a distinctive advantage of the matrix structure is the more efficient use of resources. The structure makes the efficient use of human resources possible because specialists can easily be transferred from one division to another. (In the case of the CT certain specialists are already incorporated within the team structure, such as the school psychologist, whilst other specialists outside of the team, e.g. FET CAs, can be

brought on board of interventions as and when necessary.) The matrix structure is also flexible and there is space to adapt to a rapidly changing environment.

The major challenges related to the matrix structure include the confusion and frustration caused by the dual chain of command. Matrix bosses and two-boss employees have difficulty with the dual reporting relationships. This structure can also generate high conflict because it splits divisional against functional goals. Rivalry between the two sides of the matrix can be exceedingly difficult for two-boss employees to manage. Another disadvantage is the time lost to meetings and discussions devoted to resolving the conflict. Often the matrix structure leads to more discussion than action because different goals and points of view have to be addressed.

My interaction with the CT members indicated that there were different views among them regarding the matrix structure. Some felt that they would benefit more if they worked directly under their respective heads, rather than in a CT environment. These officials claimed that they received more stimulation and professional growth from their pillar managers. Others welcomed the matrix structure as it provided them to focus on a specific set of schools, and by working with those schools, were able to build strong relationships that benefitted both the Circuit Official and the schools. It also became clear that it would be difficult at times to access support from those officials who worked outside of the CT environment, as the CTM had no direct “control” over them – the frustration in this regard was enhanced by a longer chain of command that had to be followed to get such officials on board. My conclusion was that a significant number of District Officials (outside of the particular CT that I worked with during the research) did not make the required paradigm shift to work closely in a team, and preferred to continue with the way in which they operated for many years prior to the CT approach being introduced. I personally feel that the CT approach has significant merits in terms of supporting schools, but that it would take time and effort for officials to make the mind-shift in becoming active team members, working in collaboration with others to achieve a common goal.

4.3.3.3 Reasons for introducing the Circuit Team approach

Ndzuzo (2010) states that, in 2008, the WCED looked at innovative and more efficient ways to deliver better services to the schools, and wanted to set up a “one-stop-shop” as a single point of contact and delivery to coordinate education services to the people at grass-roots level. Within the ranks of the WCED Head Office there were internal tensions related to which functions of the WCED had to be centralized and which needed to be decentralized, as well as a growing awareness that the roles and responsibilities of key role players within

the education system, such as school principals, circuit managers and CAs needed to be reviewed in order to enhance service delivery. In addition, many of the practices the WCED related to service delivery were at that point in time founded in past practices, and not taking current realities and future demands into consideration.

The analysis of the working environment also pointed out that there was a general lack of support to schools in disadvantaged areas, including rural areas, which needed urgent attention. Ndzuzo (2010) emphasized the crisis related to coordination: too much time was spent in meetings and attending workshops. He also referred to the response crisis, by which he meant that there were too many people involved in the response chain, with the result that it took far too long for important issues to be decided upon, resolved and implemented. In addition, he identified the crisis of relations: the fact that the strong hierarchical structure under which the WCED operated, led to territorialism. He concluded that, all-in-all the WCED resembled the classical features of a very strong bureaucratic organization.

It was against this background that the concept of the CT approach to service delivery took root. The plan was to establish smaller, more efficient and effective structures as close as possible to the people in the Province that could provide them with the basic education services they needed to develop into fully functional institutions of learning.

4.3.3.4 The specific roles and responsibilities of the Circuit Team Manager

According to Ndzuzo (2010) the job purpose of the CTM is to manage and coordinate a school-based support service to schools by a multi-functional circuit team in order to assure the provision and sustainment of quality education that is aligned with predetermined national and provincial goals.

WCED Minute 0002/2008 (WCED 2008b) places specific emphasis on the roles and responsibilities of the CTM. This official is in terms of his/her appointment *inter alia* the accounting officer for the National Strategy for Learner Attainment (NSLA) programme – a programme aimed at improving and strengthening schools that achieved less than 60% in the annual Senior Certificate Examinations. [In the context of this thesis, this programme relates to the underperforming schools.] This minute makes clear reference to the importance of the development of comprehensive School Improvement Plans (SIPs) which have to be monitored and reported on at the end of each school term to ensure the proper implementation thereof. CTMs also have the responsibility to identify and report on schools

that are at risk of under-performance, and have the obligation to develop a turn-around plan for such schools [which, in the context of this thesis, refers to the CIP].

Harker (2010) places specific emphasis on the quality-assurance role of the CTM, which refers to duties aligned to WSD, WSE, SIPs and CIPs. She emphasizes that the CTM must:

- Provide vision, guidance and operational support in developing, managing and assuring quality in Whole School Planning, Management and Evaluation;
- Lead and support professionally credible practices in WSE, IQMS, PMDS and SPMDS;
- Coordinate and analyse Quality Assurance (QA) Reports;
- Help formulate differentiated programs in SIPs and CIPs;
- Oversee QA of systemic and focussed programs for Institutional improvement, and
- Institute and manage an annual CIP comprising of identified needs and a future-based program to develop all education institutions.

For the purpose of this research study, it is interesting to note that the above presentation was given at a centralized training for all CTMs in the WCED, and that her presentation is one of the very few that makes specific reference to SIPs and CIP. The fact that the CTMs received training regarding these two aspects need to be kept in mind for the findings of the fieldwork discussed in Chapter Five, where it was uncovered that neither the four schools nor the CT had SIPs and a CIP in place.

4.3.3.5 Values and principles underpinning the circuit team approach

Ndzuzo (2010) introduced the following values and principles that he strongly suggested need to be incorporated into the activities of an optimally functioning CT:

- Empowerment - team members;
- Sufficient Knowledge and skills (organization, process, mandate, etc.);
- Participation & consultation;
- Ownership (belonging to team);
- Responsibility and accountability;
- Positive organizational culture;
- Respect for individuals;
- Clarity about vision of the organization, and
- Decisive yet flexible management.

From my interaction with the CT members, I found that the first two values (empowerment and sufficient knowledge and skills) did not receive the required attention they had hoped for, within the CT context. One CT member was very explicit about the fact that CT members

received no (on-going) training to perform their duties optimally, and CT members had to resort to their own study and research when they faced situations they felt disempowered to deal with. As will be pointed out in the discussions in Chapter Five, most of the other values listed above gradually came into being in the CT that participated in the research study.

4.3.3.6 Drafting and managing school and circuit improvement plans

At the same training event that all CTMs in the WCED attended (referred to in sub-paragraph 4.3.3.4 above) Botha (2010) made a presentation on SIPs and CIPs. He referred to IQMS that compromises Developmental Appraisal (DA), Performance Measurement (PM) system, and WSE – the latter including SSE. After reflecting on numerous problems that have been experienced with IQMS implementation, he focused on what schools need to do with regard to the SIP, SSE and WSE:

- They need to undertake the SSE process;
- They have to produce a SIP;
- They have to project-manage the implementation of the SIP;
- They need to submit their SIP to District for approval;
- They need to produce and submit a School Annual Report (SAR);
- They need to monitor the implementation of SIP internally, and
- Where needed, they have to review and refine certain aspects of the SIP implementation as a result of the monitoring process

Although his presentation fails to spell out details regarding the development and construction of the CIP in relation to the SIPs, Botha proposes what he calls a “Quality Assurance model” for the CTs, consisting of six steps:

1. **Research** - data analysis of the SSE, SIP, and Annual Performance Improvement Plan (APIP) to identify specific challenges that school are likely to experience;
2. **Implementation** of the CIP, with measurable indicators that will make successes or challenges explicit to the CT members;
3. **Monitor** the progress of the implementation of the plan;
4. **Evaluate** the impact of the plan on learner performance;
5. **Review** by using new knowledge gained to consider the effectiveness of the strategy, and
6. **Re-plan** by revisiting the CIPs and SIPs, and adapting where necessary.

Once again, the issue of the CIP has been mentioned by name, and although the direct link with the SIPs has been established, this presentation, together with the others made at the centralized CTM training failed to provide any detail on (1) exactly how the CT members

have to analyze the SIPs, (2) how they need to determine what issues will be dealt with in the CIP, apart from those contained in the SIPs, and (3) how they need to structure the CIP to ensure that it is a comprehensive working document detailing what needs to be done when, and by whom. The lack of this information emphasizes the value that this research study is bringing to the field of WSD, and these missing issues are addressed in the fieldwork (Chapter Five), to form part of the model that is the outcome of this research study (Chapter Six).

4.4 THE LINK BETWEEN THE IMPROVEMENT PLANS AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Due to my experience in working with underperforming schools, and the plans that the multi-functional teams used to assist these schools – in hindsight: the CIP (par. 1.1) – as well as the fact that I attended short courses in Project Management, I grappled with the question of how the principles of Project Management can be utilized to ensure the effective implementation of the SIPs and CIPs.

Although Project Management is normally associated with disciplines outside of the social sciences, Bisschoff, Govender and Oosthuizen (2005) adapted the principles of Project Management to meet the needs of the education and training environment. The discussion in this paragraph is based exclusively on their writings in this regard, through which I aim to align the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of SIPs and CIPs with basic Project Management principles.

In the first place, Bisschoff, Govender and Oosthuizen (2005:19) define Project Management as the art of directing and coordinating human and material resources throughout the life of a project to achieve predetermined objectives of scope, cost, time, quality and participant satisfaction. The life of a project is cyclic, meaning that every project has a beginning and an end.

Taking the working definition of a SIP (as stated in par. 2.6.1) into consideration, i.e. “a school’s annual operational plan …” this phrase links with the definition of Bisschoff, Govender and Oosthuizen: as an annual operational plan the SIP commences at the beginning of an academic year, and ends at the end of an academic year. From the discussion in Chapter Five it becomes clear that the CIP follows the same time lines. In addition, the SDP (which is the longer term strategic plan of a school – par. 2.6.1) will, although it exceeds the duration of a single academic year, also adhere to the definition of Project Management because it, too, has a starting and a finishing date.

Secondly, the authors (2005:11) state that Project Management involves the planning, organizing, directing and controlling of the resource scope to achieve a relative short-term objective to attain specific goals. This means that there is complete correlation with the management functions of the SMTs and CT members as discussed in par. 2.8.1.2 of the thesis, resulting in the same basic functions to be performed whether a person is managing the implementation of a SIP or the implementation of a specific project. This statement is also relevant when one considers the project life cycle phases (Bisschoff, Govender and Oosthuizen 2005:22) which describe the four phases of a project's existence, and are depicted in Figure 4.7 below:

Figure 4.7: The project life cycle concept (Bisschoff, Govender and Oosthuizen 2005:22)

Life cycle phases	**Phase 1**	**Phase 2**	**Phase 3**	**Phase 4**
Four basic phases	***Conceptual phase***: defining the scope of the project	***Developmental phase***: planning the specifications.	***Implementation phase:*** procuring services and executing the activities	***Termination phase***: closeout of the project
Key question/ activity	Identify the project needs	Construct a model to show how the needs will be developed. Evaluate the model to optimize processes	Execute the tasks. Carry out the project in line with the plans or models generated.	Evaluate to what extend the needs were satisfied.

These phases broadly resemble the four management functions: Phase 1 broadly corresponds with planning, Phase 2 with organizing, Phase 3 with directing and Phase 4 with controlling. In each phase the technical work that has to be done must be stated, as well as the specific people involved in the phase. The particular outcomes, project deliverables or products expected at the end of each phase must be stipulated, and careful consideration must be given to determine whether the phase outcomes contributed to the achievement of the project goals (Bisschoff, Govender and Oosthuizen 2005:15).

Thirdly, there is a strong correlation between the matrix approach in Project Management, and the application thereof within the context of a Circuit Team – which was discussed at length in par. 4.3.3.2. Bisschoff, Govender and Oosthuizen state that:

> Successful project management is strongly dependent on a solid working relationship between the project manager and those functional managers who have a direct responsibility for assigning resources to the project. In addition, it is a requirement for functional employees to report vertically to their line managers while at the same time reporting horizontally to one or more project managers (2005:16).

The authors (2005:10) also emphasize that the team members only report to the project manager (in the case of the CT this is the CTM) for their work on the project, but, in addition, they have to report to other managers for their other daily work – in the case of the District Office to the relevant head of the particular pillar under which they resort. Taking these issues into account, it becomes clear that the implementation of SIPs and CIPs is strongly aligned with the implementation of a project.

Fourthly and finally, literature on Project Management emphasize the centrality and importance of a "work breakdown structure" (WBS) which provides a structured breakdown of the scope of work into manageable work packages, which can be further developed into a list of activities, and assigned to people responsible for the accomplishment thereof (2005:34, 40). Bisschoff, Govender and Oosthuizen (2005:34 - 35) claim that the WBS provides a common framework for:

- Describing the project;
- Planning the project;
- Establishing costs and budgets;
- Tracking performance (the interplay between time, cost and quality);
- Linking objectives with responsibilities;
- Monitoring status and schedule;
- Networking and planning initiation, and
- Establishing responsibility assignments.

When the SIPs and CIPs are constructed in Chapter Five, most of the issues listed above are integrated into the improvement plans. Hence, it can be deducted that the WBS is in essence the equivalent of the SIPs and CIPs, resulting in a close alignment between the improvement plans and principles of Project Management. In addition, the authors (2005:1) observed that education and training officials and organizations are increasingly adopting the project management approach to manage the performance of their work more effectively. Against this background it is important that SMTs and CT members are well acquainted with the principles of Project Management in order to successfully develop, implement, monitor and evaluate their respective improvement plans.

4.5 SUMMARY

In this chapter the conceptualization and implementation of the CT approach in the WCED was discussed. The rationale for the restructuring of the WCED was explained, and the organizational design of the WCED at Head Office, District Office and Circuit Office levels was investigated. With regard to the latter, the importance of the matrix management model

was highlighted to ensure the smooth functioning of the CTs. The chapter concluded with a discussion that emphasized the importance of utilizing the principles of Project Management to successfully implement the SIPs and CIPs. The following chapter deals with the AR process and findings that were made during the fieldwork.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF ACTION RESEARCH PROCESS AND FINDINGS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter Four the way in which the WCED conceptualized and implemented the CT approach was discussed. This chapter presents an analysis and interpretation of the data collected. The results of this interpretation will be presented as themes and categories, supplemented by a literature control to verify the results. In addition, the AR process will be explained step-by-step, after which the findings of each step will be provided, with an explanation of how these findings influenced the next step/stage of my research.

I carried out the actual fieldwork between January 2012 and June 2012. Prior to this, in August 2011, I made a formal presentation to the specific CT that agreed to be part of the research study. During the period August to December 2011 I put a number of logistical issues in place in preparation for the fieldwork to commence in January 2012, such as obtaining permission from the WCED and management of the particular District in which the four underperforming high schools are situated. During this time I also met the four Principals and elicited their participation by explaining what the study aimed to achieve and how I suggested that it would be conducted. The four schools that participated in the research study are referred to in this chapter as follows:

- S High School;
- E High School;
- K High School, and
- HG High School.

5.2 DISCUSSION OF THE ACTION RESEARCH PROCESS

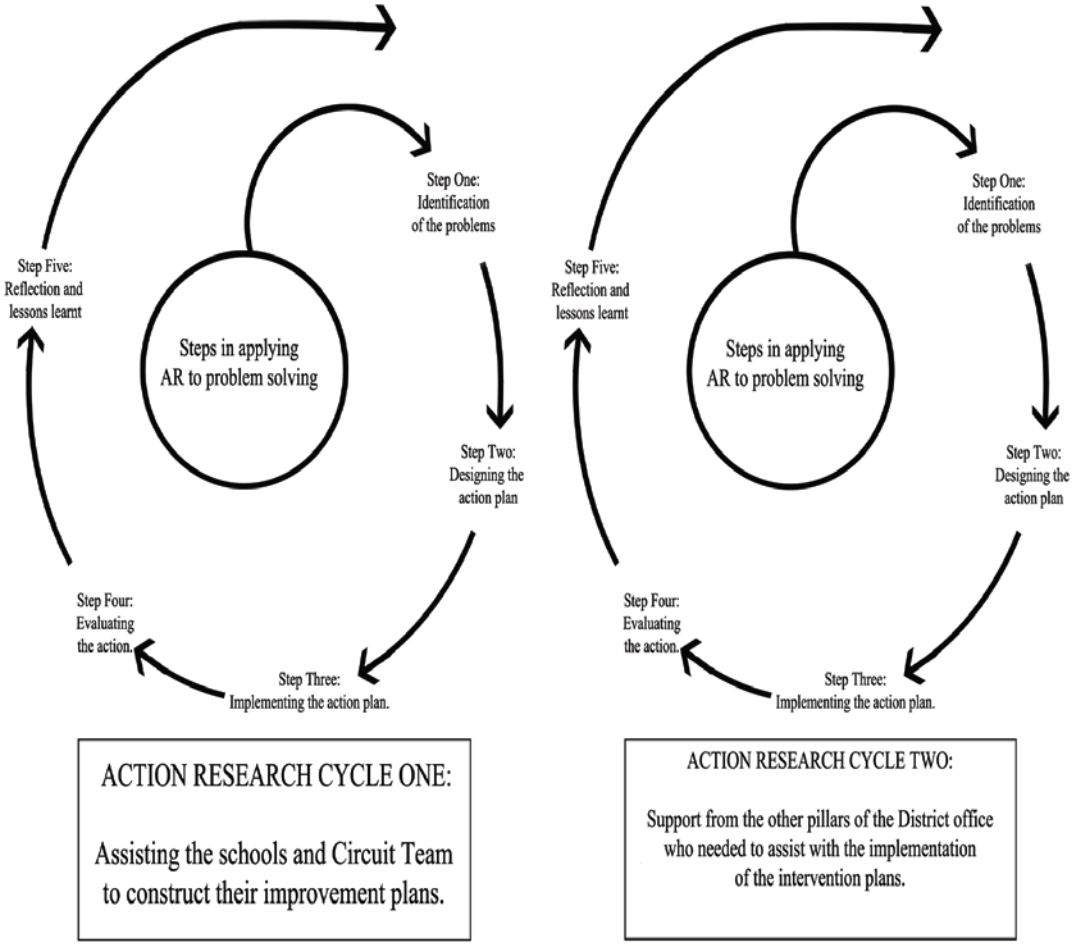
The purpose of this research study was to design a model that will better enable CTs to support SMTs of underperforming high schools towards WSD. To achieve this, an AR design was used (refer to par. 3.4 of the thesis). Data collected through interviews, participant observation, and document analysis were indexed into specific themes, after which I reorganized the data under different categories.

Two main AR cycles were conducted. The first cycle dealt with assisting the four schools and the CT with the construction of the SIPs and CIP. The second cycle focused on the support systems required for the implementation of these improvement plans. These cycles will now be discussed in detail, taking the five steps of the action research process into consideration, viz.:

- Identification of the problem;
- Designing the action plan;
- Implementing the action plan;
- Evaluating the action, and
- Reflection and lessons learnt.

These steps are visually presented in figure 5.1 below.

Figure 5.1: The Action Research Process



5.3 ACTION RESEARCH CYCLE ONE: ASSISTING THE SCHOOLS AND CIRCUIT TEAM TO CONSTRUCT THEIR IMPROVEMENT PLANS

5.3.1 Step One: Identification of the problem

Through the literature study and personal experience I identified the main problem underpinning the research study: if SIPs and a CIP were not developed and implemented, schools would not be effectively supported towards WSD. To confirm the authenticity of the problem, I had to gather data from the participants involved in the research study to determine why this problem was occurring and how it could be improved.

My first priority was to conduct a baseline study on the status of the CIP and SIPs with regard to the CT and four schools respectively. For this purpose I held personal interviews with the four school principals, and did the same with the CTM, IMGMs, as well as the School Psychologist. As explained in Chapter Four, these officials from the CT were the only ones working directly with the high schools – the rest of the CT members were employed to service the primary schools.

Whilst the interviews continued, I also started with the document analysis. The documents I studied during this step of the action research approach were the minutes of meetings, the assessment results of the four schools, the WSE Report of HG High School, the SIPs of each school and the CIP. From this baseline study, the following findings, categorized into themes and categories, emerged, and are captured in table 5.1 below:

Table 5.1: Overview of the themes and categories emerging from the interviews and document analysis

THEMES	CATEGORIES
THEME ONE: The Circuit Team was not functioning as a team.	1.1 The autocratic management style of the Circuit Team Manager was causing problems.
	1.2 The plan of action was not developed in a participatory way.
THEME TWO: The schools were not receiving the required support to prepare their school improvement plan.	2.1 The schools were able to articulate the areas in which they required support.
	2.2 The schools did not have school improvement plans in place.

DISCUSSION OF THEME ONE: THE CIRCUIT TEAM WAS NOT FUNCTIONING AS A TEAM

The first set of interviews was held with four members of the CT who worked directly with the high schools: the CTM, two IMGMs and the School Psychologist. These interviews took place in the offices of each of these officials. The information gathered from the interviews clearly points to the fact that there were intense conflicts between the CTM and the rest of the CT. This conflict stemmed from the reorganization of the circuits and the schools in the particular District Office at the beginning of January 2011, when the CTM also took up office as the leader of the CT. From the interviews with these officials, the following distinctive categories emerged:

Category 1.1: The autocratic management style of the Circuit Team Manager was causing problems

It was very obvious that the CTM adopted an autocratic management style which became evident in the way in which he unilaterally agreed with the Top Management of the District Office to have new schools allocated to his circuit, without consulting with his CT members. His circuit was the only one in the District which did not maintain at least some of the schools the officials had serviced prior to January 2011, as was the case with the other five circuits in the District.

> "They decided this (the inclusion of the Helderberg and Kayelitsha schools in the circuit) at a CTM meeting, without at least consulting us. So obviously big fights took place. The team decided to stand together against the CTM, but he did not back down". (IMGM)

> "I did not want it at all … we had to work with new people. Some of the other circuits still had their old schools, but for us the schools we were given were totally new. All of us were initially opposed to the move". (IMGM)

The above statements echo the viewpoint of Bush (2008:14) that people are more likely to accept and implement decisions in which they have participated, particularly where these decisions relate directly to the individual's own job. Johnson and Johnson (2009:183) explain that a characteristic of an autocratic leader is to dictate orders and determine all policy without involving group members in the decision-making process. In their research they found that aggressive acts were more frequent under autocratic and laissez-faire leaders than they were under democratic leaders. Hostility was thirty times as great in the autocratic groups than in either of the other two. Their studies also confirmed that 95% of the participants preferred a democratic leader to the autocratic leader.

The CTM acknowledged that the restructuring of the circuits caused a lot of tension and problems:

> *The first challenge was the great opposition towards change. It was very bad, because the entire circuit changed. I had very strong opposition from the entire team. (CTM)*

In addition, the CTM accused the CT members that they were in a comfort zone from which they had to be set free.

> *He claimed that we were in a comfort zone from which we had to get out of. (IMGM)*

"The problem was that the whole team became too acquainted with the schools they had … I had to do all in my power to break the comfort zone mentality. The other reality was that the schools they previously serviced were also in a comfort zone and they also needed new officials to get them out of that situation". (CTM)

From the above it is evident that the effective functioning of the CT was impaired by the CTM's autocratic approach. As a result the CT did not function as an effective team because some of the basic characteristics of an effective team were not being adhered to. These include:

- Power in the group is equalized and shared – in this case the position of the CTM determined power, and power was concentrated in the authority system;
- Different methods are used for decision-making purposes and consensus is sought on important issues where the group is involved in and group discussions are encouraged. In the case of the CT the decisions were made at the highest level, with minimum group discussion and group involvement, and
- Interpersonal, group and intergroup skills are emphasized and there are high levels of inclusion, acceptance, support and trust. It was clear that the functions of the group members were stressed, cohesion ignored and rigid conformity promoted (Johnson and Johnson 2009:26).

However, the CTM realized that the team would not be able to function optimally and achieve their goals if the above situation did not change for the better. During the interview he informed me that he organized a workshop for the CT members to resolve the conflict and to improve the unity within the team. Two important

developments took place at this workshop: firstly, a vision for the CT was crafted and secondly, the roles and responsibilities of CT members were unpacked:

- Circuit 1 Vision: *"Do more to create excellent self-managing schools in Circuit 1."*
- Circuit 1 Mission Statement: *"To inspire and provide tools for positive change and growth in the school community of Circuit 1, to significantly increase excellence through teamwork, learner-centred teaching and principle-centered governance, management and leadership."*

A slogan for the CT "Do more!" was also developed, from which the following logo emerged:

The CTM reported during the interview that:

> *This motto had a great impact on the team members and led them to refer to themselves as 'Team 1.' (CTM)*

However, there were mixed reactions from the CT members to the above statement of the CTM:

> *There was no intervention done to get the team to stick together. The team members healed on their own. (IMGM)*

> *The CTM held the team together. He set high standards for himself and this rubbed off on the team. Everybody accepted the fact that we wanted to do more and that we're in it to win. (IMGM)*

"In the light of the autocratic management style, this was simply an academic exercise. It was not the vision that the team adopted. There was a strong divide between the team leader and the team. This did not hamper my personal performance as I am a very positive person and I create my own happiness". (School Psychologist)

The formulation of the vision and mission statements is the primary responsibilities of a good leader. Having been a School Principal for several years, the CTM did what a good Principal would do: ensure that there is a vision for the institution that will drive all the operations and activities of the school. Since he was elevated to a higher level of authority than a School Principal, he continued this form of best practice, which is also strongly supported in literature.

Van Deventer (2009:71) lists the following tasks that a leader has to perform: A vision of how things could be done better must be created, and such a vision has to be translated into workable agendas or projects. These agendas and projects have to be communicated to generate excitement and commitment in others and the execution of the agendas must be performed in a climate where problem-solving and learning is nurtured. Finally, the leader must persist until the agendas and projects have been accomplished.

The aspect of vision and linking it to leadership abounds in literature on the subject. Nuku (2007: 44 – 45) describes a vision as a shared image of the fundamental purpose of a school and an image of the future state thereof, and as such provides strategic direction for school improvement. He lists three main functions that the vision seeks to achieve: it encourages, enables, empowers, inspires and develops educators to execute their duties effectively and with the necessary professional ethics; it is a cornerstone for decision-making that enables educators to know where they are going to, and it enables educators to focus their energies in achieving sustainable and quality results.

Manning (2002:79) emphasizes that the essence of leadership is influence: the ability to draw followers. Looch *et al.* (2003:8) view leadership as the determining factor in the quality of desired outcomes. Manning (2002:26, 39) mentions that integrity is inseparable from leadership – a leader has to face up to who he/she is. He emphasizes that leaders need to be skilled relationship-builders and that the followers need to know what the leader expects of them. He underlines the importance of life-long learning as the key to successful leadership, and stresses that leaders have to reflect often on situations, in order to remain successful (2002:32, 78, 86 - 87).
The second aspect that formed part of the workshop agenda was the unpacking of the roles and responsibilities of each CT member.

> *At the workshop we analysed the job description of each team member. Then each official had to explain to the rest of the team how he/she fitted into the CT and what their unique contributions to the CT were. (CTM)*

Again members of the CT did not fully agree with the intention behind this approach and claimed that the exercise was undertaken so that the CTM could be assisted in understanding how each official had to fulfil their responsibilities within the team.

"The CTM is not a psychiatrist and was very dependent on knowing what each of us does in the execution of our normal duties so that he could be informed how each team member functions within his/her discipline. The whole exercise was undertaken to help him understand what our job description entailed". (School Psychologist)

Despite the disagreement in the way in which the CTM handled the situation, Chinsamy (2002:6 – 7) emphasizes the importance that the District Office needs to have a certain degree of functionality and effectiveness, as well as a clear plan on how it will share its limited resources in supporting schools towards WSD. It therefore becomes imperative that CT members need to know exactly how each of them fit into the framework of supporting schools. Kruger (2009:7) also supports the clarification of roles and responsibilities as one of the enabling mechanisms to support and develop schools that are struggling to create a culture of teaching and learning.

After the workshop was held, the CTM put another mechanism in place to unite the team: following from his days as a Principal where he used to have short staff meetings every morning to brief the staff on issues, and to organize the school day, he instituted a daily briefing session in his office. This enabled every CT member to know exactly what was happening in all the schools within the circuit. During these meetings he would make announcements to the team, and would look into new developments that occurred. The team members also had the opportunity to provide feedback on their experiences and findings at particular schools, and where necessary, changes were made to the officials' weekly programmes to address areas of intervention at specific institutions. The CT members had greater appreciation for this intervention:

> *Every morning we report to each other what happened. We also experience how CT members dealt with issues at schools. This report back is a good learning opportunity and is very important for our development. (IMGM)*

"It is a positive experience to keep abreast of the developments at schools. It strengthens cooperation and builds the team morale. It also provides for open communication, and things

can then move much quicker. After the CTM has done the announcements for the day, he then provides the opportunity for each of us to raise particular issues". (School Psychologist)

From the above it became obvious that the CTM underwent a degree of personal transformation. He started to listen to the officials under his authority, and once that happened, the team started to work more closely together. The fact that he strived towards enhanced communication with the CT members is of particular importance, as Daft (2008: 661 – 667) views effective communication as the building block of any successful organization. The author claims that communication is a fundamental determining factor for success as it promotes motivation amongst team members, it is a source of information that aids decision-making, and it plays an important role in altering peoples' attitudes.

It has to be kept in mind that the CTM was managing the only way he knew best: as a Principal would do, with a strong emphasis on an autocratic approach to get things done. This aspect of his management style was most likely the cause that gave rise to the initial problems he experienced with the CT members. Furthermore: Principals and Departmental Officials are not always trained and skilled in transformational leadership, so it is often difficult for them to adapt to this role. This aspect will receive attention in the development of the model and the recommendations emanating from the research.

When one considers the developments that were taking place within the CT, there is clear correlation with the five stages of team formation that Tuckman and Jensen developed (Werner 2007:147 – 148):

- **Forming:** At this stage, the individual team members have not yet become a team. They are still finding out about each other and need to feel included; they seek to know one another's attitudes and backgrounds, and to establish the ground rules. Individuals are also keen to establish their own personal identity in the team and make an impression on their fellow team members. The main issues for the team, at this stage, are cohesion and involvement;
- **Storming:** This is the stage during the formation of the team where most conflict is encountered. It can be a very difficult time within the team, where team members will engage in conflict and test the limits. Individuals will bargain with each other as they try to sort out what each of them wants from the team process. Individuals will communicate their personal goals and it is at this stage that conflict may prevail when differences in individual goals are revealed. Individuals

within the team may resist control and show opposition to other team members. The major issues at this stage are team direction and the management of conflict;

- **Norming:** This is the stage where group norms are established such as the norms of behaviour and role allocation. The individuals within the group develop ways of working to forge closer relationships and harmony where mutual trust and respect exists. The team focuses on goals and delivering results. Individuals welcome feedback;
- **Performing:** This stage is concerned with actually getting on with the task in hand and achieving the overall objectives. The team will probably engage in group thinking and exclude non-team contributors. At this stage, the issues faced are more likely to be concerned with individual performance such as de-motivation. Some teams never reach this point as they are caught up in an earlier stage, and
- **Adjourning:** In this final stage, the team may disband because they have either completed the task or fellow members have left. Before the team disbands, they may reflect on their time together and then prepare to go their own ways. Some team members may experience feelings of separation and loss.

Based on my interaction with the CT, it is clear from the above that in the early months of 2011 when the CTM took up office and the in-fights between him and the CT members began, the CT found themselves in the storming phase. During 2012, when I worked with them in the execution of the fieldwork, the team progressed to the norming phase, and were on their way towards the performing phase.

Category 1.2: The plan of action was not developed in a participatory manner

The second category that emerged from the data gathered concerned the plan of action which the CT devised to address the state of underperformance in the four schools. At the opening of the schools in January 2011 (directly after the in-house conflict referred to in category 1.1 above) the CT visited each school in the circuit to introduce themselves to the schools. In the case of the four underperforming schools, the CT used the opportunity to interact with the management and staff about the fact that they had achieved below 60% in the 2010 National Senior Certificate (NSC) examinations. (In the WCED, all schools who obtain an average of below 60% are categorized as underperforming.) Table 5.2 below captures the pass percentages of each school, based on their 2010 NSC results:

Table 5.2: The 2010 NSC Examination pass rate of the four schools

SCHOOL	2010 ENROLMENT	NUMBER PASSED	PASS %
S High School	205	99	52.1
E High School	109	40	38.1
K High School	242	101	42.6
HG High School	168	75	45.2

Taking the autocratic approach that prevailed in the ranks of the CT, as described in category 1.1, into consideration, the analysis of the data generated clearly shows that the same top-down approach prevailed when the CT met and interacted with the four schools. Harsh words and at times blaming characterized the interaction between the CT and the four schools, which was the way in which the CTM found it appropriate to get his message across. I was able to deduce six distinctive issues that the CT put to these four schools that can, with the necessary modification, be built into the model that will form the outcome of this research study:

In the first place, the CTM made the fact that these schools were underperforming (based on the information in table 5.2) explicit. This was necessary to ensure that the schools clearly understood that they were seriously underperforming, and that they required assistance and support to improve:

> *I indicated to them that they were underperforming and also gave them the facts so that they could realize that they were not performing. (CTM)*

In the second place the CTM pointed out to them that they were able, with the necessary support, to perform at a much higher level:

> *I told them that they were at 40%, but that they actually were 80% schools and that we as a team would provide the necessary support for them to reach those outcomes. (CTM)*

Thirdly, I found that that the approach of the CT was one of support and development, not "inspection":

"Our message was to place our children and our country upfront. Therefore these schools realized that it was not inspection, and they started cooperating with the team. We were friendly, but firm. The schools felt that they did not want to disappoint us". (IMGM)

The CT then had a general session with the entire school's staff about the results of the school and the message of their support. Directly after that the team had a separate session with the SMTs to analyse the academic performance of the school, per subject:

> *After we addressed the entire staff, we took the SMTs separately, and looked at the results of each subject to determine what each subject had to do to improve. (IMGM)*

> *We looked at the gr. 12 results and identified those subjects that were not doing well at all. We stated very clearly that we have to work together as a team to turn the situation around. (IMGM)*

Fifthly, a strong sense of accountability from the schools' side was built into the message:

"I made it clear to my schools that there are ways of dealing with (1) incapacity and (2) progressive discipline, should they fall out of line. These are the two tools that are laid down to enable the entire school to march together. I also taught them that one has a school inside of a school: e.g. if you are the Maths HOD, you have a school of Maths and you must answer all the problems and issues regarding Maths … I also told them: 'You have the skills. You need to take care of these children. You must start to do things on your own also. There has to be no failures, only victors'". (IMGM)

"Our message was: 'We are underperforming. We are in this together.' What happened with the results is not good enough for our children. You must ask yourself: Why does your child not attend this school? You must develop this school in such a way that your child will want to be here. The child living in the shakes around the school is very important to us". (IMGM)

In the final instance, success would only be ensured by regular follow-up visits after this initial meeting with the schools:

"So I had to start following up on this. I even attended SMT meetings and became visible at these schools, making my presence clear. I told the Principal … that he had to see to it that the school succeeds". (IMGM)

From the above it was obvious that a top-down approach was followed to ensure that the schools' performance would improve dramatically. From my personal experience this bureaucratic approach was characteristic of the way in which Government Departments in the country operated: the WCED was putting pressure on the District Director who in turn put pressure on the CTM and then in turn the IMGMs were pressurized to deliver improved learner achievement results.

Byrne-Jiménez and Orr (2012:37) support the *modus operandi* followed by the CT to sit down and analyse the learner achievement results of the previous year, followed by the setting of goals and identification of areas for improvement. These authors quote various research studies which proved that this "singular focus on learning creates a high level of coherence, which has shown to be highly effective in disadvantaged schools." (2012:44).

In par. 2.7.2 of the research study the issue of accountability in the context of WSD was dealt with, and the need of support by the District Office highlighted. Taylor and Prinsloo (2005:12 – 13) also support the notion of a differentiated approach to school improvement. They distinguish between an authoritative, government-led approach towards underperforming schools (which they call Type I schools) and those schools that have the capacity to benefit from lighter interventions (called Type II schools). They are in agreement with Chinsamy (2002:4) that accountability measures have to be in place, and that these must be coupled by support to lever improved learning. They, too, stress the importance of training school managers to implement accountability measures, and training teachers in subject knowledge.

A differentiated approach to school development is also echoed by Mosselson (2008:2). Her point of view is that underperforming schools need to be assisted with organizational and management development which will enable them to benefit from other interventions. She emphasizes that change is a slow process, and needs to be done on a school-by-school basis.

While I appreciate the stance of Ngubane (2005:21 – 22) that a top-down approach in terms of WSD is undesirable, I have to agree with the other authors that schools have to be held accountable for the quality of teaching and learning that they offer. I found that, in cases where accountability measures are lacking, school managers had little commitment to improve the standard of education in their institutions. I also need to align my point of view to that of Mosselson (2008:2) and Chinsamy (2002:4) who emphasize the importance of the District Office in supporting the schools to higher levels of performance. Without support, schools will not be able to develop and transform.

In the final analysis, I discovered that the CT did not have a CIP in place. When I conducted the interview with the CTM early in February 2012, I found that there was no written plan of action on the table to support the development of these four

schools. It was only much later in the roll-out of the fieldwork that the CTM provided me with a document he developed, entitled "Strategic plan for Circuit 1: Roles, responsibilities and reporting." Although the document clearly set out the core duties of each CT member in terms of what it called "quality service delivery aspects", it listed the ten "imperatives of the District Director", namely:

- Management and governance of schools;
- Filling of posts/ HR management of schools;
- Learner accommodation;
- Infrastructure and maintenance;
- Increase in pass rate of NSC;
- Literature and Numeracy Improvement;
- Sustained performance in well-performing schools;
- Turn-around of poorly performing schools;
- Reaching of targets (i.e. academic targets each school has to reach), and
- Conducive conditions (i.e. school safety, security and discipline).

The problem I had with the above was that the "activities" contained in the document were generic statements which were not at all informed by the specific needs of the schools. The fact that these categories were called "imperatives of the District Director" was again for me symptomatic of the typical top-down, autocratic approach that prevailed in Government circles.

According to http://www3.hants.gov.uk/education/hais there is growing agreement across society that the State cannot, and should not, direct the actions of citizens without their cooperation. The authors state that progress in any arena of life is only possible if individuals and communities are willing to contribute to the solution. Public participation also has the potential to change how individuals and communities live and interact, and therefore it has a transformative effect on how people think about themselves and their role in society. It is against this background that, because the CT did not interact with the individual schools regarding their developmental needs, attempts to change the institutions around would not be likely to have any lasting effect.

DISCUSSION OF THEME TWO: THE SCHOOLS WERE NOT RECEIVING THE REQUIRED SUPPORT TO PREPARE THEIR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANS

I interviewed the Principals of the four schools individually after the interviews with the members of the CT were concluded. The aims of my interaction with them were (1) to build on and strengthen the positive relationship that developed during my presentation to them during the last months of 2011, and (2) to get more in-depth knowledge and greater understanding of the particular issues they grappled with in terms of WSD. The visits took place over two school days, during which I visited two schools per day and held interviews with the respective Principals in their offices. From the interviews and document analysis the following categories emerged:

Category 2.1: The schools were able to articulate the areas in which they required support

During the interviews my first aim was to acquaint myself with the dynamics of each school, after which I questioned the Principals on what their specific needs for support and intervention were. I purposefully decided to take this route so that I could cross-reference this information with the priorities listed in their SIPs during a follow-up visit. The members of the CT needed to have this kind of conversation with the Principals, but it was obvious from the discussion under category 1.2 that they one-sidedly focused on improved grade 12 results, rather than on WSD. The Principals were eager to share their priorities with me, and two important issues arose from the discussions:

In the first place, there was a strong emphasis on improved academic results. S High School stated that they aimed for a 75% pass rate at the end of 2012 and already had particular strategies in place to obtain this, such as afternoon classes and telematics classes (where learners could view subject-related DVDs in the school hall). E High School had its focus on a 70% pass rate, and added the importance of training sessions for both the teaching staff and the SMT. However, HG High School could only identify raising the level of learner achievement from 56.4% to 65% by the end of the year as a priority, and could not relate to any other aspect of school improvement. The CT identified this Principal as the weakest school manager in the circuit, and the poor quality of responses I got from him (compared to the other three Principals) confirmed his lack of understanding WSD.

The second common theme that ran through the interviews was the need for the FET CAs to come on board to support the subject teachers and assist the Heads of Department (HODs) in managing the curriculum. Accounting, Business Studies, Life Sciences, Mathematics and Physical Sciences were identified as the subjects that large numbers of learners failed.

The main problem that I had with the responses from the Principals in terms of the areas in which support was needed was that they focused almost entirely on only one aspect of SSE, i.e. learner achievement. It was also clear that the same mentality prevailed amongst members of the CT:

> *When the CT arrived at the school, they introduced themselves as people who were eager to help and support. The message they brought was working towards an <u>improvement in the results</u>, and that support they promised came forth.* (Principal: K High School) [own underlining.]

What is lacking in this regard is a holistic view of the school as an open system and recognizing that improved learner achievement as the outcome of WSD can only take place if a school is properly functional. The mistake made by both the CT and the SMTs of the four schools was to focus entirely on learner achievement, neglecting the task of ensuring that each school was basically functional. Westraad (2011:11) proved this point when GMSAF supported and uplifted many underperforming schools: if a school was not functional, everything needed to be investigated to ensure that the bare essentials were in place before focusing on other key areas of development.

Although the intention of CT was good in terms of supporting the schools to obtain improved learner achievement rates, their approach was not educationally sound. As each of the four schools was classified as “underperforming” (and in some instances the term “dysfunctional” was used) the CT’s main focus needed to be on WSE area 1: basic functionality of the school – as discussed in Chapter Two. From the interviews it was clear that the CT made considerable effort to assist the schools, but the fact remained that they did not pay sufficient attention to assisting the schools in getting the basics in place.

Category 2.2 The schools did not have school improvement plans in place

After the initial visit to the schools I returned a few days later to S High School to have a discussion with the entire SMT on how they conducted their SSE, what lessons they learnt from the process and what obstacles they faced when they drafted their SIP. During the interview I discovered that the school had not engaged in SSE at the end of 2011, and therefore did not have a SIP for 2012 in place. It was uncovered that they neglected this duty and that they did not see the importance and relevance of the process in terms of whole-school development – an aspect that was already covered in Chapter Two: many schools either do not have SIPs in place, or simply do it for the sake of compliance, but with no understanding of the importance and value of the exercise in terms of school improvement.

After I reported the discovery to the CTM, he made a survey amongst the other three schools and found out that none of them had their SIPs in place for 2012. The situation that arose was that neither the schools nor the CT had their improvement plans in order.

The above state-of-affairs led me to discover that, despite the support the CT was giving to the schools, they themselves had not given the SIP and CIP any thought, and did not at that stage see the relevance of integrating service delivery in a more effective way by working according to improvement plans. This viewpoint was strengthened by the discovery that HG High School underwent WSE in May 2011, and when I examined the report and critically looked at the situation at the school, I could not find any trace that the recommendations contained in the report were being addressed either by the school or the CT. It therefore became clear to me that neither the schools nor the CT recognized the importance of WSD.

5.3.2 Step Two: Deciding what to do

At a meeting with the CTM and the IMGMs we took into account that the schools indicated their need for external intervention. The fact that a positive working relationship between the four schools and the CT had been established made it relatively easy for the CT to take the schools to a next level of intervention. We agreed that this intervention was to (1) assist the schools to develop a SIP for at least the remainder of the 2012 academic year, and (2) to assist the CT to develop a CIP for supporting the schools holistically – at least for the rest of the current academic

year. We also agreed that a workshop with the schools and CT would be the ideal way to address this priority, and to nurture the existing relationship. The CTM therefore arranged for such a session to take place.

5.3.3 Step Three: Implement the action plan

The workshop took place in the school hall of S High School. The CTM and IMGMs were present, as well as the entire SMTs of the four schools. Each school's SMT was grouped together around a large table where they could sit and interact with each other as they worked through the process. The fact that I was requested to facilitate the workshop clearly indicated to me that the CTM and IMGMs were uncertain on how to go about the process of developing a SIP, which strengthened my perception that they did not know much about this process and therefore did not feel comfortable enough to conduct it.

STAGE ONE: UNDERTAKING SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION

After I informed the participants about the nature and purpose of SSE, I handed out the SSE instrument based on the nine areas of WSE (See Appendix F). I purposefully bound the questionnaires of areas 1 – 3 (basic functionality, management and communication, and governance and relationships) into a separate booklet, and also did so with areas 4 – 6 (quality of teaching and learning and educator development, curriculum provisioning and learner achievement) and areas 7 – 9 (school safety, security and discipline, school infrastructure and parents and the community). The purpose for this was to maximize each SMT member's cooperation in completing the exercise. This meant that at each of the four tables where the schools were seated, they would work in smaller groups of two to three people each, each of the sub-groups working through one of the three booklets. While the groups were working through the questionnaires, the CT members and I circulated amongst the groups to provide guidance and assistance where needed.

At the end of this first part of session one, I allowed each of the three sub-groups per school to report to the rest of their SMT colleagues what their scoring and results were, and to discuss this with each other. After this, I led them into a second phase of this session: each SMT had to identify at least one, but not more than two priorities from each of the 9 areas of WSE that they considered to be of significance to the

school's whole-school development. In table 5.2 below the results emanating from this exercise per school are captured.

Table 5.3: The top priorities that each school identified for each of the nine areas of WSE

WSE AREA	K HIGH SCHOOL	S HIGH SCHOOL	HG HIGH SCHOOL	E HIGH SCHOOL
1. Basic functionality	Policies on late coming and absenteeism for learners and educators had to be developed.	Language and religious policies had to be developed	Policies and procedures on late coming were needed. Graffiti and tidiness of the premises had to be dealt with.	School policies needed to be communicated to all stakeholders. There had to be follow-up on absenteeism
2. Management and communication	Relationships amongst staff and management had to be addressed.	Relationships amongst staff and management had to be addressed.	Delegation of tasks was unclear. Attention to monitoring and follow-up of tasks.	Roles and responsibilities of SMT members needed to be sorted. Monitoring of tasks needed attention.
3. Governance and relationships	The SGB was not supporting the school sufficiently.	The support from the SGB was limited. The SGB did not have mechanisms in place to monitor the school's performance.	There was no relationship between members of the SGB.	SGB members needed training to fulfil their duties.
4. Quality of teaching and learning and educator development	Educators struggled with classroom management. Educational resources were not utilized.	Record keeping of professional development activities was lacking.	Educators did not plan lessons properly. Educational resources were not optimally used.	Teachers needed training in applying various teaching methods. Teachers needed assistance to help learners with barriers to learning.
5. Curriculum provisioning	The school's assessment policy was not properly implemented.	Planning the implementation of the curriculum was a problem.	Planning the implementation of the curriculum was a problem.	Teachers struggled to use technology when teaching.
6. Learner achievement	The quality of passes needed attention.	The school's pass rate needed to be 70%.	A 70% pass rate was aimed for.	The overall pass rate for 2012 needed to be 70%.
7. School safety, security and discipline	Gangsterism was a threat to school safety.	A safety policy for the school was needed.	Gangsterism was a threat to school safety.	Gangsterism was a threat to school safety.
8. School infrastructure	Urgent repairs to damaged doors and electrical wiring was needed.	The school needed to develop a maintenance policy	Urgent repairs were needed for parts of the school building.	Renovation of the school walls had to be done. Sport fields needed upgrading.

9. Parents and the community	There was a lack of parental involvement in the sub-committees of the school.	There was a need for a workshop with parents, to get them involved in the matters of the school.	Parents needed to be encouraged to visit the school and participate in the programmes of the school	There is no support from parents - their involvement is not satisfactory.

STAGE TWO: IDENTIFICATION OF TOP PRIORITIES FOR 2012

Following the input that the schools provided (captured in table 5.2) where they identified a maximum of two priorities for each of the nine areas of WSE, the next step was to guide them to identify a maximum of four priorities from the entire list. The reason for limiting the number of priorities was that the first term of the year had already expired, and there would only be eight months left in which the SIPs and CIP could be implemented.

To enable them to achieve this outcome a sheet of paper with the following headings was given to each group to fill in:

- Identify and name the specific priority areas;
- Indicate what had been done (completed) up to that stage in 2012 with regards to each of the priorities, and
- Indicate what was outstanding and therefore needed to be attended to before the end of the 2012 academic year, in order to address the specific priorities.

The raw data obtained from this exercise is captured in Table 5.3 below:

Table 5.4: Identification of main priorities by each school

K HIGH SCHOOL	
Priority 1:	Shortage of teachers
What has been done	Apply for additional posts
Priority 2:	Gangsterism
What has been done	Meeting with parents, broader community and police structures
Priority 3:	Late coming
What has been done	All late comers have been recorded and their parents informed
What still needs to be done	Communicate the problem to the community
Priority 4:	Broken doors, painting and furniture (desks and chairs)
What has been done	Applied for emergency repairs
What still needs to be done	Follow up with the WCED
What still needs to be done	Install CCTV cameras Training session to be organized by Safe Schools for learners who are violent, aggressive and hostile
S HIGH SCHOOL	
Priority 1:	Learner achievement
What has been done	Extra classes
What still needs to be done	Vacation (autumn) classes Tutoring Career exhibitions Motivational speakers Parent involvement

Priority 2:	Staff development
What has been done	Workshops at the District Office were attended
What still needs to be done	Motivational speakers Short courses to empower educators
Priority 3:	School and learner safety
What has been done	Volunteers to patrol the schools were brought on board Metal detectors
What still needs to be done	Razor wires Surveillance cameras
HG HIGH SCHOOL	
Priority 1:	Learner achievement
What has been done	Parent and learner grade meetings Set targets and extra classes Devise monitoring mechanism
What still needs to be done	Quarterly analysis of results Learner motivation Feedback to parents
Priority 2:	School safety, security and discipline
What has been done	Security officials have been brought on board SGB and parents have become involved Meetings with Police and the community took place
What still needs to be done	Educate learners about gangsterism Encourage learners to be involved in extra-curricular activities Work closer with the police Engage social worker
Priority 3:	Curriculum Provisioning
What has been done	Management workshop Regular feedback from management meetings Departmental meeting
What still needs to be done	Monitor the plans Class visits Resources
E HIGH SCHOOL	
Priority 1:	Learner achievement
What has been done	Extra classes on critical subjects (morning and afternoon classes) Learners have registered for Maths Olympiad to improve results
What still needs to be done	Engage internal classes (gr. 8 – 11) on extra classes Change teaching styles, make lessons more interesting and exciting Regular informal assessment (weekly tests)
Priority 2:	Absenteeism and late coming (due to gangsterism)
What has been done	Parental meeting explaining the policy on learner attendance Meeting with community leaders in order to resolve the problems
What still needs to be done	Intervention from community safety leaders and WCED to ensure safety
Priority 3:	Appropriate monitoring system
What has been done	Each Department is using its own monitoring tool
What still needs to be done	Common monitoring tool to ensure quality of teaching and learning

Priority 4:	Lack of clear communication on policies
What has been done	Some policies have been reviewed
What still needs to be done	Induction of all stakeholders at the school

The above responses from the four schools were put up for everybody to view and to critique by providing inputs and ideas. This step was purposefully included in the *modus operandi*: to allow these groups of professionals to start learning from each other, thereby installing the concept of collaborative and action learning, which are important concepts within the AR paradigm. By following this plan of action I also deliberately wanted them to view their own school's situation within a broader, more holistic context of the problems and pro-active steps taken to address these, by other schools which find themselves in a similar situation.

The following trends were identified from the responses of the participants:

(1) Enhanced learner achievement rates were common to all the schools. Most of them aimed for a 70% pass rate at the end of 2012. K High School did not explicitly mention learner achievement as a priority, but when it was pointed out by the group, the school realized the omission and agreed to include it in their SIP;

(2) Another priority that was common to all the schools (because they are situated in the same geographical area) was the threat to school safety and security in the form of gangsterism that was rife in their community;

(3) Most of the schools identified an aspect that could be related to the WSE area of basic functionality. In the case of K High School the issue was late-coming. E High School also identified late-coming and absenteeism, and added school policies to their list, and

(4) In addition, the analysis pointed out that none of the schools explicitly mentioned support to the SMTs, which was the focus of this research project. Once I had pointed this out to them, the schools agreed to add it to the list of priorities. A discussion on this issue took place, and all the schools were in agreement that, as a starting point, the focus of support to the SMTs in the current year needed to be on their roles and responsibilities.

The discussion then focused on the CIP. The participants (CT members and SMTs) reached an agreement that the SIPs needed to contain those issues which the schools could implement themselves, whilst the CIP had to contain the activities that the CT would perform in supporting the schools. The latter had to dove-tail with the priorities listed in the SIPs so that the intended outcomes could be reached at the end of the day.

The next step was to identify and agree on a template that the schools would use to write-up their SIPs. After discussion, the following structure was decided upon:

- Priorities (stating explicitly what the main focus of support/improvement needed to be);
- Action steps (the activities which had to be taken to address the identified priorities);
- Timeframes (indicating when the action steps had to be taken), and
- Person(s) responsible (indicating who would lead the completion of the activities).

The provisional SIPs of each school that were written up appear in tables 5.5 - 5.8 below:

Table 5.5: Provisional SIP for S High School

PRIORITY ISSUE	ACTION STEPS	TIMEFRAMES	RESPONSIBLE
Learner achievement	Extra classes for grade 12 learners	January - September	Principal to coordinate
	Vocation classes for grade 12 learners	March/April June/July September	Principal to coordinate
	Expose learners to career exhibition	May	Deputy Principal
	Grade 12 learners to write a common examination paper	June and September	CTM to coordinate
	School submits fortnightly reports to IMG re learner performance	April – September	Principal
	SMT members and Grade Heads to have monthly sessions with top achievers and failing learners and their parents	At the end of each month, April to September	Principal to coordinate
School safety	Engage Security volunteers	January	HOD
	Install metal detectors	January	HOD
	Follow up on meetings with community leaders and police	April	HOD
	Put up razor wire	June	HOD
	Set up surveillance camera	August	HOD
Staff development	Educators attend District workshops	April – September	Chief Curriculum Advisor

Note: the blue wording refers to actions that (according to the school) have already been taken.

The red wording refers to actions that (according to the school) must still be taken

Table 5.6: Provisional SIP for K High School

PRIORITY ISSUE	ACTION STEPS	TIMEFRAMES	RESPONSIBLE
Learner achievement	Extra classes for grade 12 learners	January - September	Principal to coordinate
	Vocation classes for grade 12 learners	March/April June/July September	Principal to coordinate
	Expose learners to career exhibition	May	Deputy Principal
	Grade 12s write common paper	June and September	CTM to coordinate
	School submits fortnightly reports to IMG re learner performance	April – September	Principal
	SMT members and Grade Heads to have monthly sessions with top achievers and failing learners and their parents	At the end of each month, April to September	Principal to coordinate
School safety	Meeting with parents and broader community structures	February	Principal
	Install CCTV cameras	July	Deputy Principal
	Follow up on meetings with parents, community leaders	April	Principal
	Contact SAPS for additional assistance on gangsterism	May	Principal
Late coming	Record late comers and inform their parents	January – November	Secretary
	Advocacy on late-coming to all stakeholders	April	Principal
	Involvement of broader community	May	Principal
	Update policy and procedure on late coming, absenteeism and truancy	May	Entire SMT

Note: the blue wording refers to actions that (according to the school) have already been taken.

The red wording refers to actions that (according to the school) must still be taken

Table 5.7: Provisional SIP for HG High School

PRIORITY ISSUE	ACTION STEPS	TIMEFRAMES	RESPONSIBLE
Learner achievement	Hold parent and grade meetings	January	Grade Head
	Set targets	January	SMT
	Instate extra classes	February onwards	Grade Head
	Devise a monitoring mechanism	February	SMT
	Quarterly analysis of results	March, June, September	SMT
	Learner motivation	May and August	Grade Head
	Feedback to parents	April, July, September	Principal
	Grade 12s write common paper	June and September	CTM to coordinate
	School submits fortnightly reports to IMG re learner performance	April – September	Principal
	SMT members and Grade Heads to have monthly sessions with top achievers and failing learners and their parents	At the end of each month, April to September	Principal to coordinate
School safety	Involvement of safety officers	January	Deputy Principal
	Involve SGB and parents	February	Principal
	Meeting with police and community	February	Principal
	Educate learners re gangsterism	April	Deputy Principal
	Involve learners in extra-curricular activities	April – November	HOD
	Liaise with SAPS	May	Principal
	Engage the social worker	April – November	Principal
Late coming, absenteeism and learner discipline (related to a SMT challenge)	Update school policy on late coming, attendance and truancy	May	SMT
	Update school's Code of Conduct	July	SMT

Note: the blue wording refers to actions that (according to the school) have already been taken.

The red wording refers to actions that (according to the school) must still be taken

Table 5.8: Provisional SIP for E High School

PRIORITY ISSUE	ACTION STEPS	TIMEFRAMES	RESPONSIBLE
Learner achievement	Have extra classes for gr. 12 learners	January - September	Grade Head
	Learners participate in the Maths Olympiad	March	HOD
	Extra classes for grade 8 – 11 learners	April – November	Grade Heads
	Workshop on teaching methodologies	May	SMT
	Write weekly tests	April – November	HODs
	Grade 12s write common paper	June and September	CTM to coordinate
	School submits fortnightly reports to IMG re learner performance	April – September	Principal
	SMT members and Grade Heads to have monthly sessions with top achievers and failing learners and their parents	At the end of each month, April to September	Principal to coordinate
School safety	Involvement of security officers	April	Deputy Principal
	Meeting with SAPS, community leaders and parents	April	Principal
	Educate learners on gangsterism	May	Grade Head
School policies	Update school policy on absenteeism, truancy and late coming	May	SMT
	Develop a common monitoring tool	June	SMT
	Information sessions to stakeholders on policies that have been developed.	July – September	SMT

Note: the blue wording refers to actions that (according to the school) have already been taken.

The red wording refers to actions that (according to the school) must still be taken

At the end of the workshop the participants agreed to meet in the first week of the second term. The agenda for the meeting would be (1) to share the issues emanating from the CIP (which would still be drawn up) and (2) to reflect on the experiences of the workshop. In concluding this phase of the action research, it is important to note that all the participants fully cooperated during the workshop. They were totally engrossed in the activities and actively participated in each step of the workshop. I purposefully held the session where they would reflect on what the workshop meant for them, back till the next meeting, so that they were provided the time and opportunity to reflect outside of the workshop on what they've learnt. Their reflections are captured in par. 5.3.4, which appears later in the text.

STAGE THREE: THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE CIRCUIT IMPROVEMENT PLAN

A few days after the workshop with the CT and SMTs during which the SIPs were developed, I met with the CT members at the District Office to engage in the construction of the CIP. We collectively reflected on the lessons learnt and the issues that emerged at the workshop, and agreed on the following principles that would guide the construction of the CIP:

- There was no CIP that was based on the SIPs, in place and we therefore had to start this process from the very beginning;
- There was also no formal structure (template) for the development of a CIP in place. We therefore agreed that we would follow the same structure that we did with the development of the SIPs, namely priorities, action steps, timeframes and person(s) responsible;
- The CIP had to contain only those activities that the CT members would perform in supporting the schools, whilst the activities that the schools had to undertake, were already listed in their SIPs;
- An analysis of the SIPs clearly indicated that the four schools were in need of support re the gangsterism issue they had to deal with. The CT members agreed that the Safe Schools Coordinator at the District Office had to be called upon to assist in this regard;
- The CT would also take up the issue of generic training on the roles and responsibilities of the SMTs, as expressed during the workshop;
- The interviews I had with the four Principals at the beginning of the fieldwork brought to light that there was a strong need for teachers to be supported in terms of dealing with learners who experienced barriers to learning, and
- In the final instance, our discussions led us to take the issue of the professional development of the CT members themselves into consideration for the CIP. We came to

the conclusion that the implementation of the CIP was indeed a project that had to be managed, and therefore provided for a course in Project Management.

Taking all of the above into consideration, the provisional CIP that emerged is captured in table 5.9 below:

Table 5.9: The initial Circuit Improvement Plan

NO	PRIORITY ISSUE	ACTION STEPS	TIMEFRAME	RESPONSIBLE
1.	Learner achievement	Arrange for common exam papers to be written	June, September	CTM
		Organize training sessions on dealing with learners with barriers to learning	April to September	School Psychologist
		Organize workshops on Classroom Management	May	CTM via CCA
		Organize on-site support to teachers dealing with problematic subjects	April to September	CTM via CCA
		Organize motivational speaker(s)	May	CTM
2.	School safety security and discipline	Safe Schools' Coordinator to develop workshops on dealing with gangsterism	June	Safe Schools Coordinator
		Each school to develop/update its policies on late coming, truancy and absenteeism	June	IMG managers to coordinate
		Assist schools in follow-up meetings with community and SAPS structures	May – June	IMG managers to coordinate
3.	Empowerment of SMTs	Negotiate the content of such workshops with the SMTs	April	CTM
		Prepare the workshops materials	May	CTM and IMG managers
		Organize venue and catering	May	
		Deliver the workshop	June	
		Monitor the implementation of workshop outcomes	July - September	
4.	Empowerment of the Circuit Team members (and co-opted members from other sections of the District Office)	Workshop on Project Management	May – June	CTM to coordinate

5.3.4 Step four: Evaluate the action

At the beginning of the second term of the 2012 academic year, a follow-up meeting of all the SMT members of the four schools as well as the CTM and two IMGMs took place in the staffroom of E High School. During the first part of the meeting the CIP was presented to the participants. The issues that informed the construction thereof were explained to the meeting, and the content of the document was discussed with them. There was excitement amongst the SMT members when they saw how the CIP supplemented the activities listed in their SIPs. However, there was one aspect that they strongly expressed which was related to CIP priority one (learner achievement): the schools urgently requested that this particular aspect had to be more subject-specific. This meant that the CIP had to provide for support from the FET CAs at the District Office to the subject teachers at their schools in terms of enhancing teaching and learning in the subjects offered at the school. This further implied that the CAs had to be brought on board in the process. The CTM agreed to make the necessary arrangements via the CCA. He requested me to do the formal presentation to the CAs (again on the premise that I had a holistic view of the developments and would be able to respond to any "technical questions" that could be posed at the workshop).

The second leg of the session was devoted to a reflection on the lessons the participants learnt from the process of developing their SIPs. Based on the feedback obtained from the SMT members, I deduced the following four themes:

- The first theme clearly emphasized that this was an empowering and capacity-building exercise:

  "This was one of the most informative processes as we were never workshopped about it. Now I know that the SIP is intended to be a living document for the school. It also outlines the specific activities, strategies and interventions that each school will implement to ensure academic success for all students … It empowers me because the SIP offers a strategic and integrated process with the potential to deliver sustained improvements in schools by improving the performance of teachers and learner achievements as well". (Deputy Principal)

  "The first session for me was intimidating as I was not prepared and not aware of what was going to be asked. As the session was going on I became more confident to respond to the questions. The most important lesson was about the SIP. The response from my fellow SMTs was empowering. It gave me more confidence in developing our SIP and involving all the stakeholders of the school. As an individual I have learnt a lot and empowered (myself)". (Deputy Principal)

  The most important lesson was learning how to design an action plan. I was also exposed to the role of management in developing programmes for the school. (HOD)

The second theme centred around the benefits the SMT members experienced by interacting with their colleagues from the other schools involved in the research project:

> "Meeting managers from other schools was exciting. Sitting together, discussing the individual school's challenge, I noted that these challenges were commonly the same for all schools. What makes them unique to each other is how they are addressed individually by the schools. The discussions were empowering in that they encouraged enquiries so that one does not sit with a problem alone. Assistance can be obtained if you work with people. A foundation has been laid for the possible support from managers of other schools". (Deputy Principal)

> "Sitting down as SMT members around issues that affect our schools showed me the seriousness around bringing solutions to those problems. I also learnt that honesty and transparency are most important when it comes to problems that surround us, in order to be helped. After these sessions that we had I felt so empowered and able to tackle some problematic issues within the department. With the confidence that I gained from these brainstorming sessions I feel like kinds of sessions can be held time and again". (HOD)

The third theme dealt with the importance of reflection on their daily management activities:

> *The sessions were fruitful to us as a school because we were able to reflect on what we have planned and make some changes that were needed. (Deputy Principal)*

> "We also had time to reflect on what we had already implemented since January 2012 and what still needs to be done … I have learnt that it is important that SMT members meet on a regular basis to reflect on progress with activities. This enables managers to immediately pick up if there are due dates that are not honoured and intervention strategies can be implemented immediately. The interaction with my colleagues has gained me confidence to handle the SIP." (Deputy Principal)

- The fourth theme that emerged expressed appreciation for the gradual (step-by-step) way in which the workshops was conducted, making it easier for participants to gain confidence in mastering each element of the process:

> "I have learnt a lot because I was able to specifically focus in certain areas of the SIP. I also learnt that I need to look at one thing at a time, e.g. looking at three areas of development (3 focus areas). Although development is a process I have to a certain extent been able to set achievable targets. I think I still need some time to master the process. Where possible I would be glad if I can go through the process again". (HOD)

From the above themes there was overwhelming evidence that the participants experienced the benefits of action learning. McGill and Brockbank (2004:11) explain that action learning is a continuous process of learning and reflection that happens with the support of a group of colleagues, working on real issues with the intention of getting things done. Such a collaborative process enables people to take an active stand towards life, overcomes the tendency to be passive towards the pressures of life and work, and aims to benefit both the individual and the organization.

These authors (2004:13) also point out that action learning builds on the relationship between reflection and action. Learning by experience involves reflection (the reconsidering of past events), making sense of one's actions, and finding new ways of behaving at future events. They believe that reflection is a necessary precursor to effective action and that learning from experience can be enhanced by deliberate attention to this relationship.

Another aspect that emerged from the feedback by the participants was the value of sitting down and interacting with each other. McGill and Brockbank (2004:14) highlight the importance of this:

> The answer lies in the deliberate and intentional provision of time and space for the set members to engage in reflective learning. Action learning multiplies the kind of support which a trusted friend or colleague would offer, listening without judgement and, without giving advice, helping the individual concerned to discover his or her own solution.

In addition, the feedback from the participants revealed that they experienced the event as an empowering session which assisted in building their capacity. Flanagan and Finger (2004:550 – 551) stress the importance for managers to empower their workforce to reach new levels of performance, which implies participative work practices and delegation of appropriate authority and responsibility. Conditions to allow empowerment to take root have to be nurtured. They claim that *"trust is the mortar for the bricks of empowerment"* – thereby emphasizing the importance of trust (which is dealt with more extensively in par. 6.3 of the thesis). These authors also underline the fact that empowered people are willing to take risks and by doing so they gain new insights, meet challenges, stretch their limits and solve problems.

My personal observation was that the positive climate in which the workshop took place, treating the participants as equals, guiding them step-by-step through the process, as well as valuing their inputs as building-blocks towards the construction of the bigger picture (i.e. the development of the SIPs and CIP) strongly enabled a relationship of trust to take place on two levels: firstly amongst the participants themselves, and secondly between me as the facilitator and the participants.

5.3.5 Step five: reflection and lessons learnt

During the workshop a significant number of issues were accomplished. In the first instance, the outcome of this AR cycle was achieved: each school developed its provisional SIP, and the CT was able to construct their provisional CIP.

Secondly, the entire SMT of each school was actively involved in the creation of their SIP. What was remarkable in this regard was that each of the four schools was totally engrossed in the task at hand. This became evident in the concentrated and concerted manner in which the members of each SMT discussed the needs of their particular school. It was often difficult to stop them at the end of an activity (either to get feedback from them or to move on to the following leg of the process) because they continually requested more time to wrap up their discussions. Throughout the workshop I got a very strong impression that this may be the first time that they were afforded the opportunity to *really* engage in whole-school development – my observation in this regard was later confirmed by one of the IMGMs.

Thirdly, the feedback from the SMT, as outlined in par. 5.3.4 strongly indicates that the workshop was an empowering and capacity building process for all of them. It also revealed that the members of the SMTs realized that change and transformation at their schools had to take place in order for their institutions of learning to progress towards WSD. This realization strongly links with the reasons for choosing the Critical Theory paradigm and AR as the design and methodology of this research study: the researcher intentionally sets out to change the situation being studied, thereby transforming society, and ensuring that change will be authentic and sustainable by actively involving the participants in the research process.

In the fourth place, it was clear that the members of the SMTs were willing to be active participants in implementing the improvement strategies they listed in their SIPs. This was evident in the fact that they agreed to take responsibility for the activities listed in the SIPs whilst the CT members would oversee the implementation of the activities in the CIP. In addition, the fact that they could identify action steps that they had already taken in addressing some of their priorities, as outlined in tables 5.4 – 5.7, was proof of their commitment to ensure the successful outcome of this venture.

Another positive aspect that was evident from the commencement of the workshop was that the members of the SMTs had a clear picture of the problems that their respective schools experienced. This became evident from the active way in which they discussed and listed

the issues on the worksheets given to them: not for one moment did they sit and waste time thinking things up. It became clear to me that these people only needed a situation to be facilitated where they were afforded the time and opportunity to reflect on their schools' situation and be given a platform to become involved in WSD.

Although a number of positive issues happened during the workshop, my reflection of the process that took place made me realize that there were five issues with which I was not completely satisfied, and which I would do differently if I had to conduct this process next time.

Firstly, not all the members of the CT were involved in the development of the CIP. The CTM and two IMGMs were mainly the only active participants as they worked with the high schools. As explained in Chapter Four, the two Curriculum Advisors (CAs) attached to the CT dealt exclusively with the primary schools. Because this research study focused only on high schools, these two officials did not have any direct input into the process. In addition, the school social worker and school psychologist also focused 95% of their time and efforts on the primary schools and became involved in the high schools on an ad-hoc basis. During the time of the fieldwork the post of Administrative Development Assistant (ADA) was vacant and as a result, there was no involvement of such an official in the research. However, when the CT develops future CIPs which will include primary schools, these officials will have to be part of the development, with the ADA post having been filled.

In the second place, when I reflected on the templates used for the development of the CIP and SIP, I realized that (taking the discussion in par. 2.6.2 into consideration) budgets and resources needed were omitted from the template. Looking back at what happened I realized that I became so overanxious in my approach to the workshop, especially with regards to the development of the two sets of improvement plans, that I did not give these aspects any attention at that stage. These two issues would have to be incorporated when both the CT and the schools do their CIP and SIPs for 2013.

Another aspect related to the development of the SIP was the fact that only the SMTs were involved in the process. Other important stakeholders, such as the administrative and teaching staff members, members of the Representative Council of Learners (RCLs), SGB members, as well as community leaders were at this stage left out of the picture. The Principal of E High School also felt strongly that this was a serious omission. However, based on the empowerment of all the SMT members to take the process forward, this

exercise can then be decentralized at school level so that, when the SIPs for 2013 are developed, all the relevant stakeholders are brought on board.

Fourthly, I realized that the CTM, IMGMs and most SMT members were so preoccupied with achieving improved learner outcomes at the end of the year that the aspect of basic functionality did not feature as strongly in the SIPs as it should have. Again, based on the statement by Westraad (2011:11) that where schools are underperforming, the Departmental officials first had to ensure that the school is basically functional before other areas of development were attended to, I realized that this aspect had not received the attention it required. This aspect needed to be addressed by both the CT and the SMTs in the development of their improvement plans for the following academic year.

In the final instance (linked to the fourth issue above) I realized that, although each school set a specific target for the overall pass rate at the end of the year, there were no subject-specific issues included under the priority of learner achievement. As an example, no subject (such as Geography) was mentioned by name, and there were no indications of the specific needs that had to be addressed to support enhanced learner achievements in the subject, such as e.g. map work. This aspect had to be taken up in the SIPs and CIP of the following years. However, in the current year, teachers needed support from the District Office to reach the targets they set for the 2012, and this need gave rise to action research cycle two.

5.4 ACTION RESEARCH CYCLE TWO: SUPPORT FROM THE OTHER PILLARS OF THE DISTRICT OFFICE WAS NEEDED TO ASSIST WITH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INTERVENTION PLANS

5.4.1 Step One: Problem Identification

This cycle has two origins: Firstly, at the end of the workshop discussed in par. 5.3.3 the SMT members realized the need for the FET CAs to come on board of the intervention strategy by assisting the educators in the management and implementation of the curriculum. Secondly, at the end of par. 5.3.5, my reflection on the workshop led to the realization that the SIPs and CIP had to be more detailed in terms of which subject-specific interventions were needed to support the subject teachers.

As outlined in Chapter Four, the FET CAs were centralized at the District Office and worked across the six circuits of the District to support the high schools in managing and

implementing the curriculum in grades 10 to 12. The problem that the research study faced was to find a mechanism to get the CAs on board of the roll-out of the SIPs and CIP. If the teachers did not get the required support in their respective subjects, learner achievement would be impaired. In addition, the fact that there was no mention of any specific subject intervention required by the schools up to this moment of the fieldwork, contributed to the problem because there would be no agenda for the CAs to interact with the subject teachers if the needs for support and assistance had not been made explicit.

5.4.2 Step Two: Designing the action plan

The CTM called a meeting with all the FET CAs where I interacted with them on the nature of the research study and secured their involvement in the support provided to the HODs and other subject teachers at the four schools. This route of communication had to be followed because of the hierarchical nature of the Department's operations. In order to access the system I had to follow the required protocol which did pose a problem as it was time-consuming to wait for the event to take place, and also frustrating in as far as the silo-mentality that prevailed within Government structures where groups of officials were protective of their territory. This state of affairs is, in my opinion and based on my experience, not conducive to service delivery, but at that stage I had no other alternative but to follow the rules.

The meeting took place in one of the boardrooms in the District Office building. Apart from the FET CAs, the CTM was the only other official present. He introduced me and referred to the fact that I was involved in a research project in his circuit. I presented the CAs with the same presentation I gave to the CT in August 2011 when I introduced the nature of the research to them. I also gave each FET CA a hand-out of the ethical considerations and talked them through the document. As the timeslot given to me was very limited, I could not arrange for interviews with them. However, I compensated for this by developing a simple questionnaire and handing it to each one. The purpose of the questionnaire was to obtain information from them on how they went about supporting the teachers in the four schools, what successes they experienced, and what the major challenges were that they faced when working with underperforming schools. The rationale behind this was to try and get as much information from each of them in the short space of time to my disposal about their experiences relating to curriculum implementation. The CAs agreed to send their responses to me by the following week. (A copy of the questionnaire is attached in Appendix E).

At the beginning of the following week the CTM phoned me and also forwarded emails from the CCA in which he encouraged all FET CAs *not* to participate in the research. He claimed that he was never consulted on the matter (despite the fact that I was in possession of previous correspondence via email from the CTM informing him of the meeting and the purpose thereof). I later learnt from an IMGM that there were personal issues between the CTM and CCA and that my research project was part of the battle between the two of them.

Only one FET CA responded by sending me his questionnaire. The CTM and I were of the opinion that a single official's response on how he supported the teaching and learning of his subject in the four schools was very limited – we needed a holistic perspective from the majority of FET CAs. We therefore had to seek an alternative route to reach the intended outcome.

The phenomenon that manifested itself in this regard was resistance to change. Van Deventer and Kruger (2009:41 – 42) cite two categories of resistance to change. The first category deals with the psychological reasons for the resistance, whilst the second has to do with organizational reasons for resisting change:

- The psychological reasons for resisting change are (1) loss of the familiar and reliable, (2) loss of personal choice and values, (3) possible loss of authority, (4) not understanding the reasons for change, and (5) lack of skills and motivation.
- The organizational reasons for resisting change are (1) a lack of leadership skills which results in an absence of explicit aims and effective delegation, (2) a lack of effective management skills which results in insufficient infrastructure to translate principle into action, (3) failure to recognize the social side of the work, and not providing staff with an appropriate working environment, (4) inappropriate working procedures which are based on power relationships and political processes which are often accompanied by humiliating administrative procedures, (5) immature social networks based on competition, secrecy and fear of criticism, (6) restricted and poor quality communication which is usually one-way rather than two-way, and (7) a preference for tradition rather than experience combined with knowledge, skills and creativity.

Reflecting on the events that took place, I do acknowledge that there was a resistance to change. However, after the fieldwork was conducted and I gained more insight into the internal operations of the District Office, I cannot completely rule out the possibility that there also was a power struggle between the two officials.

Zuber-Skerritt (2009:93) refers to research which identified three major interrelated factors required for corporate revitalization: (1) coordination or teamwork (e.g. between workers and management), (2) a high level of commitment necessary for coordinated action, and (3) new competencies for problem-solving as a team, such as analytical and interpersonal skills. She adds that the research advocates a change which is based on work and task alignment, starting at the periphery with general managers and moving gradually towards top management (i.e. a bottom-up approach) and concludes that successful change efforts focus on the work itself, not on abstractions. For this research study her statement implies that there has to be a strong focus on the coordination of the completion of specific tasks (i.e. people's focus has to be action-based) whilst they learn new skills and acquire fresh insights on how to perform the functions allocated to them.

The solution we came up (with the aid of the IMGMs) was a radical departure from the original intention: if the FET CAs were not willing to participate in the research – specifically with regards to how other pillars of the District Office needed to support the implementation of the improvement plans – we would call a workshop for the Principals and HODs of the schools to consider two important issues in this regard: (1) the specific needs that each school required from each pillar of the District Office in terms of support and assistance, and (2) to consider how each pillar could improve service delivery to the schools (based on the schools' prior experience of each pillar up to that moment in time).

The above approach meant that I was working directly with the schools instead of the District Office. The justification for this was that the schools would provide the CTM and IMGMs with the necessary information to channel through the hierarchical structure of the District Office. In this way, their inputs would not be associated with the research, and they would be able to obtain the support they required. This *modus operandi* provided for a "bottom-up approach" which allowed the participants at grass-roots (i.e. school) level to let their voices be heard on the issues that concerned them the most – which is in line with the research results quoted by Zuber-Skerritt (2009:93) above.

In addition, upon reflection of the content of the CIP and SIPs, it was noted that (as these documents stood) they did not make subject-related support explicit. Therefore a session on identifying specific curriculum-related issues on which assistance was needed could be identified and tabled at the top management meetings of the District Office. In the final instance, we argued that this course of action would empower the HODs to take responsibility and ownership for ensuring effective curriculum delivery at their respective schools.

5.4.3 Step Three: Implement the action plan

At the workshop the participants were grouped together as follows: The CT members were in one group, the School Principals formed another group and the HODs were grouped into four sub-groups according to their subject fields: Social Sciences, Commercial subjects, Life and Physical Sciences, and Languages. This meant that, for example, all the Language HODs of the four schools worked together in a group, and so for the other three categories of subjects as well. The rationale for this homogenous grouping was to allow the subject specialists of the schools to work together on identifying the particular needs that their specific subjects experienced. Likewise, the four principals were grouped together to reflect on management issues, and the CTM with the two IMGMs worked with each other reflect on their role of support from the perspective of the District Office.

The workshop participants from all three groups strongly agreed that capacity-building was a high priority to be addressed. In this regard, capacity building and support for the SMT on the one hand, the teachers on the other and also for the learner were clearly identified from the interaction with the participants. Based on this, the following three themes, set out in table 5.9 below, were identified:

Table 5.10: Overview of themes emerging from the discussions of the CT members, Principals and HODs

THEMES
The SMTs required capacity-building to manage their schools effectively.
Teachers needed support to implement the curriculum.
Learners required assistance to achieve better results.

DISCUSSION OF THEME ONE: THE SMTs REQUIRED CAPACITY-BUILDING TO MANAGE THEIR SCHOOLS EFFECTIVELY

An analysis of the inputs provided by the groups clearly identified three areas in which the SMT members of the four schools needed support.

The first aspect pertained to the management of the curriculum. According to the Educators' Employment Act (Republic of South Africa, Department of Education 1999:3C-12 – 3C-14) the HODs were responsible to ensure that the curriculum is effectively implemented at school level. This has a direct bearing on teaching and learning in the classroom, and if the

implementation of the curriculum is properly managed, it will have a positive impact on the quality of learner achievement.

> *It is important that the SMT is supported to manage the curriculum. This will ensure that the learners' achievements are improved. (Principal)*

"I am confident that if we focus on how to run the departments of the school there can be a lot of improvement in the professional development of educators, and as a result they will be able to perform better in teaching their classes". (HOD)

"In addition the pace at which some of the educators worked was too slow. They often expected the minimum from their learners, and were often unable to get to three written activities with the classes per week. Learners were mostly exposed to content and educators did not equip them with critical thinking and application skills". (IMGM)

> *CAs must prioritize the capacity building of each HOD on identifying weaknesses in curriculum delivery, addressing identified weaknesses, strategic planning, monitoring progress in implementation, multi-tasking and quality assurance. (Principal)*

Glanz (2006b:2 – 3) emphasizes the fact that good principals must be viewed as guides and coaches, and as leaders who establish high expectations and common direction. They regularly observe classrooms, guide lesson planning, create common planning time, monitor learner learning, collect data ad use results to influence improvement plans. Although the HODs are responsible for subject-specific planning, implementation and assessment, the Principal as the "Head Teacher" has to take the lead in the school to ensure that the basics are in place for quality teaching and learning to take place. Against this background Glanz underlines the following characteristics re the principal as instructional leader:

- The Principal is *the* key player in the school to promote learning, and plays a vital role in accomplishing deep, sustained, and school-wide achievement for all learners;
- High achievement for all learners is the major goal for a Principal, and he/she has first and foremost to be concerned in activities that actively promote good teaching, which in turn promotes learner achievement;
- The Principal must play an active, on-going role in instructional leadership. Instead of being an expert in all areas, the Principal needs to be a master "diagnostician" – able to provide the school what it needs at the right time and in the right context, and
- Leadership matters. Research has continually demonstrated that leadership is critical for school success. Glanz also refers to research that indicated that a substantial relationship exists between leadership and learner achievement.

The second aspect in this regard pertained to school leadership.

> "After the session I felt motivated and am ready to do whatever it takes to improve the situation in our school. Things have never been like this. We really do not deserve the situation we find ourselves in. I believe that SMT members are the pillars of our schools and must be assisted to lead their departments and the school in general. As a SMT we are really concerned about the functionality of the school. We need to bring about change. Everything is possible if we work as a team". (HOD)

As indicated in par 2.8.1 one of the main functions of the SMT is to provide leadership and management to the school, and an in-depth discussion of the various functions with regard to these two aspects was provided. In order to lead and manage the school in a changing world, Moloi (2005:97 – 99) identified four fundamental skills of strategic and transformational leadership which are characteristic of a school as a learning organization:

- Strategic thinking: a process used by a leader to formulate, articulate and communicate coherent teaching and learning strategies and vision for the school;
- Innovative thinking: the ability to find new opportunities for development, learning and growth in every member of the school;
- Rational decision-making: the ability to deal with operational problems and decisions, and
- Human resource leadership: this takes account of aspects such as the beliefs, attitudes and motivations of educators in schools, and of the influence and interaction between organizational environments and the educators. This aspect is of particular importance when it comes to participative decision-making in the schools.

Male (2006:4) states that Principals of highly effective schools tend to spend more of their time in the leadership mode, where decision-making and influence are the primary activities, than in the operational world where the emphasis is on a "hands-on" approach. Conversely, Principals in schools with challenging circumstances will spend the major part of their time in the operational rather than the visionary mode, particularly in the early stages of school improvement.

The same author (2006:64) provides the following characteristics of highly effective principals – there are five "clusters", each of them having two or more major aspects which define what a Headmaster as leader of the school has to do:

- Create the vision: this entails strategic thinking, coupled by a drive for improvement;
- Building commitment and support: the main activities here are to impact and influence all aspects of the school's life, as well as self being accountable for what one does, while also holding others accountable;

- Gathering information and gaining understanding: in this regard the Principal needs to be aware of social issues affecting the school, and be able to scan the internal and external environments of the school;
- Personal values and passionate conviction: this includes respect for others, challenging and supporting the staff, and having a personal conviction, and
- Planning for delivery, monitoring, evaluating and improving performance: the skills needed to undertake this include analytical thinking, taking initiative, being a transformational leader, promoting teamwork, understanding others and developing the full potential of others.

The above characteristics are of great importance within the context of this research study, bearing in mind that a sound foundation is being laid to capacitate Principals of underperforming schools to graduate to self-managing institutions of learning. The issue of crafting a vision has been extensively dealt with in par. 2.8 of the thesis and there is overall agreement in literature that without a clear vision in place, no school would be able to excel. Gaining the commitment and support of people, coupled with taking accountability, has a great impact on turning the general state of underperformance in the schools around. A Principal who does not hold personal values, and is not passionate about his/her work, will not be able to transform a school into a functional institution where quality education prevails. In order to achieve all of this, Principals need the skill of effective planning. In the case of underperforming schools it is the obligation of the CT to ensure that capacity is built with regard to this important management function.

Crawford, Kydd and Collins (2002:141) present the following criteria for judging the effectiveness of SMTs, which are on the one hand categorized into positive and negative attributes, and on the other hand follow the structure of an open system (as portrayed in figure 2.1) – input, process and output:

Table 5.11: Criteria for judging the effectiveness of School Management Teams (Crawford, Kydd and Collins [2002:141])

POSITIVE ASPECTS	NEGATIVE ASPECTS
INPUT: TEAM MEMBERS	
On individual level: ▪ Competent in SMT role	On individual level: ▪ Weak in SMT role
As a group: ▪ Complementary strengths ▪ Small enough for discussion ▪ Single-tier structure	As a group: ▪ Too large for discussion ▪ Two-tier structure

POSITIVE ASPECTS	NEGATIVE ASPECTS
PROCESS OF TEAMWORK	
Internal: ▪ Protect agenda from external pressures ▪ Principal shares information and decisions ▪ Full participation by all members ▪ Work hard ▪ Positive relationships	Internal: ▪ Inner cabinet
External: ▪ Communicate decisions ▪ Encourage staff input and respond to it ▪ All members accessible to outsiders ▪ Present as a united front ▪ Positive relationships with outsiders	External: ▪ Failure to communicate ▪ Some members inaccessible leading to "them and us" perceptions ▪ Expressions of dissent or leakage of information ▪ Aloof, don't praise staff
OUTPUTS FOR SMT	
Direct: ▪ Decisions are made ▪ Decisions are implemented ▪ Full backing of SMT members for decisions	Direct: ▪ Fail to follow through
Indirect: ▪ School runs smoothly in difficult circumstances ▪ Good educational results ▪ Happy learners ▪ High staff morale ▪ Works within school budget	

The third aspect in which SMTs required support was to follow through with their academic improvement plans in order to enhance learner achievement.

> *At our school there is a weakness in implementing our agreed-upon programmes of action. We always make good plans, but we are weak when it comes to implementing these. (HOD)*

"Both the CTM and IMG should spend more time on scrutinizing the each report from the CAs and make follow-ups in monitoring progress in the implementation of the recommendations. Where gaps are identified in both content knowledge and teaching styles, they should be proactive in arranging corrective measures such as capacity building programmes". (Principal)

Zmuda, Kuklis and Kline (2004:99 – 101) emphasize the importance of data analysis in relation to the quality of learners' work within the classrooms. They argue that data analysis is indeed a powerful opportunity to work collaboratively with others to identify common strengths and weaknesses, as well as systemic solutions – despite the resentment they

found by a significant number of teachers who viewed data analysis as intruding upon their individual autonomy.

In the second place, data analysis will inevitably result in a mandate for change, as data always gives rise to action that has to be taken. The authors claim that in a competent school in which data signals gaps between current practice and the desired results, change becomes difficult to avoid. On an individual level teachers become conscious that what they were doing did not match their personal beliefs. On a systems level, people became conscious that what that they were being asked to do would be evaluated in classrooms across the school to judge the approach's effectiveness.

Thirdly, data analysis is public information and will likely spawn increased pressure for accountability if results are poor. The implication is that learner achievement can be linked to teacher performance. However, teachers will find that data and the results emanating from them can be powerful forces for generating an intrinsic desire to improve.

In the final analysis, the authors strongly recommend that teachers produce data summaries which they argue are invaluable, as the process empowers staff to do the following:

- Describe current learner achievement in a concrete and comprehensive way that directs action;
- Identify priorities that are likely to emerge for which measurable goals can then be developed;
- Present a synthesis of the evidence rather than attributing blame, and
- Foster ownership of performance data.

Based on my interaction with the schools and CT, I found that they did not employ data analysis as a strategy towards WSD at all. The topic was foreign to them and there was great hesitance towards the issue. I also uncovered that the SMTs and teachers did not know how to conduct data analysis or how to interpret the results into workable action plans. Therefore, this aspect needs to be incorporated into training programmes to capacitate SMTs and teachers in the use data analysis towards enhanced teaching and learning.

DISCUSSION OF THEME TWO: TEACHERS NEEDED SUPPORT TO IMPLEMENT THE CURRICULUM

During the workshop a number of areas in which subject teachers needed to be empowered were discussed. For the purpose of this discussion I will mention the following six issues that were considered as non-negotiables by the participants.

- The first issue related to subject knowledge and teaching methodologies. Concern was expressed that teachers in some subjects (such as Accounting, Mathematics and Physical Science) did not have a strong academic background as far as their knowledge of the subject was concerned. In addition, teachers' knowledge of appropriate methodologies was not up to the required standard. This issue alone poses a major challenge to assisting underperforming schools, because if it is not addressed in a sustainable manner, there would be no improvement in learner results.

  In our subject our problem is that the staff members are not developed in terms of subject knowledge and how to teach the subject. (HOD)

  "An important lesson learnt was that the educator was the person to be empowered to teach the subject. They seemed to struggle not only to deliver the content but to provide language abilities to the learners ... The teachers needed to show the learners how the different aspects of the curriculum were interdependent and related to one another. It was therefore important that they be trained on the proper methodologies suitable to the subject(s) they taught". (IMGM)

  Christie, Butler and Potterton (2007:31, 42) found that in "schools that work" (as they named it – referring to schools in disadvantaged communities that were able to excel) teachers are competent in using various teaching methods, and their subject knowledge is the key to effective teaching and learning. These aspects are also coupled with a firm belief that disadvantages can be overcome, and that promoting hard work and discipline is important for learner achievement to take root. They also found that a positive ethos in the school is critical for sustained success – even more important than the required physical resources to teach the subjects.

- Secondly, dealing with learner behaviour and discipline remained a challenge to staff members. This aspect is directly linked to the first issue (subject knowledge and teaching methodologies). Regelski (1975:96) stated that in an instructional situation where teachers were unable to use innovative ways to convey the learning content to learners, "*they (the learners) would resort to their own means to rid them from their boredom."*

Our learners lack the necessary self-discipline and sense of responsibility to do their work, and our educators seriously need assistance in this regard. We cannot expect better results if there is a lack of discipline amongst the learners. (Deputy Principal)

Rossouw (2012:414) identified the conduct of learners as one of the most prominent factors that influences the learning environment in South African schools. Ill-disciplined behaviour was found to destroy all well-intended efforts to restore or create a positive culture of teaching and learning. He referred to research that found a high correlation between poor discipline at school and a high level of learner absenteeism. In addition, there has been a loss of respect and trust between learners and educators. Disruptive behaviour and other forms of misconduct by fellow learners have adversely affected the safety, security and success of other learners at schools.

The author (2012:424 – 426) identified a number of causes of learner misconduct: The male-female ratio on the staff had an influence on the disciplinary climate at the school: a higher percentage of male educators on the staff led to fewer disciplinary problems. Learners often had a negative influence on one another: the group often imitated the unruly and arrogant individuals. Large numbers of learners in a class was found to contribute towards disruptive behaviour. Where there was no respect for human dignity, victimization and bullying of younger learners took place. The lack of discipline at home was found to be a major reason for disruptive behaviour in schools, and dysfunctional homes also had a negative influence on school discipline.

- In the third place time management was identified as a priority for the staff members. In this regard, time management referred to both the optimal use of instructional time as well as planning the delivery of the curriculum in such a way that the subject syllabus was properly covered in time.

  "One of my frustrations was that at the beginning of a period, a teacher would leave the class to go make photocopies in the office. This meant that the learners would be left unattended in the classroom which resulted in a waste of valuable instructional time. Such teachers could not make the link between this kind of behaviour of theirs and the poor academic results they achieved in their classes". (IMGM)

  "Teachers need to be guided and supported on how to plan their work schemes so that they are able to cover all the work before the exam starts, and also have some time left during which they could do revision". (IMGM)

Fleisch and Christie (2004:103) noted "another striking point of contrast between dysfunctional and resilient schools" was the importance accorded to teaching and learning. In underperforming schools syllabuses were not covered, resulting in a high

failure rate in the external grade 12 examination – with a number of schools achieve a 0% pass rate. In all of the resilient schools they observed, it was found that teachers and learners were in classrooms, the teaching staff was stable and teachers were motivated by the importance and satisfaction of their work. These authors concluded that when schools lose sight of leadership and their central purpose, they are vulnerable to collapse.

In addition, Christie, Butler and Potterson (2007:69) also found that time-on-task, as well as the optimal use of instructional time was a prominent feature in schools producing good results. Every school in their survey made use of extra teaching time to produce good examination results.

- In the fourth place the participants were vocal about support to teachers in achieving the academic targets they set in their academic improvement plans. Through the intervention of the CT, each subject had to set a pass percentage for the particular subject, and their progress in reaching such targets was closely monitored. In my view, this was only one part of the solution of trying to address the underperformance in terms of the learner outcomes. This drive had to be coupled with quality teaching, effective time management and sound teaching methodologies to really make a positive impact.

> *We would sit down with the entire SMT and discuss the improvements needed to achieve better quality pass rates. Each subject had to formulate their targets for improved learner achievement. (CTM)*

> "At the beginning of each year we do our target setting, so that we know what we are aiming for. However, if there is no additional support forthcoming (from the District Office) we will be in trouble of not achieving what we set out to achieve". (HOD)

Smith (2009:19) noted that goal setting in schools and in the classroom has the potential to improve achievement by motivating students to reach their goals. Having, sharing and working toward a common goal was evidence of good morale and effective teaching in schools. There are some studies in education that have shown that teaching low-achieving students to set goals for themselves enhanced academic achievement and students' intrinsic interest in the subject. In the classroom, achievement is enhanced to the degree that students and teachers set challenging rather than 'do your best' goals relative to the students' present competencies.

She also found that individuals require feedback that provides information about their progress in relation to their goals. Feedback is a moderator of the goal-performance relationship in that the combination of having a goal and gaining feedback on progress toward the goal is more effective than goals alone in improving performance. For feedback to work efficiently, learners and teachers must have a clear understanding of the standard or goal they are aiming for. It is difficult to measure progress towards a goal without feedback that indicates what has been achieved and what remains to be done. Feedback is required so that further effort can be exerted or a change in strategy implemented. Feedback can also offer reassurance that the goal or target is within reach and that progress towards the goal is being made (Smith 2009:21).

- Another issue that the meeting expressed was a need for the staff morale to be boosted. Teachers needed additional encouragement to take control of the challenges that they faced in turning their schools around, especially in the light of the socio-economic conditions prevailing in their township. The latter further contributed to low pass rates.

> "The socio-economic conditions prevailing in the surrounding community, coupled with the continuous threats of gangsterism, have a direct influence on the levels of motivation of the teachers. It is not easy to do one's best when you are overwhelmed by situations such as these". (Deputy Principal)

> "As much as learners need to be motivated, so our teachers have to be constantly motivated. The fact that we had a history of being an underperforming school did not do the morale of the staff any good either". (HOD)

The University of Illinois (2012: 2) found that effective leadership was one of the most significant factors that contributed to positive staff morale. Distrust of management, poor interpersonal relations (between the leader and staff) and inflexible working conditions contributed to low staff morale. Other factors that contributed to low morale included disputes, high employee turnover rates, changes in leadership, and unclear expectations. The lack of opportunity for personal growth, due to an unchallenging environment, was also a determining factor.

- In the sixth place, the workshop participants felt strongly that on-site support by the CAs was non-negotiable in terms of raising the standard of education in their schools. This implied that they expected the CAs to visit them at their schools, conduct class visits and assist them in their classrooms with the particular issues they struggled with.

The responses from the participants clearly indicated that in some cases the teachers received regular on-site support visits and the meeting expressed their appreciation for

this, as the quality of teaching was enhanced, and the learners of these teachers benefitted from this.

"We have wonderful cooperation from our CA. When you call him, he will be there within two days at the most. He will go out of his way to attend to the problem you are struggling with. What is also great is that the school will have his report within one day after he has visited the school". (Deputy Principal)

However, the discussion clearly pointed out that some CAs never visited the schools during the 2012 academic year. If one bears in mind that these were underperforming schools that required very specific and intensive support from the District Office, such conduct had to be deemed irresponsible and unprofessional.

"You know, we have not seen this CA for the entire year yet. Attempts to contact him seem to be futile, because there is no response. In our subject we cannot move strongly if we don't have this person at our side. Because of the neglect the teachers have become demotivated. I really cannot understand that an official can behave in this manner. He knows we are struggling, but there is no attempt to support us". (HOD)

The Province of the Eastern Cape, Department of Education, Chief Directorate: Curriculum Management (2007:4) provided the following important framework for on-site support by CAs to schools:

Table 5.12: A framework for on-site support to teachers (Province of the Eastern Cape, Department of Education 2007:4)
(http://www.ecdoe.gov.za/files/documents/On-Site%20Curr%20Support%20to%20Schls.pdf)

STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	RECOMMENDED FOR
Demonstration lesson	A curriculum official or a teacher, who has mastered a particular skill, delivers a lesson for other teachers in the school to observe. A lesson-debriefing instrument is developed to guide observations. At the end of the lesson, or at the end of the school day, the curriculum official engages with teachers in a mini-workshop or directed discussion about the lesson.	…a group of teachers who are all trying to master the same new skill or method.
Co-operative planning	A particular lesson or activity is co-planned with the curriculum official. In this way, opportunities are created for planning processes to be modelled and reinforced. It builds confidence in teachers as the risk of implementing a new innovation is shared with the curriculum official. Co-planning is particularly effective if it is followed by a team teaching demonstration lesson.	…a group of teachers who are trying to implement a new way of planning to best support the lesson.

STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	RECOMMENDED FOR
Team teaching	This approach works best when a process of cooperative planning has preceded the teaching of the lesson. During the planning stage, specific roles are allocated. Team teaching works best when the same lesson is taught to more than one class. In this way, it is possible to teach – reflect – revise and then teach again.	…a group of new or inexperienced teachers trying out new teaching methods and techniques or teachers focusing on specialized areas and aspects of a particular subject/ learning area
Mediating reflection (post lesson focus group discussions)	An approach used for a group of teachers in a school who have a particular issue or challenge with regard to classroom practice, for example, managing a large class. The curriculum official encourages experimentation and enquiry. Reflections are recorded and shared in a focus group discussion. Effective strategies to deal with the issue are identified and implemented.	…a group of teachers who share a common issue or challenge about classroom practice.
Whole-school workshop	In some cases school support visits may take the form of a workshop with the whole staff of the school. For example, the development of an assessment policy for the school.	…a school that wishes to develop its own teaching and learning policies and strategies.
Lesson observation	The curriculum official observes a few lessons in the school. The instrument for observation is agreed in advance and teachers are clear about what will be discussed afterwards.	… curriculum officials, subject heads etc. to monitor the implementation of new skills or teaching methods.

Taking the problems they experienced in teaching the subject content and methodological issues into consideration, the participants decided that, in order for them to obtain the necessary support from the CAs, it was important for them to identify specific issues in which they required support and intervention. These issues had to be discussed with the CAs and also handed over to them so that they could structure their school visits in such a manner that these could be addressed.

It is important to realize that the following list of areas of support were the perceptions of the teachers themselves and includes issues of what they would want. However, the crucial issue would be that the CAs had to be willing to buy into the agenda. If this did not happen, the required support and assistance would not take place which would jeopardize the learners' levels of achievement. It could also be that the perspective of the CAs on the real needs of the schools might be different from that of the teachers, which implies that they would need to sit down and discuss what exactly the priorities were. The list provided by the participants regarding on-site support to teachers included the following:

- Class visits (including lesson observation);
- Demonstration lessons conducted by the CAs;
- CAs providing them with additional materials and notes on subject issues – hard copies, but also via email;
- Discussing teaching-learning methodologies with the teachers;
- Assisting the teachers with Continuous Assessment (CASS) of learners' work;
- Checking the workbooks and portfolios of the learners and providing feedback in ways that they could improve in this regard;
- Guidance in terms of setting of quality exam and test papers was an important issue highlighted by the participants, as well as how to analyse results and develop academic improvement plans;
- Assistance with drawing up lesson plans was another priority, and
- The use of technology in the class – one particular CA was noted who provided on-site training to all the teachers teaching his subject in the four schools on how to use the data projector and to develop power point slides.

In order for this support to take place, the meeting strongly agreed that the CTM would take the issues raised back to the District Office and, through the internal channels of communication, inform the Curriculum Section of the needs expressed by the meeting. Without this interim approach to try to solve the situation, there would be a serious vacuum in the communication between the schools and the District Office, and result in no sustained intervention, which would affect the outcome negatively.

DISCUSSION OF THEME THREE: LEARNERS REQUIRED ASSISTANCE TO ACHIEVE BETTER RESULTS

The third and final aspect of support to the schools related to the needs that the learners experienced and looking at strategies to address these so that increased levels of learner achievement could be sustained. Due to the socio-economic conditions of the township, learners were in dire need of support and encouragement to enable them to perform optimally. Four major issues were mentioned and discussed in this regard:

In the first instance, the meeting requested the CTM to ensure that the four schools were listed on the District Improvement Plan which was a special structure set up for District Officials to assist struggling schools with extra classes for grade 12 learners throughout the year. This did not mean that the subject teachers would negate their duties and responsibilities, but when one considers problems teachers experienced with relation to their

subject knowledge and teaching methodologies (as discussed in category 1.2), this intervention would also contribute to assisting the teachers in this regard.

In addition, the meeting also requested that the CTM had to play a leading role in ensuring that a motivational programme for grade 12 learners was in place, and was sustained.

"He (the CTM) should ensure that the school is included in the District Intervention Programme for extra classes for all the subjects we've identified as priorities. He should be part of the school's endeavours to build and maintain parental support to each gr. 12 learner and driving the school's motivation programme for gr. 12s. (Principal)

Christie, Butler and Potterson (2007:76) found that at all the schools that were performing well despite the obstacles they faced there was a real concern for the future and welfare of the learners, also after official school hours. Extra efforts were put to ensure that learners achieved so well that they could qualify for bursaries for tertiary studies. These schools also made an effort to bring motivational speakers to the school to interact with the learners about their future careers, and also to motivate them to succeed.

Masitsa (2006) (www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/recordDetail?) found that a lack of learner motivation to study was a problem experienced world-wide. In South Africa in particular, it was found that learners were not inspired to study and do their best. He therefore concluded that motivation was indispensable to learning because it influenced independent interest in the learner and induced him/her to make an effort to succeed at his/her studies.

The third aspect raised by the meeting was that counselling had to be available for those learners who needed it.

> *The Special Education Unit should continue responding to learners needing counselling and intervention, as well as assisting the school to identify and redirect learners not coping academically. (Principal)*

According to Graduate School Planning and Information (not dated) counselling psychology facilitates personal and interpersonal functioning across the life span with a focus on emotional, social, vocational, educational, health-related, developmental, and organizational concerns. Through the integration of theory, research, and practice, and with sensitivity to multicultural issues, this specialty encompasses a broad range of practices that help people improve their well-being, alleviate distress and maladjustment, resolve crises, and increase their ability to live more highly functioning lives. Counseling psychology is unique in its

attention both to normal developmental issues and to problems associated with physical, emotional, and mental disorders.

Specific areas of intervention are: substance abuse, vocational psychology, mental illness (e.g. anxiety disorders), neuropsychology, aggression/anger control, anxiety disorders, interpersonal relationships, crisis intervention and eating disorders.

Fourthly, during my interview with the School Psychologist attached to the CT, he indicated that he and the School Social Worker experienced that language was a huge barrier when they had to deal with traumatized learners:

> "Due to the socio-economic situation prevailing in the township there were a lot of learners who were severely traumatized and who found it difficult to express themselves in a foreign language. At the moment we are resorting to using an interpreter to assist with the intervention, but this is only a short-term solution to the problem". (School Psychologist)

Based on the above, he explained to me that his primary focus in supporting schools was on the primary schools. However, he did assist high schools as and when his services were required. He specifically mentioned that he adopted an approach for high schools where he would establish an Institutional Learner Support Team (ILST) which consisted of staff members whom he would empower on a regular basis to take responsibility in seeking solutions to the problems experienced by individual learners as well as groups of learners.

> "I see it as my priority to assist all high schools to set up ILSTs. In cases where the ILSTs were functional in high schools I would work with them and address situations through them. Where high schools did not have an ILST in place, I would assist the SMT to set up such a structure. The ILSTs would then become a roll-out mechanism to address problems at school level, and I would guide them and provide the necessary empowerment to them. I have to state upfront that it has been my experience that when the Principal takes the lead and a keen interest in the establishment of the ILST, the chances are very good that this structure will be well run and functional". (School Psychologist)

The aspect of cultural differences has been identified as one of the major barriers to communication and impacts directly on the situation described above. Due to cultural differences, the meaning of words and phrases can easily be confused and can lead misunderstandings, an unwillingness to communicate and to a breakdown in communication (http://www.ehow.com/list_6727619_six-barriers-communication.html#ixzz2FeYHUeCj).

From the inputs provided by the participants at the workshop, the following needs were listed with which learners needed support. Once again, these needs were the ideas that the teachers came up with. The CTM had to communicate these to the relevant section at the District Office for these to be operationalized:

- Counselling services for learners (through the ILST or the CT);

- Early detection of learners with problems and referral of them;
- Additional time for assessment;
- Assisting with permission for alternative assessment methods;
- Dealing with learner pregnancies;
- Supporting learners with disabilities;
- Career guidance to learners, and
- Placement of learners at alternative schools.

5.4.4 Step Four: Evaluate the action

As the fieldwork aspect of the research was drawing to a close at this stage, I concluded the workshop with a reflection session in which I asked the participants to reflect on what the workshop had meant for them, but also to take their involvement in the research project from its commencement into consideration. From the responses obtained, I deduced the following themes:

- **The value of mutual support:** It was specifically the HODs who put a strong emphasis on the value that they were afforded to learn from each other and to support each other in terms of the implementation of the curriculum, and the problems that were associated with this aspect:

  We have discovered that we actually have common problems in our schools, and by discussing the issues, we can support each other. (HOD)

> "Networking is an important tool in empowering ourselves. It enables growth and free sharing, knowing and realizing through these discussions that I am not alone. There are other HODs and the CA to communicate with and to ask for help where needed". (HOD)

> "I have realized that my neighbouring schools are my 'real neighbours' in terms of enriching myself and improving my methods of curriculum in my subject, and also asking educators from these schools with better expertise than me to come and assist me where possible". (HOD)

Zuber-Skerritt (2009:88) highlights the following findings she made from action research and action learning, which applies directly to the above statements of the participants:

> The main insights I gained from coordinating and evaluating numerous action research teams and projects are that action research only works successfully if all members of a team own the problem and are interested in solving it; if they work on the project collaboratively and voluntarily … if they are open for change, critical review, reflection and self-evaluation.

She also identified the importance of a skilled facilitator, collaborating with colleagues, working on important and practical issues, planning and taking systematic and strategic

action, gaining new knowledge, skills and insights, and experiencing a sense of excitement and renewed motivation as the issues that learning teams appreciated (2009:89).

- **The value of constructing a plan of action and following through with it** was emphasized by the Principals. In this regard, they referred to their SIPs. One Principal also stressed the importance of managing the implementation of the SIPs and to deal effectively and efficiently with deviations from the plan.

> *Some of the items on the plan can be achieved while other can just be given more time – quite exciting! Monitoring and cooperation from all levels are invaluable. (Principal)*

> *It shows that we can do better if we plan together. If we plan together we can do more. The work becomes easier. Everybody does their best. (Principal)*

> "We are becoming aware that a plan is as good as its implementation. Managing the implementation is where much focus is needed because different management skills are necessary. We have identified gaps with regard to implementation, and these need to be addresses as a matter of urgency". (Principal)

Bisschoff, Govender and Oosthuizen (2005:62 – 63) state that, within the context of effective Project Management (such as the implementation of the SIP), leaders who inspire their people display superior management skills. They identify three important factors that contribute to project success: (1) forces within the manager (values, confidence in team members, leadership inclinations, and a feeling of security in an uncertain situation), (2) forces in the team members (tendency towards autonomy, readiness for decision-making, tolerance for ambiguity, interest in the problem of the project, identification with the project goals, appropriate knowledge, and expectation of participation in decisions), and (3) forces in the situation (type of project team, group effectiveness, the nature of the problem, and the pressure of time).

- **Greater teamwork and positive working relations within the ranks of the CT** in terms of delivering support and assistance to the four schools were reported by the IMGMs. It was also interesting to note from their feedback that the improved situation at CT level had a positive effect on the SMTs, and that numerous problems at school level have been addressed:

> "There is enhanced team work at management level. The management meetings are planned. We have been able to curb educator late-coming and absenteeism, and we partially improved

learner late-coming as well. Successful parental meetings took place to encourage the parents to become involved in their children's education". (IMGM)

"Morning briefings of all staff members are taking place, and management meetings are taking place on set dates. There's cohesion amongst the members at management level. There is also a great improvement in the working relations amongst the staff members. Good relations are key to the smooth running of each school. We are following planned programmes in managing the schools. However, improvement in Maths results is hindered by the gross lack of properly qualified Maths teachers". (IMGM)

Johnson and Johnson (2009:536 – 637) explain that team building involves analysing work procedures and activities to improve team productivity, the quality of relationships among team members, the level of members' social skills, and the ability of the team to adapt to changing conditions and demands. Team building is aimed at increasing the long-term team effectiveness by improving the process of members working together.

They continue by making the link between team building and action research: Team procedures and activities are analysed, changes are planned to improve productivity and effectiveness, changes are implemented and their success is assessed. Team members typically are involved in diagnosing and planning change. AR interventions are commonly focused on (1) goal setting that clarifies the team's goals, (2) improving the interpersonal competence of the members, (3) redefining and negotiating the role and responsibilities of each member, and (4) identifying problems that interfere with effective teamwork.

Despite the positive feedback, the fact cannot not be ignored that other units within the District Office (especially the Curriculum Section) were taken out of the equation, and the question remains how the plan of action taken during this AR cycle would change the way in which the District Office operated.

To answer the above issue of bringing the other units of the District Office on board of the required interventions I need to firstly state that the SMTs have been empowered to develop their SIPs in which they would make the areas for support and development explicit. In addition, the CT has not only been assisted in developing their CIP, but also acquired insight on the importance of this document as a management tool for effective service delivery. As discussed in par. 5.3.3 the CIP would capture the interventions that the other units of the District Office also had to deliver. The CTM would table these areas of intervention at the Top Management meetings of the District Office where the priorities would be forwarded to the various Section Heads. The CT would then have to closely monitor that each of the other units delivered on their mandates.

5.4.5 Step Five: Reflection and lessons learnt

A limited number of positive aspects were accomplished during the workshop: The intended outcome of this cycle was partially achieved as the participants were able to articulate the areas of support required from the various pillars of the District Office. I am of the opinion that the fact that a platform was created for them to engage in this activity, greatly assisted them in this regard as I doubted whether they would have performed this task at their individual schools.

To achieve the above, a bottom-up approach was followed (contrary to the autocratic, top-down manner in which events took place as described in cycle one). The voice of the people at grass-roots level was clearly heard and understood. However, the identification of the needs (as it occurred during the workshop) was actually supposed to happen right at the beginning of 2012 so that it could have been addressed from the commencement of the academic year.

A positive breakthrough was the fact that the CT members experienced greater teamwork and cooperation. They put systems in place to allow them to function more optimally, which indicates that they also learnt from their involvement in the research study.

I do not feel as optimistic about the outcome of this action research cycle as I did with the first one. The fact that the CAs were not willing to participate in the research due to internal politics within the ranks of the District Office was a setback for me personally. However, an alternative route was taken and the outcome achieved to empower the participants from the four schools to at least articulate their needs, and to identify ways in which service delivery could be improved in future.

Reflecting on the entire fieldwork that was done brought me to the realization that I ought to have taken an integrated approach right from the very commencement of the research. This means that I should have taken all the components of the entire District Office on board from the beginning, and not have focussed firstly on just the particular CT that was part of the research. Such a route could have avoided the situation we faced when the CAs did not become involved in the research.

The predicament remains that if the other pillars of the District Office would not get on board of future developments to implement a coherent CIP, service delivery to schools would continue to suffer. The assistance to especially underperforming schools hinges on this

crucial aspect. My only consolation at this point in time is that at least the participants from the schools and the CT have been empowered to put the necessary measures in place (through their SIPs and CIP) to work constructively towards WSD in the future as no one can take away the skills and knowledge they acquired.

A final observation is that the issues for support listed in par. 5.4.3 (where the needs of the SMTs, teachers and learners were discussed) needed to be integrated with the content of the provisional SIPs of the four schools, as outlined in tables 5.5 to 5.8. This would result in a working document which would be much more comprehensive and would ensure that the important issues identified in the second AR cycle would be integrated with the initial needs that the schools identified in the first AR cycle.

In addition I find it important, at the end of the fieldwork, to reflect on the question whether or not the efforts of the CT during the past two years have enabled the four schools to improve. During the fieldwork a number of issues were identified that were not ideal, such as the internal politics which caused the FET CAs not to come on board of the research. Taking my point of departure from the introduction to par. 1.2.1, where it was stated that the quality of education in a country can be measured in terms of its learners' academic performance, I studied the examination results of the four schools during the period 2010 to 2011 to determine whether or not the CT's intervention had a positive effect on them.

Table 5.11 below compares the National Senior Certificate results of the four schools at the end of 2010 (when the particular CT had not yet serviced the four schools) and the end of 2011 (which was the first year in which the particular CT worked with the four schools):

Table 5.13: A comparison between the National Senior Certificate results at the end of the 2010 and 2011 academic years respectively

Name of school	2010 pass %	2011 pass %	Difference
E High School	38.1%	68.1%	30%
HG High School	45.2%	56.4%	11.2%
K High School	42.6%	60.3%	17.7%
S High School	52.1%	65.1%	13%

Although I have to acknowledge upfront that the above data only refers to one of the nine areas of WSE (i.e. learner achievement), the picture that unfolds portrays that a very significant improvement has taken place in all the four schools within the space of only one academic year, especially at E High School. The content of the above table provides

sufficient reason to deduce that the support and assistance that the CT gave the schools have indeed enabled the schools to progress towards improved learner achievement outcomes. What is absolutely remarkable to me is that these achievements were possible without a formal SIP or CIP in place. One cannot but wonder what the overall effect of the intervention and support to these schools would have been if these improvement plans did indeed exist.

In conclusion, after completing the AR process, I also need to reflect on the manner in which my fieldwork adhered to the criteria for AR, as set out in Table 3.1 and based on the work of Coleman and Briggs (2002:137). The following discussion is aimed at briefly evaluating my research against these criteria:

- *Purpose: action for improvement*. I was able, with the collaboration of the participants, to empower the CT members and SMTs with the required skills and knowledge to take action towards improving the situation in which they found them. This was done by assisting them to develop and implement their CIP and SIPs. Having experienced putting AR into practice for the first time in my professional life, combined with the excellent guidance from my promoter, enabled me to understand the practice of AR, and how it can be used to change a situation for the better. My constant reflection during the two AR cycles, as discussed in par. 5.3.5 and 5.4.5 above, have led me to discover ways in which I can improve my practice so that it can become more effective.
- *Focus*: *doing it oneself, on one's own practice.* From the onset of the fieldwork until the completion thereof I was actively involved in the research and worked *with* the participants to achieve the aim and objectives of the research. However, I remained as objective as possible by keeping record of events, and making a concerted effort to mix with all the participants, so that I did not give an impression that I favoured certain (groups of) people above others. My reflections, documented in par. 5.3.5 and 5.4.5 above, provide evidence of shortcomings that I identified and that I would change when I had to do this for another round, thereby improving my practice.
- *Relations*: *democratic:* I maintained a democratic approach to my research by allowing the participants to assist in determining the agenda of the research. The workshops that took place during the two AR cycles (par. 5.3.3 and 5.4.3) were initiatives that came from the participants themselves (in the first workshop, it was the CT members, and in the case of the second, it was the SMTs that identified the need for it). The evaluation of the actions, as described in par. 5.3.4 and 5.4.4, is evidence of the fact that I incorporated the perspectives of the participants on the action into my explanations.
- *Aim*: *to generate theory:* My purpose with the research, amongst others, was to create an improvement which was not yet in existence. The SMTs needed to be emancipated

from the cycle of continued underperformance, and the CT needed to be provided with additional skills to enable the transformation process at these schools to take off. The study of past practices (through the literature reviews) provided direction in assisting the CT members and SMTs towards WSD. As a qualitative researcher, I also made my values explicit to the participants, and integrated these with the theories of others as explanatory principles. Furthermore, I aimed to generate theory on how to improve the situation of underperforming schools by the development of the model, which is set out in Chapter Six.

- *Method*: *critical, iterative.* Because I was actively involved in the roll-out of the research, I was able to continuously monitor what was happening. In this regard my field notes for the purpose of participant observation and the interviews I had with the participants, greatly assisted me to keep track of developments as they were unfolding. The three methods of data generation that I employed provided me with sound evidence to support my claims about the action that took place. Through constant and critical reflection during each AR cycle (par. 5.3.5. and 5.4.5) I was able to identify a number of issues that I would do differently if I had to repeat this process.
- *Validation: peer.* I tested the strength of my evidence and the validity of my judgements by sharing findings with the participants. In addition, the IMGM from another CT who completed his PhD in Education Management and who assisted me with the group interviews was another source of critical feedback. My language editor, who is a trained educationist with significant experience in assisting post-graduate students, also acted as a "critical buddy" to validate my findings.
- *Audience: professionals, policy makers, users, academics.* At the time of completion of the thesis I know that I was able to influence the situation at a local level, where the research participants were empowered to transform their situation. Arrangements have been put in place for me to do a formal presentation to the District Office which will widen the scope of the audience. During 2010 I had the privilege of addressing the AR Conference held at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU) on the research – which drew a lot of interest from the academics present. By complying with the requirements of the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) I have to hand in a publishable article after submitting the thesis for examination, thereby reaching more academics on the nature and findings of this research study. I also made arrangements for writing a textbook on WSD, aimed at education managers, in which the most important findings emanating from this research study can be brought to their attention.

5.5 SUMMARY

In Chapter Five the AR process and the findings that emerged from the data obtained through interviews, participant observation and document analysis from the participants were discussed. Two AR cycles emerged from the analysis of the data: the first dealing with assisting the SMTs and CT to construct their SIPs and CIP, and the second examining the support systems required for the implementation of the intervention plans. The following chapter outlines the proposed model which emerged from critical reflection on the whole process that unfolded during the fieldwork.

CHAPTER SIX

A MODEL TO ASSIST CIRCUIT TEAMS IN SUPPORTING SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAMS TOWARDS WHOLE-SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter discussed the AR process and the findings emanating from the fieldwork I conducted. In this chapter the model, which forms the crux of the research study, is presented, and described from both a structural point of view, and an operational perspective.

6.2 REFLECTION ON THE FINDINGS FROM THE ACTION RESEARCH PROCESS

My professional development was greatly enhanced by conducting the fieldwork, and it empowered me with new knowledge, skills and insight into an issue about which I thought I had sufficient knowledge: supporting underperforming schools (during my employment as Circuit Manager). The fact that the particular CT and SMTs of the four schools were willing to participate in the research greatly enabled me to achieve the primary aim of the study: to develop a model for CT members to support SMTs towards WSD. Reflecting on what took place during the fieldwork, I am able to identify a number of successes, as well as issues that require urgent attention – which will be taken into account in the development of the model. These reflections are briefly outlined in the following paragraphs.

The working relationship between the CT members was strengthened by developing the vision, mission and values for the CT, as well as clarifying the roles and responsibilities of each CT member. Coupled with the fact that daily briefing sessions were held, it not only enhanced communication between the CT members, but also built trust and ultimately also united the team.

Trust was enhanced by the interaction between the CT members and the schools, from the CT's first visit. The fact that the team constantly visited the schools on-site made a significant contribution to establish a positive working relationship between the two entities. The message that the CT brought to each of the schools, as well as the plan of support that

they followed enhanced the cooperation between them. Essentially the message consisted of the following elements:

- It was made clear to the schools that they were underperforming. This statement in itself dismissed all possible misconceptions of the state in which the schools found themselves. They were told the truth, and this clear message enabled them to realize the predicament in which they found themselves;
- The schools were reminded of the fact that they were able to achieve better results, which brought in the element of extrinsic motivation;
- The CT not only promised to support them, but also followed up on this promise which led to an increase in respect from the Principals for the CT;
- It was important that the CT sat down *with* the schools to analyse the examination results and to look at ways in which to address the issue (although this unfortunately was not contained in a coherent written plan of action). This activity also proved to be an empowerment exercise for the schools;
- Co-accountability was built into the working relationship between the CT and schools, and pressure was put on the schools to actively contribute to the desired improvement, and
- Regular follow-up visits took place which continued the dialogue between the two parties.

As indicated in the activities listed in table 5.3, as well as the provisional SIPs contained in tables 5.4 – 5.7 it is clear that the schools (out of own accord) started to do something towards addressing the priorities they identified. These actions were, however, not contained in a formal improvement plan. Nevertheless, the fact that the schools took action was a strong indication of their commitment to turn their situation around.

Reflecting on the workshop described in par. 5.3.3 it was shown that, given proper guidance and direction, both the SMTs and the CT could develop their SIPs and CIP respectively. All that they needed, was time and space (without any external interruptions) to critically reflect on the state of their institutions and to look within themselves for solutions to the problems they faced. It was for this reason that they viewed the workshop as an important capacity-building exercise where they could also discuss issues across schools and reflect on their management practices.

The fieldwork also revealed a number of issues that required attention, which need to be addressed by any model for improvement. The first of these issues was the autocratic, top-down management style of the CTM which initially caused a lot of problems for the proper

functioning of the CT. However, the fieldwork also pointed to the fact that he gradually changed this approach which enabled the team to work more closely together. The fieldwork has shown that such transformation is possible, if the necessary space, time and support for it to happen, is given. This issue has also been taken up in the structure of the model, as well as the recommendations emanating from the study.

The fact that SIPs and CIP did not exist was a reason for concern, as there was no formal agenda for the working relationship between the schools and the CT in place. Considering the improvement in learner results alone, as tabled in table 5.12, one cannot but wonder how more pertinent the improvements at these schools would have been if these documents were developed and implemented. The model (par. 6.3) sets out to address these issues very pertinently.

Another problem that the fieldwork pointed out was the fact that, from the moment the CT worked with the schools, there was an almost exclusive focus on enhanced learner achievement results, without attending to issues of basic functionality. Bearing in mind that these four schools were essentially underperforming, the CT should have taken an approach to assist them to put the basic requirements in place. In the development of the model, as well as the recommendations flowing from the study, this shortcoming has been addressed.

When the CIP was developed, only the CTM and IMGMs were involved. Although it was explained that the other members of the CT operated almost exclusively in the primary schools, it would be imperative for the future (when the CT also incorporates the needs for support of the primary schools into their CIP) to involve all the CT members in this very important process. This weakness has been attended to in the development of the model.

During the second action research cycle it became clear that specific subject-related needs were not explicitly addressed in the SIPs or the CIP. This was a grave omission as it would compromise support to subject teachers, and result in lower learner achievement rates. In retrospect, much of the information required in this regard was done when the CT first visited the schools, and *inter alia* conducted an analysis of the examination results: the outcome of this should have been readily incorporated into the SIPs. The construction of the model has taken this shortcoming into consideration.

The non-involvement of the other pillars of the District Office (especially the FET CAs) remains a problem to the outcome of the research study. Two issues are of importance here: firstly, for the purpose of supporting the four schools during the remainder of the 2012

academic year, the CTM has to filter the required support to the various sections of the District Office via the official channels of communication. However, in the second place, the learning that occurred in this regard needs to be addressed in the suggestions for improvement in the model, and as will be evident from the discussion in par. 6.3, this has been attended to.

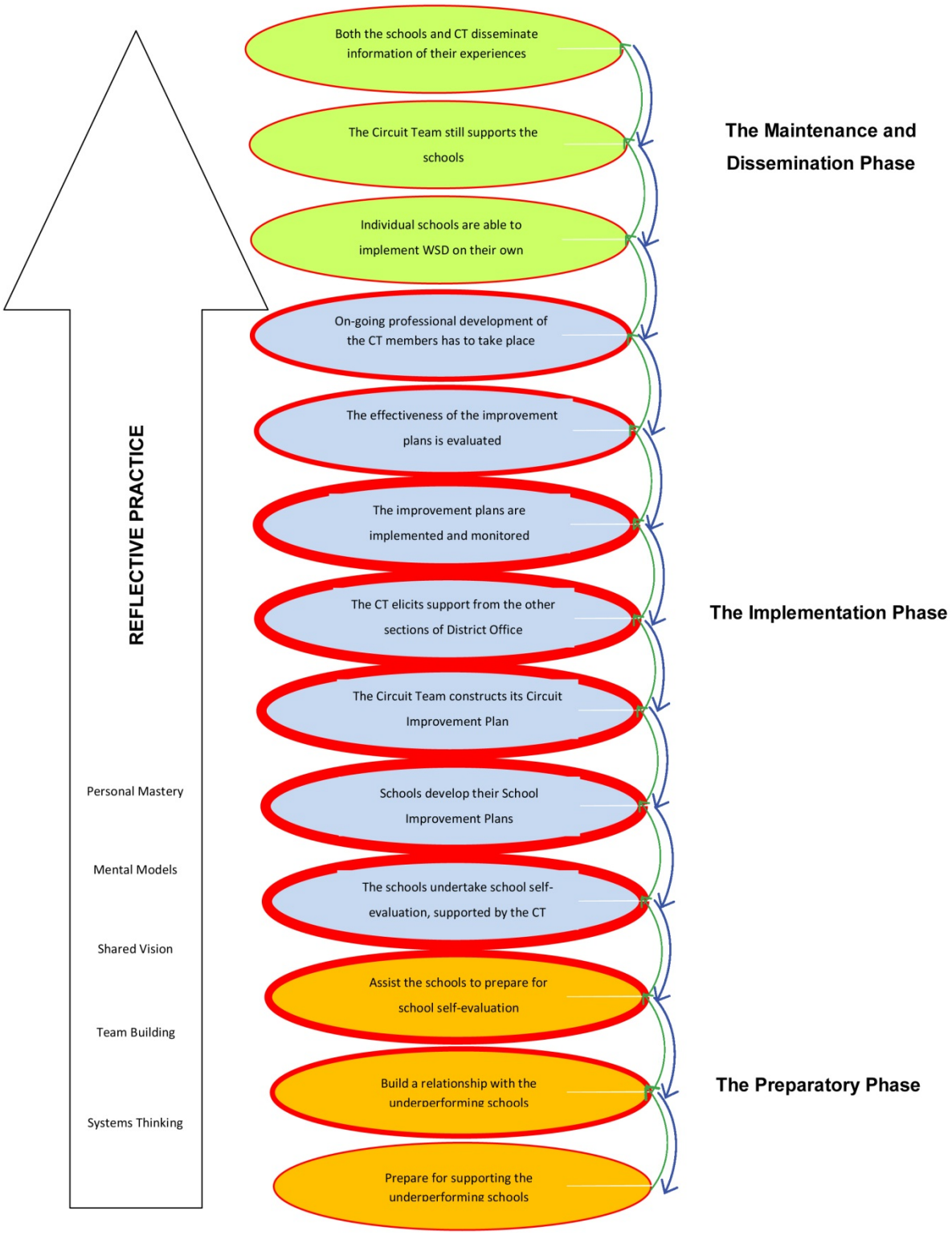
Coupled to the above-mentioned challenge, one of the greatest shortcomings of the research study was that I needed to take the entire District Office on board of the research from the very onset thereof. Instead of doing the presentation in 2011 to the CT only, my audience needed to include all the officials in the District Office dealing with the four underperforming schools. This would have had a totally different outcome to the research. Again, the identification of this oversight has been taken into account for the construction of the model.

6.3 A STRUCTURAL DESCRIPTION OF THE MODEL TO ASSIST CIRCUIT TEAMS IN SUPPORTING SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAMS TOWARDS WHOLE-SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT

The model that emerged from the action research process and findings, as well as from the literature study conducted, appears in figure 6.1 below, and is described in the following paragraphs, after which the *modus operandi* of operationalizing the model is fully explained in par. 6.4:

Figure 6.1

A model to assist Circuit Teams in supporting School Management Teams towards whole-school development



6.3.1 Spiral structure

The model is in the form of a spiral. The reason for choosing the spiral model was that, according to Punt (2012), it makes project monitoring easy and effective. Each phase with its loops, requires a review from the officials concerned, and therefore makes the process of whole-school development much more transparent. Such a structure is also suitable for high risk projects, and therefore suits the situation of assisting underperforming schools very well.

As can be seen from the model above, it is broken down into three distinctive phases: a Preparatory Phase, an Implementation Phase, and a Maintenance and Dissemination Phase. Each of these has a number of loops which represent the required sequential steps to follow when assisting schools towards WSD (indicated by the green-coloured arrows moving upwards). Another significant feature of the model is that it forces the SMTs and CT to go back to a previous step if the action to be taken in a specific loop has not been completed. This is represented in the model by the blue fall-back arrows.

The model is in essence also an action learning model. It enables the CT members and the SMTs to constantly reflect on the course of action they took, and whether it enabled them to achieve the desired outcome. It is against this background that an arrow cuts across all three phases, emphasizing reflective practice (par. 2.2.3) which builds on the five disciplines of a learning organization identified by Senge, as discussed in par. 2.2.2 of the research study. This arrow moves from an underperforming situation in the Preparatory Phase through the implementation phase to establish a self-managing school (par. 2.2.2) in the Maintenance and Dissemination Phase. It is important to note that, during the task performed in each loop of the model, reflection has to be built in.

Another important feature is the thick and thin lines that pass through the various loops of each phase. These represent the intensity of support that has to be offered to schools: the thicker the line, the more support an underperforming school would require from the CT during that particular loop of the model, and the thinner the line, the less support would be needed. From the model it is already evident that the greatest support is needed in the Preparatory and Implementation Phases, with much less thereof in the Maintenance and Dissemination Phase.

Each of the three phases of the model, with its sequential loops, will now be discussed in greater detail.

6.3.2 The Preparatory Phase of the model

This first phase of the model of is crucial importance for delivering and supporting the underperforming schools towards WSD. The phase seeks to prepare the CT members on the one hand, and the schools on the other hand, for the intervention that would take place. During this phase, it is of the utmost importance that the CT members know each other, build working relations with each other, and build relationships of trust with each other. They then have to assist the SMTs of the underperforming schools to do the same before the actual support and assistance can take place.

Based on the data from the fieldwork, as well as the literature review conducted in Chapter Two, this phase of the model has to consist of three distinctive loops:

6.3.2.1 Loop one: The Circuit Team has to prepare itself for supporting the underperforming schools

Under the leadership and guidance of the CTM, the CT has to establish and clarify their vision and mission statements. The roles and responsibilities of each team member has to be unpacked and understood by all in the team so that every team member is absolutely certain of the role that the other persons will play in supporting the underperforming schools.

Building relationships of trust is paramount to the CT members at this stage of the model. They have to be in a position to work with openness and honesty. Furthermore, communication between the CT members will need to be strengthened through *inter alia* daily briefing sessions so that each member is fully knowledgeable of the developments within the circuit on a daily basis. Accountability systems need to be put in place, such as a weekly or monthly template for planning and reporting back on support given to schools.

6.3.2.2 Loop two: The Circuit Team builds a relationship with the underperforming schools

This task is performed on-site, meaning that the CT would visit the individual schools on their premises. The main purpose of this step is for the CT to establish a relationship of trust with each school. Without such a relationship in place, no intervention will have a lasting and positive effect. It is at this stage that the CT will also bring their message of support to the

schools, stating that they would work together with the school to turn the situation around for the better.

6.3.2.3 Loop three: The Circuit Team assists the schools to prepare for school self-evaluation

Once the relationship between the CT and the schools has started to take route, the CT has to assist the schools to prepare for SSE. During the Preparation Phase the following has to receive attention (as the other processes involved in SSE would be undertaken in the Implementation Phase):

- Clarify the vision and mission statements;
- Clarify the roles and responsibilities of the SMT members;
- Put a steering committee in place (for SSE), and
- Identify the relevant stakeholders to participate in SSE.

6.3.3 The Implementation Phase of the model

The main emphasis of the Implementation Phase of the model is on the development, implementation and monitoring of the SIPs and the CIP, as these are the management tools and the project plan for school improvement and WSD. The following loops can be distinguished during this phase of the model.

6.3.3.1 Loop one: The schools undertake school self-evaluation, supported by the Circuit Team

Based on the nine areas of WSE, the schools conduct their SSE in order to determine the priorities for the specific academic year. It is, however, very important to realize from the model that this task is strongly supported by the CT. The CT has to be on board and effectively guide the process so that it is done correctly, and to ensure that the outcomes (results) of the exercise are authentic for the particular school within its particular context.

6.3.3.2 Loop two: Schools develop their School Improvement Plans

Following the outcome of the SSE, the schools are now in a position to construct their individual SIPs. They need to identify the specific priorities, develop suitable action plans, determine deadlines and allocate specific persons to oversee specific tasks whilst also determining the resources needed, and the costs involved.

6.3.3.3 Loop three: The Circuit Team constructs its Circuit Improvement Plan

As the CT had to be hands-on in assisting the schools during loops one and two with preparing for the SSE and developing their SIPs, the CT should at this stage have a holistic overview of the challenges and priorities faced by the school. On the basis of this insight, the CIP needs to be developed, based on the specific actions that the CT would undertake to complement the activities done by the schools themselves.

6.3.3.4 Loop four: The Circuit Team elicits support from the other sections of the District Office

Based on the information contained in the CIP, the team now has to determine what specific roles specialists from the other pillars of the District Office need to play in supporting the schools. They therefore have to sit down with officials from the Corporate Service branch, the Special Needs in Education section, and most importantly, the Curriculum section. The activities to be undertaken by these officials have to be clarified, and each activity with a person responsible to execute the task must be identified, and written into the CIP.

This aspect was a major problem during the fieldwork. In order for effective and efficient service delivery to take place, officials of the District Office must collaborate with members of the CT. Egos of individuals cannot be allowed to derail the process, and the CT has to work on this aspect continuously to get the collaboration they require for supporting them in their endeavour to turnaround the underperforming situation prevailing at these schools.

6.3.3.5 Loop five: The improvement plans are implemented and monitored

During this stage, the SMTs will drive the implementation of their respective SIPs, whilst the CT will ensure the delivery of the CIP. These two broad processes need to be continuously monitored to ensure that effective support is taking place. Instances where the plans do not work out, or where deviations have occurred, need to be reported and where necessary, adaptions have to be made to ensure that the plans stay on track.

6.3.3.6 Loop six: The CT oversees the training of the SMTs in their roles and responsibilities

Due to the strong emphasis on the role that school management has to play within the context of WSD (see par. 2.2.1), it is imperative that the SMTs of the underperforming schools are trained and supported on an on-going basis to fulfil their obligations in this regard. The CT also has to ensure that the training which the SMTs received is

implemented. Without checking on this aspect, there will be no sustainable growth and development in these schools.

6.3.3.7 Loop seven: The effectiveness of the improvement plans is evaluated

At the end of the academic year, a thorough analysis of the effectiveness of the CIP and SIPs has to be undertaken to determine what worked, and why, as well as what did not go off well, and why not. Lessons for future implementation of the improvement plans have to be drawn from this exercise.

6.3.3.8 Loop eight: On-going professional development of Circuit Team members has to take place

The CT members are at the forefront of the entire process of WSD. In order to lead this process effectively, these officials have to be capacitated on an on-going basis. Regular reflection meetings, as well as formal workshops have to take place to broaden their scope of knowledge and skills which they in turn have to impart on the SMTs to allow WSD to take root.

6.3.4 The Maintenance and Dissemination Phase of the model

The overall aim of this phase is to establish a self-managing institution: both at school level and at circuit level. The knowledge, skills and experiences imparted during the implementation phase had to empower all the stakeholders at school and circuit levels to break through the cycle of underperformance, and to lead the schools to become fully functional institutions of learning. From my experience in assisting underperforming schools, it usually takes between one to three years, depending on the local circumstances, for schools to start functioning more optimally. As the lines of support in the model clearly indicate, the need for support becomes considerably less during this phase. The following loops can be distinguished in this phase:

6.3.4.1 Loop one: Individual schools are able to implement whole-school development on their own

The knowledge, skills and experience developed during the implementation phase empowered the SMTs to take fully ownership of WSD. They constantly applied what they

learnt to everyday practice, and have graduated to a level where they can be regarded as self-managing institutions.

6.3.4.2 Loop two: The Circuit Team still supports the schools

The CT still supports the schools to maintain their newly acquired status of self-managing schools. However, as the model shows, the frequency and intensity of such support is less than before.

6.3.4.3 Loop three: Both the schools and Circuit Team disseminate information of their experiences

Because a culture of feedback and disclosure is encouraged within a learning organization, and employees are encouraged to learn from their own experience, as well as the experience and practices of others (Moloi: 2005:10), it is important that platforms are created for both the schools and the CT to share what they have learnt from their interactions relating to WSD. In the case of the schools, they can share their experiences with other schools in the circuit or district via circuit/district meetings. The CT on the other hand needs to impart their knowledge to other CTs in the same, and perhaps other Districts. In this way a learning culture is established and life-long learning is firmly embedded in the everyday practices of departmental officials.

6.3.5 The important role of reflective practice

In par. 2.2 of this research study the importance of the school as a learning organization, which constantly reflects on its practices, was made within the context of WSD. Against this background Moloi (2005:1 – 2) stresses that the quality improvements which schools as learning organizations implement can only be achieved through open communication, reflection and inquiry processes that collectively contribute to school improvement.

In addition to the three phases of the model that have been explained in par. 6.3.2 – 6.3.4 the reader will notice an arrow cutting through all the phases, starting from the Preparatory Phase and working its way up to the Maintenance and Dissemination Phase. This arrow has the wording “Reflective Practice” written on it, and is supported by the five disciplines of a learning organization identified by Senge (1994:6 – 11) which were also discussed in terms of its relevance to this study in par. 2.2.2:

- Personal mastery;
- Mental models;
- Building shared vision;
- Team building, and
- Systems thinking.

For the implementation of the model the above paragraph means that, at each loop in the three phases of the model, reflection has to take place in order for the participants (SMTs and CT members) to continually expand their capacity to create the desired future and to achieve what they desire (Moloi 2005:2). The reflection at each loop of the model also has to view the decisions and actions taken in the light of the above-mentioned five disciplines of a learning organization.

6.3.6 The principles of Action Learning

Before discussing the operationalization of the model it is important, in the light of the above discussions, to consider the role of action learning in relation to the implementation of the model. Based on the writings of Moloi (2005), Zuber-Skerritt (2009) and McGill and Brockbank (2004) who discussed various principles and values of action learning, I decided for the purpose of this study, to concentrate on the following which I term the “5 Cs” of action learning. These principles are fundamental to the operationalization of the model.

6.3.6.1 Collaboration

Moloi (2005:87 – 89) defines collaboration as working jointly together with others towards achieving a particular goal. She stresses the importance of acquiring new skills and knowledge through learning teams and emphasizes that collaboration is an essential ingredient for continuous learning and development, thereby linking it to life-long learning. A collaborative culture is established by creating positive interpersonal working relationships through mutual support, understanding and shared purposes. Zuber-Skerritt (2009:13) adds to this by stating that when people collaborate with each other, everyone’s view is taken as a contribution to understanding the situation.

The above accentuates the importance that people have to work together in teams and to share knowledge, skills and experience in order to grow, not only as individuals, but most specifically as an organization: be it the school or the CT. It is therefore imperative that opportunities for dissemination (as suggested in the third phase of the model) are created so

that more people become empowered. Because regular District Office meetings happen – either with the schools alone, or with the District officials themselves – this type of platform actually already exists in many Districts, and can therefore be expanded to accommodate this very important practice.

6.3.6.2 Critical reflection

To understand the nature of critical reflection, McGill and Brockbank (2004:94 – 101) explain four aspects of reflective practice:

- *Knowing that:* This refers to propositional knowledge which a student acquires in the mainstream part of his/her professional study at university, and can also be referred to as "textbook knowledge" or "knowing about something." Relating to this research study this can take on the form of things that teachers know about teaching, and Principals know about management.
- *Knowing-in-action and knowledge-in-use:* This refers to knowledge that comes from professional practice. Knowing-in-action becomes knowledge-in-action when a person is able to describe to somebody else what he/she is doing such as riding a bicycle. It is only when there is a discussion about what a person is doing, that the person transcends the "knowing that" phase. Within the context of this study, this form of reflective practice takes place when a Science teacher is able to describe to his/her CA how he/she went about incorporating cooperative learning with the grade 12 class on a specific day.
- *Reflection-in-action:* This happens when a person is in the midst of an action and asking questions, such as "Do I need to alter, amend or change what I am doing to …?" Reflection therefore takes place while an action is happening – such as checking-up on something that might need some kind of modification. Applying this to the research study, an IMGM, conducting a workshop for the SMTs on effective leadership styles, may at the end of a particular section of the workshop, reflect and ask the question "Would it be better for me to allow for feedback from the participants at this stage, or should I rather move on to the next phase of their interaction?"
- *Reflection-on-action:* This is the act of reflection that takes place after the action has been performed. When a person critically reflects on an event in this manner, the possibility of learning that is transformative, takes place. Within the context of this research study, such reflection may occur when the CTM, on completion of the CIP, critically examines the document and poses questions such as "Did we take all aspects of the schools into consideration?" "Have all the subject-specific needs of the educators been catered for?" "Does this document cover all the major priorities that the schools have indicated they need support and assistance from us?"

Reflection-on-action *with others* (own emphasis) in dialogue which encourages reflection about the actions of a person will be more likely to be effective in promoting critical reflective thinking. Without the interaction brought about by dialogue, critically reflective learning may not happen (McGill and Brockbank 2004:101). When one considers the nature of the spiral model, as well as the guidelines for operationalizing it in practice – see par. 6.4 below – it becomes clear that this very important aspect of critical reflection has to occur at the end of each loop, in each phase of the model. Such reflection-on-action with others is critical not only for action learning to take place, but also to prepare for the following loop when a further course of action towards WSD has to take off.

This reflection-on-action with others may take on one of the following approaches: (1) where the specific action in a particular loop pertained only to the members of the CT, they alone would be engaged in the reflective practice. (2) If a particular action involved only the members of the SMT, they have to be guided to share their reflections with each other (because this practice will be totally new and foreign to them). (3) When an activity involved both the SMTs and CT members, there has to be the required dialogue between the two parties to reflect with each other, and take important lessons from the experience into the future.

Against this background, critical reflection is an important aspect of action learning because it seeks to improve and transform issues. This aspect is strongly linked to the collaborative nature of action learning (discussed in 6.3.6.1 above) due to the central element of dialogue between people, and also connects strongly with the following principle: communication.

6.3.6.3 Communicative action

Zuber-Skerritt (2009:125) introduces the concept “communicative action” in the context of cooperative reflection, stating that it implies *interacting* partners who meet as subjects. The primary goal of communicative action is to reach a mutual understanding concerning the shared situation and common aim of development. Language is therefore the central communicative medium and central mechanism for coordinating actions. Communicative action takes place at two levels: (1) the level of action which refers to the everyday context of social interaction where experiences are gained and exchanged through ordinary language, and (2) the level of discourse which is a rational or reflective level where the level of action that has been taken, can be reflected upon. In this way the discourse becomes a central medium of individual and collective learning.

In the context of this research study, communicative action will take place on a daily basis between members of the CT on the one hand, SMT members on the other hand, and when these two parties meet to collectively share information with each other on e.g. the status of the implementation plans they are working towards. The other level where communicative action is required is when critical reflection has to take place between the members of the CT and SMTs to share insights, experiences, knowledge and skills gained on route towards whole-school development – as has been explained in par. 6.3.6.2 above.

6.3.6.4 Co-accountability

Moloi (2005:87) links co-accountability to the principle of collaboration and places it in the context of the restoration of the culture of teaching, learning and management. She defines the term as the development of a common purpose amongst learners, educators, principals and parents who espouse mutually agreed and understood responsibilities. For the purpose of this discussion, co-accountability means that each person in the CT and the schools has to work in a responsible and accountable manner with other participants to ensure that WSD takes root in a particular institution of learning.

6.3.6.5 Commitment

If WSD is to succeed, individuals and groups of people involved have to commit themselves to a single purpose, and must share the responsibility and willingness to transform schools into viable institutions of learning. Commitment is a distinct attitudinal component that plays a role in an individual's internalization of organizational values. Transforming schools into learning organizations requires committed principals and educators (as well as CT members) to bring about meaningful change in schools. This deliberate effort and collaboration is illuminated through reflection, collective thinking and dialogue, continuous commitment to learning, professionalization of teaching, encouragement of experimentation, and risk-taking (Moloi 2005:88 – 89).

For the purpose of this study each CT member has to be whole-heartedly committed to the execution of the tasks that he/she is responsible for. It was for this reason that it was important for CT members to clarify their roles and responsibilities so that each one knows exactly what is expected of him/her, and is able to deliver on those matters of support. In the same vein, this applies to the SMT members: not only do they have to commit themselves to the process of transformation at their schools, but they need to have clarity on their roles within the management structure of the school.

6.3.6.6 The importance of trust within a team

The above principles can only be practiced if an atmosphere of trust and honesty prevails among the CT members and the SMT members. Without mutual trust between these participants involved in working towards WSD, all attempts in this regard will fail. McGill and Brockbank (2004:19, 68) explain that trust which is needed to enable significant learning and development grows from confidentiality: not to disclose the content of other members' contributions outside of the working field.

Johnson and Johnson (2009:124) explain that the crucial elements of trust are openness and sharing, on the one hand, and acceptance, support and cooperative intentions on the other. Working cooperatively with others requires openness and sharing, which in turn are determined by the expression of acceptance, support and cooperative intentions in the group. Openness is the sharing of information, ideas, thoughts, feelings and reactions to the issue the group is pursuing. Sharing is defined as the offering of one's materials and resources to others in order to help them move the group towards goal accomplishment. Acceptance is the communication of high regard for another person and his/her contributions to the group's work. Support entails recognizing the strengths and capabilities that the other person has to manage the situation productively. Cooperative intentions are the expressions that one is behaving cooperatively and that each group member will cooperate to achieve the group's goals.

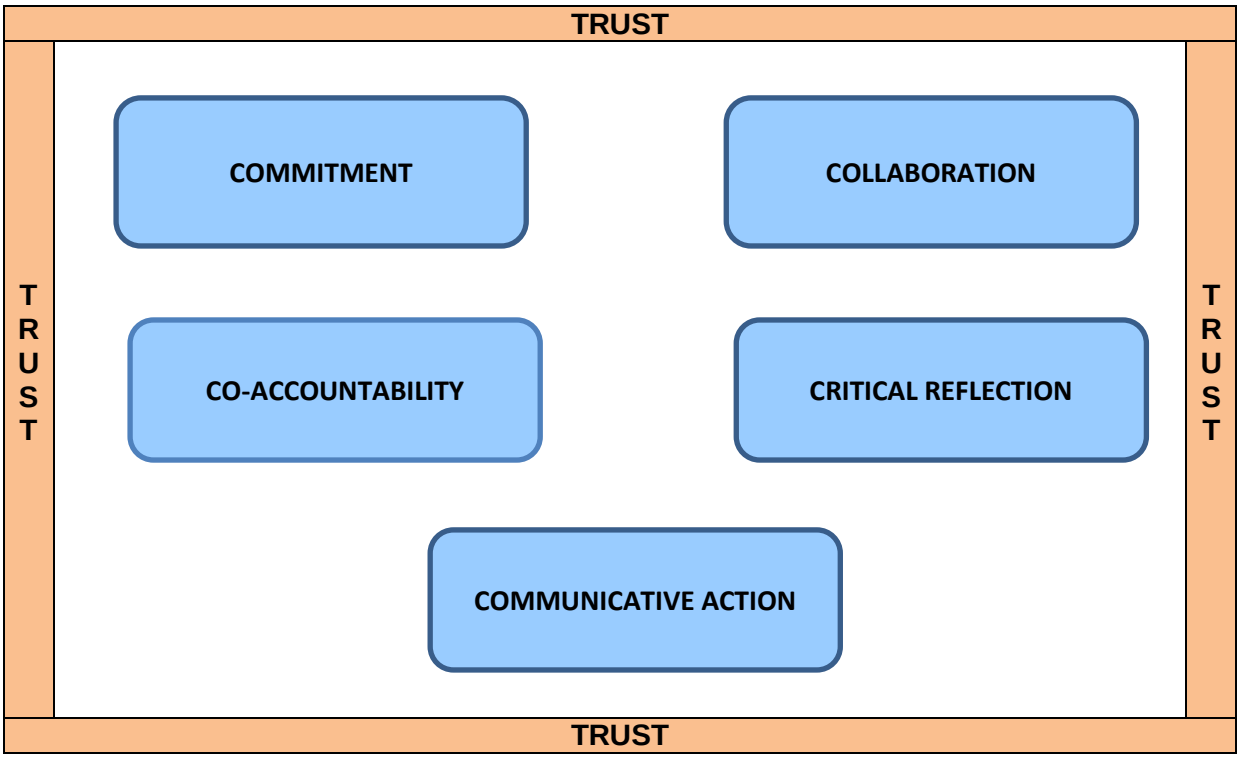
The implication of the above is that the members of the CT and SMTs need to work in a relationship of trust to achieve the aims and objectives set out in the improvement plans. Johnson and Johnson (2009:125) stress that interpersonal trust is built through risk and confirmation, and destroyed through risk and disconfirmation. Without risk there is no trust, and the relationships amongst the group members cannot improve. It is against this background that these authors (2009:124) developed their model on the dynamics of interpersonal trust, portrayed in figure 6.2 below:

Figure 6.2: The dynamics of interpersonal trust (Johnson and Johnson 2009:124)

High openness and sharing	High acceptance, support and cooperativeness.	Low acceptance, support and cooperativeness.
	Person A: Trusting confirmed.	Person A: Trusting disconfirmed.
	Person B: Trustworthy confirmed	Person B: Untrustworthy. No risk.
Low openness and sharing	Person A: Distrusting. No risk.	Person A: Distrusting. No risk.
	Person B: Trustworthy disconfirmed.	Person B: Untrustworthy. No risk.

In summary, the "5 Cs" of Action Learning discussed in this sub-paragraph can only achieve what it set out to do if an atmosphere of trust exists between all the participants involved in the process of WSD. It must be stressed that these principles are crucial for the model to work effectively, and these principles, together with a high degree of trust has to permeate all phases of the model. In this regard, the "5 Cs" can be considered as operational principles that have to guide the implementation of the model through every loop and phase of it. Figure 6.3 below captures the essence of this statement by encapsulating collaboration, critical reflection, communicative action, co-accountability and commitment within a framework of trust:

Figure 6.3: The five principles of Action Learning founded in a relationship of trust:



6.4 GUIDELINES FOR OPERATIONALIZING THE MODEL TO ASSIST CIRCUIT TEAMS TO SUPPORT SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAMS TOWARDS WHOLE-SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT

The discussion in par. 6.3 of the thesis centred mainly on describing the structure of the model to assist CTs to support SMTs towards WSD, indicating that the model consists of three distinctive phases, each of which contains a number of loops. Based on the structure of the discussion in par. 6.3, this paragraph will outline ways in which the model can be operationalized for implementation by a CT.

6.4.1 Guidelines for operationalizing the Preparatory Phase of the model

6.4.1.1 Loop one: The Circuit Team has to prepare itself for supporting the underperforming schools

The most appropriate manner for allowing the CT to prepare itself for its role in supporting the underperforming schools would be to have a workshop or a retreat where the all CT members are afforded the time and space to think and plan on a number of crucial issues that would ensure the success of their venture. The most important issues that emerged from the literature study, as well as the fieldwork are the following:

- If vision and mission statements are not in place, it is the opportune time for the CT members to create a shared vision and clear mission that all CT members are committed to achieve. Based on Naidu *et al.* (2008:60 – 61) and Flanagan and Finger (2004:302) a vision can be defined as a mental image of a realistic, credible and desired future for an organization which has to be shared with its stakeholders and be in writing. Naidu *et al.* (2008:62) explains that the mission gives direction to an institution's activities and is a concise outline of "who we are, what we do and where we are headed." In cases where such statements exist, it would be the opportune time to revisit these and ensure that everybody in the CT is clear on where these statements are directing the team into the future.
- The fieldwork clearly pointed to the important aspect of identifying and unpacking the roles and responsibilities of each CT member. In this regard, the official job description of each member of the team can act as a guiding document as this captured the essential duties that each CT has to perform. It is critical for the effective functioning of the CT that each member not only know how he/she fits into the picture, but also understands the roles that other team members have to fulfil. Johnson and Johnson

(2009:15) underline the importance of group members in understanding their roles so that the group's goals can be achieved. Roles are usually complementary in that one role cannot be performed without the other. The authors warn that, if roles and responsibilities are not clarified, role conflict will arise that can impair the effective functioning of the team.

- The retreat/workshop also provides the CT members the much afforded opportunity to build relationships of trust with each other. This aspect was discussed at length in par. 6.3.6.6 above, and also incorporated the "5 Cs" of action learning which form the guiding principles according to which the CT need to work as a united team.
- In conjunction with the above bullet, ways of enhancing communication amongst the team members have to be agreed upon and set in place. If communication is indeed one of the most important management skills (Van Deventer and Kruger 2009:156) the CT has to identify mechanisms that would be suitable for their particular situation and environment. During the fieldwork the issue of daily briefing sessions was identified as a very effective way of keeping the team informed on developments within the circuit. Other mechanisms that could be explored include emails, sms, weekly meetings, etc.
- In the final instance accountability systems have to be agreed upon and put in place. This includes, but is not restricted to, a weekly or monthly template for planning support to schools and for reporting back on developments at the schools.

6.4.1.2 Loop two: The Circuit Team builds a relationship with the underperforming schools

Before visiting the schools, it is important that the CT reflects on the workshop/retreat during which they prepared themselves for supporting the underperforming schools. They need to critically consider whether or not this event achieved the aim it set out to accomplish, and critically look at any gaps or overlaps in terms of their effective functioning as a team.

In addition, the team needs to plan the message of support that they would take to the underperforming schools. Based on what was uncovered during the fieldwork, the following elements were identified to put across to the schools during the first visit:

- It must be made clear to the schools that they were underperforming. Although the fieldwork found that there was a strong top-down approach in this regard, it is important, in the light of building the trust relationship with the schools, that the truth be told, but in a professional manner so that the schools can also feel encouraged to emancipate them from the situation they find them in.
- The schools have to be reminded of the fact that they are able to achieve much better results. In this regard motivation is brought into the picture, and a foundation laid on

which the CT can work with the schools to turn the situation around. The principles of collaboration and co-accountability feature strongly at this point on the agenda, as it will be a team effort where both the CT and the schools will perform certain tasks to improve the state of affairs.

During the first visit to each of the schools, the following *modus operandi* (based on aspects of the fieldwork) is suggested:

- The CT members have to introduce themselves to the school, indicate who they are and explain what role they play within the team;
- The CT has to bring across their message of support, as stipulated above;
- Contrary to the approach of the CT that participated in the research study, I strongly suggest that, at this stage, an open discussion between the CT and school takes place on what problems re basic functionality the school is experiencing, and deliberate on ways how these issues could be addressed – this step is built into the process so that the basic functionality in underperforming schools can be addressed as a priority, in the light of Westraad's (2011:11) stance on the matter. (Such an approach should optimize the buy-in of the school as it operates from a bottom-up approach and is based on the premise discussed by Flanagan and Finger (2004:325 – 326) that when people participate actively in the change process, they are more likely to take ownership of it and less likely to resist it.);
- After this discussion (or as a follow-up) the CT has to sit down with the schools to analyse the examination results and consider appropriate strategies to turn the low academic levels around;
- All the decisions emerging from the discussions on basic functionality, as well as the ways to improve learner achievement must be written down so that these ideas can be incorporated into the SIP and CIP which will be addressed in the next loop and following phase, and
- From this moment onwards, regular on-site visits and follow-ups from the side of the CT are imperative to ensure that WSD takes root in these schools.

6.4.1.3 Loop three: The Circuit Team assists the schools to prepare for school self-evaluation

After this initial visit to the schools, the CT has to get together to reflect on the actions taken and to identify alternative ways in which this exercise could be improved on in the future. Important lessons learnt during the event have to be recorded for future use.

During loop three of the Preparatory Phase the CT has to assist the schools to prepare for SSE. It must be stated that the actions taken in par. 6.4.1.2 did not represent formal SSE, but was merely an introduction to get the schools to start taking ownership of the process. In loop three, SSE is not yet carried out, but the critical steps to prepare for this important event are put in place, and schools have to be assisted to do it correctly.

Based on the discussion in par. 2.6.2 where the sequential steps in conducting SSE were outlined, the following aspects need to be attended to in this step of the Preparatory Phase:

- The school's vision and mission statements need to be clarified. In this regard, the same procedure as suggested for the CT, described in par. 6.4.1.1, can be followed to ensure that these statements are in place and are understood by all stakeholders;
- The roles and responsibilities of the SMT members have to be clarified. The basic job descriptions for the Principal, Deputy Principal(s) and HODs (who collectively constitute the SMT) are found in the Educators' Employment Act (Department of Education 1999), and the content of this document can be used as a basis for clarifying the roles and responsibilities of the SMT members. In addition, there are numerous tasks that SMT members have to perform within a school to ensure its optimal functioning, such as timetabling, physical infrastructure, etc. These issues need to be listed and divided amongst the SMT members so that everyone holds a particular portfolio for which he/she is responsible and accountable;
- The following step in preparing for SSE is for the CT to assist the school in putting a steering committee that will oversee the entire process of SSE and WSD in place, and
- The final aspect that needs to be dealt with in the Preparatory Phase relates to assisting the schools to identify the relevant stakeholders to participate in SSE, and to bring these people on board of the process. The school would need representatives from *inter alia* the learners, parents and community leaders to participate in the event.

6.4.3 Guidelines for operationalizing the Implementation Phase of the model

6.4.3.1 Loop one: The schools undertake school self-evaluation, supported by the CT

Prior to supporting the schools to undertake SSE, the CT needs to reflect critically on the actions taken in the previous loop: what went well and why, and if there were aspects that did not go off well, why did this happen and how do they need to alter their *modus operandi* in the future.

The following guidelines are suggested for the schools to undertake SSE:

- It is strongly suggested that this occasion takes place in the form of a workshop or retreat where all the relevant stakeholders partake in the event;
- If capacity to lead SSE at SMT level is seriously lacking, it would be advisable for the CT to lead the process. However, it must be stressed that such an intervention by the CT must be aimed at capacitating the SMT to take over this role in the future. I would rather see the CT leading the process, than to have the process derailed by the incompetence of the SMT. In my opinion, the event must be a complete success from the very beginning, and a high standard of work has to be maintained, irrespective of who is leading the event;
- At the onset of the workshop, it is necessary to explain what SSE entails, and what purpose it serves in assisting the school towards WSD;
- The route followed during the fieldwork (par. 5.3.3) could be a useful *modus operandi* for such a workshop: the participants are divided into specific groups that will complete only specific sections of the SSE instrument. Alternatively, all the participants can work through all nine areas of WSE – this route will, however, be more time-consuming;
- After the above round of SSE, the participants need to discuss their results with each other and to report back to plenary;
- The next step is to allow the participants to identify at least one, but not more than two priorities from each of the nine areas of WSE that they consider are of significance to WSD at their institution, and
- When the participants have completed this exercise, they are provided the time and opportunity to discuss the priorities they identified, and where necessary debate these or re-align them to emerge with a final list of not more than six issues they agree upon as the main focus areas for the new academic year. This activity will lead directly into the next loop of the Implementation Phase: the development of the SIP.

6.4.3.2 Loop two: Schools develop their School Improvement Plans

Following the outcome of the SSE, the schools are now in a position to construct their individual SIPs. The following *modus operandi* is suggested:

- Once the final priorities have been agreed upon, the participants brainstorm appropriate activities (action plans) that have to be performed to address each of the priorities. As it was done in the workshop referred to in par. 5.3.3, the participants can consider what has already been done to address the issues and what still has to be done with regard to each priority;

- One very important aspect in this regard that emerged from the fieldwork was the need to make subject-related support needed for particular subjects explicit in the SIP;
- The list of activities (action plans) for the SIP need to be sequenced in a logical order, starting with the activity that has to be performed first, followed by the second one, etc. until all activities have been placed in chronological order of their performance;
- Each activity (action plan) has to be assigned to a specific person or group who will be responsible and accountable to oversee the implementation thereof;
- A deadline (timeframe) for the completion of each activity (action plan) is identified and written down;
- The reflection (discussed in par. 5.3.5) on how the workshop described in par. 5.3.3 could have been improved, brought to light that two additional aspects needed to be included in both the SIP and CIP: the identification of resources and costing of an activity. In terms of resources, the participants need to identify appropriate human and physical resources needed for specific activities. A human resource can, for example, be an external expert who will be brought on board to workshop the staff on discipline. A physical resource is for example, security gates to be erected at the school to curb gangsterism;
- Once the above have been clarified, the participants need to calculate the costs involved in performing each activity. Some activities might not cost anything at all, for example, when SMT members undertake management-by-walking-around (MBWA) during tuition time to ensure that teachers and learners are in class and that the full duration of the contact time is optimally utilized. Other activities will have cost implications, such as a workshop is to be conducted by an external service provider, the school will have to budget for the facilitator's fees, the hiring of a venue (if the school premises cannot be used), catering for x-number of people, printing of hand-outs, etc. and
- With the above plan of action agreed upon, the SIP needs to be written up. Based on the discussion in par. 5.3.5, I propose that the following template be used for this purpose:

PRIORITY	ACTIVITIES	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE	RESOURCES	COSTS

A SIP developed in the above manner will be a comprehensive document to ensure that WSD takes place, and will be owned by all the stakeholders of the school.

6.4.3.3 Loop three: The Circuit Team constructs its Circuit Improvement Plan

After the development of the SIP has taken place, and the process of SSE has been completed, it is once again important that the CT members who were part of the process, reflect on the events that took place at the workshop (retreat) and look for ways in which such an exercise can be improved in the future. They also need to guide the SMT in implementing reflective practice so that they, too, can utilize this important management tool to empower themselves.

As the CT members were hands-on in assisting the schools and overseeing the process during loops one and two with the preparation for SSE and the development of the SIPs, they should at this stage have a holistic overview of the challenges and priorities of all the underperforming schools they have to service. On the basis of this insight, the CIP needs to be developed, taking the following broad guidelines into consideration:

- The CIP needs to be based on the specific actions that the CT, and other pillars of the District Office, will undertake to complement the activities that the schools themselves will perform (listed in the SIPs);
- The priorities expressed in the SIPs need to be taken as the point of departure. Issues that are common to a particular group of schools have to be identified, for example, the SMTs of three schools have to be trained in school management and leadership, and these have to be listed as activities to be carried out;
- If there are priorities or activities that the members of the CT cannot attend to, they need to identify the relevant officials in the District Office who are experts or specialists in those areas, and who have to be brought on board to assist the schools;
- Timeframes (deadlines) for the completion of each activity have to be specified;
- Human and physical resources (as discussed in par. 6.4.3.2) need to be identified and listed in the CIP;
- The funding of particular activities (as discussed in par. 6.4.3.2) has to be calculated and included in the CIP, and
- Based on the discussion in par. 6.4.3.2, I hereby recommend that the same template that was suggested for the SIP, be used for the CIP as well:

PRIORITY	ACTIVITIES	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE	RESOURCES	COSTS

6.4.3.4 Loop four: The Circuit Team elicits support from the other sections of the District Office

Again, following the work done in par. 6.4.3.3, the CT needs to reflect on the lessons they learnt during the process of developing the CIP, and has to record their experiences for future implementation.

The task to be undertaken during this phase has already started off in the previous loop when the CT members were required to identify specialists (experts) from other pillars of the District Office to assist them with addressing specific issues at the schools. As it became evident from the fieldwork conducted (see par. 5.4.2) there might be resistance or unwillingness from members of the District Office who are not aligned to the CTs. The CTM needs to sit down with the specific persons involved and elicit their support. It has to be stressed that all officials at District Office level have to collaborate when it comes to supporting schools – whether they are placed within a CT or not. Without this collaboration and commitment schools will not effectively progress towards WSD.

Due to the hierarchy within Government, it will be wise to keep the supervisor of the official whose assistance is sought, in the loop in order to gain support for involving the person in the intervention strategy. Flanagan and Finger (2004:326 – 327) also suggest the following strategies:

- Involve the different people in the planning process, so that they can see the initiative as their own, and not as something imposed on them by outsiders;
- Gain the support of opinion leaders in the organization. Others often follow their lead, for people tend to model the behaviour of others, especially those that they admire or trust;
- Concentrate on the doers, not the doubters. The risk-takers are more likely to support one's efforts to bring improvement about;
- Sell the benefits of becoming involved to the people – motivate them to embrace the benefits by putting these on as personal a level as possible, and
- Don't be half-hearted when presenting them with the call for support – an enthusiastic approach will assist in overcoming the resistance.

Once the relevant external officials have been brought on board, the activities and timeframes for their involvement in the execution of the CIP have to be written into the document.

6.4.3.5 Loop five: The improvement plans are implemented and monitored

Prior to implementing the required action in this loop, CT members need to reflect on the events that took place during the previous loop, and look at strategies they employed which produced the required results, but also to identify matters that did not go according to plan.

Loop five represents the most critical stage of the entire process that has culminated up to this moment in time. The smoothness with which the SIPs and CIP are implemented (or the lack thereof) will be a clear indication whether or not the planning, that preceded this loop, was up to the required standard. Bosschoff, Govender and Oosthuizen (2005:23) state that:

> The implementation phase of the project life cycle is probably the most important one. During this phase, the project is actually in motion and deliverables are about to be achieved … Execution of the project commences according to the detailed planning and design of the project.

Based on my experience, this is the most difficult stage for both the SMTs and the CT, as I have found that Government officials are generally speaking, cautious when it comes to implementation. One of the HODs echoed this sentiment during the fieldwork when he said:

> *At our school there is a weakness in implementing our agreed-upon programmes of action. We always make good plans, but we are weak when it comes to implementing these. (HOD)*

Westraad (2011:29) concurs with the above, stating that:

> Most South African schools will also struggle at the level of implementation, particularly if there is not a certain level of functionality within the school. In addition, the contextual factors that impact on implementation are daunting: schools need passion, drive and support to make breakthroughs that will bring about meaningful change.

The most effective way to combat the hesitation that arises with this phase is to simply start doing the first activity that was written into the improvement plan during the second and third loops of the Implementation Phase. It was for this reason that the suggestion was made for the action steps to be sequentially ordered – this will make implementation much smoother. The SIPs and CIP have to be implemented to the letter, and careful monitoring has to take place to ensure that the plan stays on track.

Monitoring mechanisms during the Implementation Phase can include the following, but are not restricted to:

- The Principal remains the Accounting Officer for the implementation of the SIP and the CTM has the same status with regard to the CIP;

- Each activity listed in the SIPs and CIP has to be performed by the persons allocated to the task, and within the stipulated deadline;
- Throughout the implementation phase, communication with all stakeholders is critical. People need to stay in touch with each other and keep each other abreast of developments;
- Members from the CT have to be on-site at the schools regularly to oversee the implementation of the plans, and
- Regular reporting has to be built into the plan, and these occasions have to be honoured.
- Meetings involving all the stakeholders have to take place on a regular basis.

Flanagan and Finger (2004:316 – 317) offer the following advice:

- Mistakes will happen. When they do, there has to be an agreed-upon mechanism to rectify the situation;
- Mistakes can be minimized by thinking and planning ahead. All eventualities must be anticipated and contingency plans have to be in place;
- Guard against carelessness as this can destroy a project;
- Laziness cannot be tolerated;
- Take a stand against incompetence by monitoring and improving performance standards and implementing training and coaching aimed at correcting identified weaknesses in staff competencies;
- When delegating, select the correct person for the task, conduct a thorough briefing, train as required, hand over authority and monitor appropriately;
- Follow up and supervise that instructions have been carried out, and
- Develop a risk-management plan by identifying possible risks and putting measures in place to deal with such risks.

6.3.3.6 Loop six: The CT oversees the training of the SMTs in their roles and responsibilities

The implementation and monitoring of the improvement plans are enormous and contain multiple facets that both SMTs and the CT have to attend to on an on-going basis. Therefore, the reflection on the activities that took place in the previous loop is most crucial, and careful records have to be kept to ensure that lessons learnt are captured, to be taken into consideration in the future.

Murakami and Orr (2012:5) have found that successful Principals (and one may include: SMTs) are vital in sustaining developments and improvements at school level. My experience in dealing with underperforming schools strongly supports these scholars'

stance. In par. 1.1 of the thesis it was explicitly stated that the MFTs that supported the underperforming schools, in which I participated, had to spend the majority of their time in empowering the SMTs of these schools. Based on her experience with underperforming township schools in Port Elizabeth, Sauer (2011) came to the conclusion that, in order for an underperforming school to turn around, one has to attend to the training of the SMTs in their roles and responsibilities on an on-going basis.

Any specific training needs that a particular SMT might have need to be written into the SIP and CIP. It is my opinion that the CTM is responsible to attend to this issue and to ensure that this is addressed. Where SMTs are not always able to clearly articulate their developmental needs, my experience has been that "generic training" in general school management and leadership is most of the time a good starting point and helps to lay a strong foundation for these people on which follow-up sessions on other specific issues such as timetabling can be undertaken. I have to stress that these empowerment sessions cannot be a once-off session, but that they have to be undertaken on a continuous basis to ensure that sustainable change takes place at school level.

The importance of empowering other people is highlighted by Johnson and Johnson (2009:398) who explain that the psychological costs of a person feeling helpless to resolve problems include frustration, anxiety, depression and friction. These negative emotions have to be dispelled and the only route, according to the authors, is through empowerment programmes. My experience in dealing with underperforming institutions has been that the moment when the SMT members are properly trained for their duties (and they apply the newly acquired knowledge and skills), a positive spin-off is set in motion and things in the schools begin to change for the better.

6.4.3.7 Loop seven: The effectiveness of the improvement plans is evaluated

Once again, in the spirit of action learning, both the SMTs and CT have to reflect on the manner in which the training of SMTs has contributed towards WSD. Lessons learnt have to be documented and used for future reference.

The evaluation of the implementation plans will take place towards the end of an academic year. The SMTs and CT will need to sit together to analyse and evaluate in what way the support given to the underperforming schools has contributed towards WSD (or not). The lessons learnt from this experience will, together with the following round of SSE, inform the SIPs of the schools.

6.4.3.8 Loop eight: On-going professional development of Circuit Team members has to take place

One of the aspects I found lacking in dealing with the particular CT during the fieldwork was the on-going professional development of the CT members themselves. In addition, reflecting on my period of employment as Circuit Manager, I discovered that there was basically no training for District Officials in place, and that one had to rely on one's own research and study to empower oneself to deal with the situations you faced.

Taking my argument in Chapter Four in which I examined the link between the improvement plans and Project Management into consideration, I strongly recommend that all CT members as well as other District Officials working outside of a CT be trained in Project Management. The implementation of a CIP and SIP is essentially the implementation of a project, and for a CIP and SIP to contribute to a significant difference in the underperforming schools, the officials involved need to be skilled in this very important management tool.

6.4.4 The Maintenance and Dissemination Phase of the model

6.4.4.1 Loop one: Individual schools are able to implement whole-school development on their own

At the end of the Implementation Phase, it is necessary for the CT to reflect on the training they received during the year and identify topics and issues in which they need capacity-building. These have to be planned for and integrated into the CIP for the following academic year.

The knowledge, skills and experience developed during the Implementation Phase had to empower the SMTs to take greater ownership of WSD. They need to constantly apply what they've learnt to everyday practice, so that they can graduate to a level where their schools can be regarded as self-managing institutions.

Moloi (2005:101) stresses the importance that, in a learning organization, the Principal has to be transformational, visionary and instructional. She emphasizes that a strategic and transformational leadership structure is needed where clear patterns of school organization is established through identity (vision, mission, purpose and direction), strategy (goal-setting, planning, evaluation, direction, and teaching and learning tasks), structures (information flow, individual responsibilities and decision-making, and communication), technical support

(resource control, financial management and administration), human resource management (interpersonal relationships with staff and other people connected to the school) and methods of procedure. These aspects of organizational life are interrelated and interdependent. In a learning organization they have to be balanced and linked together in order to initiate system-wide improvements in an effort to build learning organizations.

6.4.4.2 Loop two: The Circuit Team still supports the schools

The CT still supports the schools to maintain their newly acquired status of self-managing schools. However, as the model shows, the frequency and intensity of such support is less than before because the school management has become increasingly empowered to manage their institution on their own.

Moloi (2005:106) emphasizes that transformational leadership is vital to transforming the school into a learning organization, and this is achieved through commitment and effectiveness. She lists the following properties that are required for schools to learn, acquire knowledge, maintain and enhance the institution's organizational life for continuous learning:

- Responsiveness – sensitivity to challenge: opportunity and risk;
- Capacity for innovation – finding, evaluating and implementing new ideas;
- Adaptiveness – adaptation to external change;
- Flexibility – reaction to problems, and
- Communicative competence – intensity of communication and rules for reaching consensus on important issues.

Johnson and Johnson (2009:202) add to this, stating that the most important leadership practice is empowering individuals by organizing them into cooperative teams. Such teams must be carefully structured to include positive interdependence, face-to-face interaction, individual accountability, social groups and group processing. Leaders are obligated to organize their people to work together – firstly to promote committed and caring relationships through a team approach, and secondly to empower staff members through teamwork.

6.4.4.3 Loop three: Both the schools and Circuit Team disseminate information of their experiences

According to Moloi (2005:10) a culture of feedback and disclosure is encouraged within a learning organization. Employees are encouraged to learn from their own experience, as

well as the experience and practices of others. Zuber-Skerritt (2009:91 – 92) confirms this point of view, stating that within a learning organization people are continually discovering how they can create and change their reality. This requires an attitude that learning should be life-long and cooperative. It therefore has to take place through discussion and dialogue.

Based on the above, platforms for both the schools and CT have to be created where they can share their knowledge, skills and experience with other stakeholders. In the case of the schools, they can e.g. share their experiences with other schools in the circuit or district via circuit/district meetings. The CT on the other hand needs to impart their knowledge with other CTs in the same, and perhaps other Districts. In this way a learning culture is established and life-long learning is firmly embedded in the everyday practices of these officials. Through the platforms of communication other SMTs and departmental officials are exposed to strategies which they can implement in their respective communities.

6.5 SUMMARY

In this chapter the primary aim of this research study, as set out in par. 1.5, was achieved: to develop a model that will enable CTs to support SMTs of underperforming high schools towards WSD. Based on the outcomes of the literature study, as well as the finding of the fieldwork, a spiral model was constructed, consisting of three distinctive phases: a Preparatory Phase, an Implementation Phase and a Maintenance and Dissemination Phase. Each of these respective phases consisted of a number of loops in which specific actions to be taken by the SMTs and CT were described. A structural description of the model was presented, followed by a discussion on how to operationalize it in practice. The following chapter will deal with the general summary, limitations of the study, recommendations and conclusion.

CHAPTER SEVEN

SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS, LIMITATIONS AND CONCLUSION

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter dealt with the primary aim of this research study: the development of a model to assist CTs in supporting SMTs towards WSD, based on the literature review and fieldwork conducted. The structure of the model, as well as recommended guidelines to operationalize it in practice, were described and discussed. In this chapter, a summary of the literature and empirical study on how the findings led to the attainment of the research aims is put forward, followed by the recommendations of the study. After this the limitations are discussed and the contribution of the study is highlighted.

7.2 SUMMARY OF THE MAIN FINDINGS OF EACH CHAPTER

The purpose of the research study was to develop and describe a model to assist CTs to support SMTs towards WSD. The following six chapters developed from the research study, each contributing to an important aspect of the research:

In the general introduction to **Chapter One** my personal interest in the research study was explained, highlighting my involvement during the period of my employment as Circuit Manager in assisting underperforming high schools to become fully functional institutions of learning. The background to the research investigated learner achievement results of South African learners in various local and international assessments from 2003 to 2011, concluding that this country's learners were seriously underperforming. After the link between effective school management and quality learner achievement results was established, the poor quality of school management prevailing in the majority of schools was explored, followed by evidence from various provinces in the country that District officials of the Education Department were not supporting schools sufficiently towards WSD. The importance of the Circuit Office with regard to support to schools was explored, followed by evidence of increased learner achievement rates in the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) which were *inter alia* attributed to the circuit team approach adopted by that Department.

The **primary research question** that guided this research study was: *"How can Circuit Teams (CTs) effectively support School Management Teams (SMTs) of underperforming schools towards whole-school development (WSD)?"*

The following **secondary research questions** were formulated to provide further direction to the research study:

- How can CTs assist SMTs to develop and implement their respective SIPs?
- How can CTs be assisted to develop, implement and monitor their CIP?
- What recommendations can be made to improve service delivery to the schools?

The primary aim of the research was to design a model that would enable CTs to support SMTs of underperforming high schools towards WSD. For the research design, I adopted a constructivist, interpretative paradigm, as well as a critical theory paradigm. Action research (which is associated with the critical theory paradigm) was the chosen research methodology. This study adopted a qualitative research approach as it best suited the purpose of the research and my philosophical assumptions.

Four underperforming high schools in the same township area in the Cape Town Metro formed the basis of the purposive sample. Data were generated through interviews, participant observation and document analysis. The eight steps outlined by Tesch were used to thematically analyse the data. Measures for ensuring the trustworthiness of the data were presented, followed by an outline of the thesis.

Chapter Two formed the theoretical discussion on WSD, with specific reference to the roles of the CT and the SMTs. Taking the research question and the nature of the research into consideration, I structured the theoretical framework according to themes (constructs). The following inter-related concepts were identified and discussed in relation to the research question: the nature of WSD, the systems theory approach to WSD, two South African models for WSD that were used in assisting underperforming schools, the concept of WSE, the nature of the SIP, the role of the District (Circuit) office in relation to WSD, and the role of the SMT with regards to WSD.

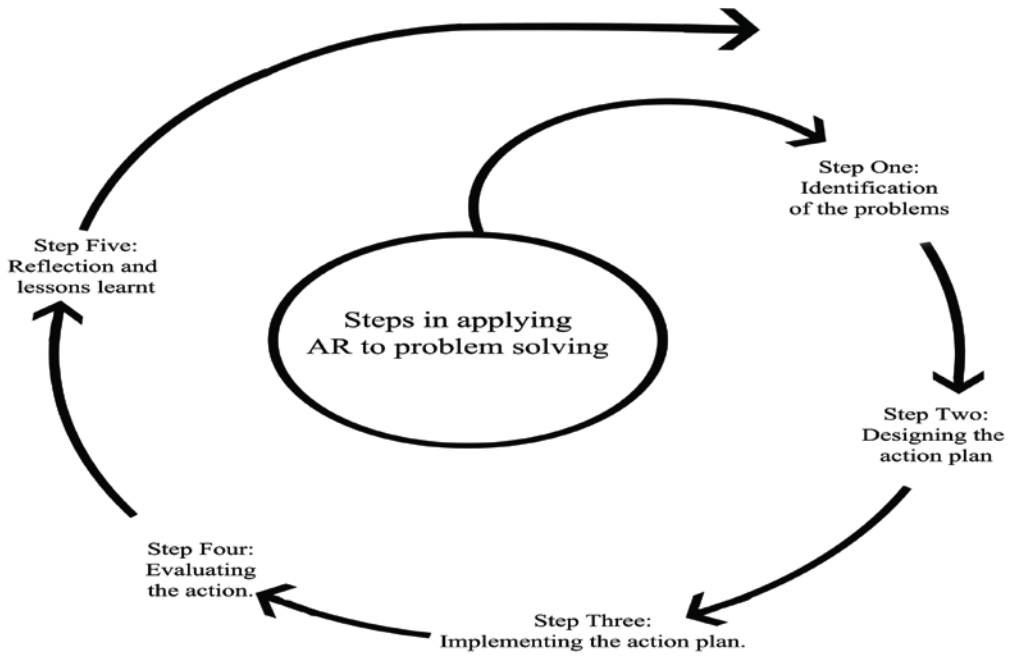
Chapter Three focused on a theoretical discussion of the research design and methodology. The following issues were explored in depth: A distinction was made between the quantitative and qualitative research approaches, and reasons were provided for choosing the latter approach to this research study. Thereafter the main issues relating to the research design, i.e. the philosophical framework: a constructivist, interpretative paradigm, as well as a critical theory paradigm, was introduced. Action research as the research

methodology was explained, followed by an in-depth discussion on sampling, data generation and data analysis. The chapter concluded with measures to ensure the trustworthiness of the data and ethics of qualitative research applied to this study.

Chapter Four was a bridging chapter between the theoretical discussions and the actual fieldwork. The purpose for the inclusion of this chapter was to provide the reader, who might not be familiar with the nature of the CT approach, with the necessary background to understand issues that would emerge from the fieldwork, and eventually influence the construction of the model. The following topics were discussed: the rationale for implementing the CT approach, the structure of the District Office and CT respectively, the functions of the various officials, the matrix model for supporting schools and concluded with the importance of adopting a project management approach to supporting schools.

The action research process and findings from the fieldwork were discussed at length in **Chapter Five**. The following five steps of the AR process were taken as the point of departure, viz.: Identification of the problem, designing the action plan, implementing the action plan, evaluating the action, and reflection and lessons learnt. These five steps are depicted in figure 7.1 below:

Figure 7.1: Recap of the Action Research Process used



From the fieldwork conducted through interviews, participant observation and document analysis, two AR cycles were identified and discussed: the first dealt with assisting schools and the CT to construct their improvement plans and the second took the support from the other pillars of the District Office to assist with the implementation of the intervention plans, as its point of departure. Themes and categories were identified under each of the cycles, and were discussed under the five steps of the action research process depicted above. The discussions were supported by direct quotes from the participants, as well as reference to relevant literature. The chapter concluded with a comparison of the 2010 and 2011 National Senior Certificate results of the four schools which clearly portrayed a significant difference in learner achievement in these schools, which I attribute to the interventions of the CT. This strengthened the viewpoint stated in par. 1.2 that the CT approach is one of the innovations implemented by the WCED to enhance learner achievement results, and therefore warrants further investigation.

In **Chapter Six** the model to enable CTs to support SMTs towards WSD was constructed, based on the findings from the fieldwork, as well as the literature review. A spiral model emerged from this process, consisting of three phases: a Preparatory, an Implementation and a Maintenance and Dissemination Phase. Each phase consisted of a number of loops which were guidelines for the implementation of the model. A common practice of reflection was firmly located in each loop of the three phases, causing action learning to be instilled in the activities of the CT and SMTs.

7.3 SUMMARY OF EACH STEP OF THE ACTION RESEARCH PROCESS, AND HOW IT RELATES TO THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The **primary research question** that guided this research study was: *"How can Circuit Teams (CTs) effectively support School Management Teams (SMTs) of underperforming schools towards whole-school development (WSD)?"* The following **secondary research questions** were formulated to provide further direction to the research study:

- How can CTs assist SMTs to develop and implement their respective SIPs?
- How can CTs be assisted to develop, implement and monitor their CIP?
- What recommendations can be made to improve service delivery to the schools?

7.3.1 Summary of action research cycle one: Assisting the schools and Circuit Team to construct their improvement plans

STEP ONE: IDENTIFICATION OF THE PROBLEM

In this step, I consulted the available literature on WSD. Despite the fact that sufficient material was available on this issue and the concepts identified in relation to it, very little of the literature focused on SIPs and hardly any reference was found relating to CIPs. In addition, it was found that many schools either did not have a SIP in place, or developed it for mere compliance's sake and did little, if anything, to ensure its implementation. However, this step not only revealed the importance of a SIP as a management tool at school level, but also as an agenda for the interaction and support by the CT.

From these findings, it may be concluded that:

- Many schools do not view the SIP as an important management tool;
- The District (Circuit) Offices do not monitor whether or not schools have SIPs in place and are implementing them;
- District (Circuit) Offices do not take their mandate of supporting schools in a serious light, and
- District (Circuit) Offices do not work according to a specific plan (CIP) to assist schools on an on-going basis with specific needs and priorities they have.

STEP TWO: DESIGNING THE ACTION PLAN

My first priority was to conduct a baseline study on the status of the CIP and SIPs with regard to the CT and four schools respectively. For this purpose I held personal interviews with the four school principals individually, as well as with the members of the CT that worked directly with the high schools. It was during these activities that I also started with the document analysis.

Two themes emerged from the findings: (1) the CT was not functioning as a team, and (2) the schools were not receiving the required support to prepare their school improvement plans. Although numerous findings emerged which would have a strong bearing on the development of the model, the overriding aspect was that none of the four schools undertook SSE and therefore did not have a SIP in place. The CT also did not have a CIP in place.

From these findings, it may be concluded that:

- An autocratic, top-down approach to management and leadership is not always a suitable way to manage people;
- A vision and mission statement, combined with clarification of roles and responsibilities of individual team members is of paramount importance to guide the operations of the teams;
- Teams normally go through the five stages of team formation: forming, storming, norming, performing and adjourning;
- A message of support (and delivering on the support) is an essential requirement for optimum working relationships between the CT and schools, and
- Schools and CTs need to regard written improvement plans to support WSD as important for their working relationship.

STEP THREE: IMPLEMENT THE ACTION PLAN

This step answered the primary research question: *"How can Circuit Teams effectively support School Management Teams of underperforming schools towards whole-school development?"* In addition, step three also answered both the first and second secondary research questions: *How can Circuit Teams assist School Management Teams to develop and implement their respective School Improvement Plans?"* and *"How can Circuit Teams be assisted to develop, implement and monitor their Circuit Improvement Plans?"*

The step involved a two-stage approach to the intervention: The first stage included a developmental workshop for SMTs to develop their SIPs in an interactive manner. The findings of the previous step indicated that they did not have their SIPs in place because they did not know how to go about the process, and were also not supported by the CT in this regard. In the workshop the SMT members were taken through a number of activities including SSE, listing of priority areas and writing up of the activities in an agreed-upon template.

The second stage involved sitting down with the CT members and developing their CIP, based on the needs expressed in the SIPs. It was agreed beforehand that the SIP would entail activities that the SMTs themselves would undertake, whilst the CIP would focus on activities that the CT itself would deliver on. The CT members were taken through the same procedure as the SMTs, and used the same agreed-upon template to write up their CIP.

From these findings, it may be concluded that:

- The members of the SMTs and CT could develop their respective improvement plans, given proper guidance and quality facilitation in this regard. They needed the time and space to sit down with each other to examine their needs in terms of WSD;
- Each SMT was able to identify their top priorities, given the conditions described in the bullet above. Inherently they knew where they wanted to go with their respective schools, and it was not difficult for them to align the required activities to each priority, and
- Although they did not (up to the stage of the workshop) have a written improvement plan on the table, they already took some actions in an attempt to solve the problems facing them.

STEP FOUR: EVALUATE THE ACTION

A follow-up workshop for all the participants was arranged. The first aspect that was addressed during that event was that the CT gave feedback on how the CIP was developed, as well as how it would complement the activities contained in the SIPs. During this presentation the schools identified an important missing aspect: other pillars of the District Office had to be brought on board of supporting them, especially the CAs - this finding led to the development of the second AR cycle. The second aspect that was dealt with was feedback of the participants from the previous workshop.

From these findings, it may be concluded that:

- The nature and quality of the SIP-writing workshop was experienced as an empowering and capacity-building session;
- Participants valued the interaction with colleagues of other schools who found themselves in the same situation;
- The participants valued the reflection they could have on their daily management practices, and
- The breakdown of the workshop into manageable steps enabled the participants to gain the necessary skills to conduct SSE and write-up their SIPs.

STEP FIVE: REFLECTION AND LESSONS LEARNT

The overall outcome of this AR cycle was achieved: the individual schools constructed their SIPs and the CT developed its CIP. All the participants indicated that the entire exercise was an empowering session which enabled them to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to reach the intended outcome of writing up their improvement plans. This realization is in line with the aims of the Critical Theory paradigm and AR: to empower people to transform the situation they find themselves in.

From these findings, it may be concluded that:

- When participants experience a capacity-building session as purposeful to their lives, they would be actively engrossed in the learning process;
- When participants take ownership of the development of an intervention (the SIPs and CIP) they will be actively involved in the implementation of the required strategies listed in the improvement plans;
- The entire CT needed to be taken on board of the development of the CIP – including those who work exclusively with primary schools;
- The template needed to be extended to include issues related to human and physical resources, as well as costs involved;
- All the role-players within the school community have to be brought on board of the development of the SIPs;
- CTs need to focus on the basic functionality of underperforming schools as a first priority, and
- Schools have to be explicit on the specific support needed per subject, as well as individual subject targets in their SIPs.

7.3.2 Summary of action research cycle two: support from the other pillars of the District Office was needed to assist with the implementation of the intervention plans

STEP ONE: IDENTIFICATION OF THE PROBLEM

The necessity for this second action research cycle was identified by the SMTs during the feedback on the CIP in the previous research cycle. In particular, the need for bringing the FET CAs on board of the intervention strategy was necessary to assist with the schools' priority of enhanced learner achievement rates.

From these findings, it may be concluded that:

- Effective service delivery will be impaired if specialists from other pillars of the District Office who are not aligned to the CTs, are not brought on board of the drive towards WSD, and
- Meaningful support from the other pillars of the District Office will only be possible if the SIPs explicitly list these as priorities and activities.

STEP TWO: DECIDING WHAT TO DO

The CTM, via the CCA, requested a meeting where I interacted with the FET CAs on the nature and purpose of the research, and took them through the ethical considerations of the research. Due to lack of time to arrange for interviews, I compensated for this by giving each FET CA a short questionnaire to ascertain what their experiences, breakthroughs and problems were in dealing with the four underperforming high schools. However, shortly after this meeting the CTM informed me that the CCA requested the FET CAs not to participate in the research which caused a major obstacle in terms of effective support to the schools. The only viable route to address the effect of this resistance was to call the Principals and HODs to a centralized venue to discuss curriculum and other related areas of support they needed.

From these findings, it may be concluded that:

- Internal politics and power struggles within the ranks of the District Office is likely to derail service delivery to schools;
- Alternative ways had to be considered to overcome the problem, and
- Schools need to list subject-specific interventions they require in their SIPs.

STEP THREE: IMPLEMENT THE ACTION PLAN

This step (for the second time) provided more answers to my primary research question: *"How can Circuit Teams effectively support School Management Teams of underperforming schools towards whole-school development?"*

At the workshop the CT members were grouped together to discuss avenues of enhanced support to underperforming schools from the perspective of the District Office whilst the principals were in a second group, specifically engaged in discussing their needs, and that of the SMTs. In a third group the HODs of the four schools were grouped together to discuss

what they considered to be important for curriculum implementation in their respective subject areas. Three themes emerged from the interactions of these groups: (1) the SMT required capacity-building to manage their schools effectively, (2) teachers needed support to implement the curriculum, and (3) learners required assistance to achieve better results.

From these findings, it may be concluded that:

- Instructional leadership, school management and leadership, and overseeing the implementation of the academic improvement plans are some of the major challenges that SMTs in underperforming schools face;
- Teachers need support regarding subject knowledge and teaching methodologies, dealing with learner behaviour and discipline, proper time management, enhanced morale, and on-site support from FET CAs, and
- Learners will benefit from extra classes and motivational sessions, whilst those who faced traumatic events in their lives need counselling.

STEP FOUR: EVALUATE THE ACTION

During this step of the workshop, the participants reflected on the value that the intervention had brought to their professional lives.

From these findings, it may be concluded that:

- The participants valued the mutual support they gained from working with each other on the common problems that the four schools faced;
- The participants (especially the Principals) valued the guidance of constructing a plan of action (SIP) and following through with the implementation thereof, and
- The CT members (dealing with the high schools) in the research project experienced greater teamwork and positive working relations.

STEP FIVE: REFLECTION AND LESSONS LEARNT

The intended outcome of the AR cycle was achieved: the participants were able to articulate areas of support that they needed from the other pillars of the District Office. For the intervention plans to be successfully implemented, it is imperative that the other pillars of the District Office be brought on board.

From these findings, it may be concluded that:

- A bottom-up approach regarding the identification of needs for support and intervention has to be followed;
- Any intervention aimed at improving underperforming schools has to follow an integrated approach where the entire District Office is taken on board from the very beginning;
- All areas of support (from Management and Governance, Curriculum implementation, Special Needs in Education, as well as Corporate Services) have to be mentioned explicitly in the intervention plans, and
- Taking the improvement in the examination results of the four schools into consideration, there is evidence that the CT approach to WSD can have a positive effect on learner achievement.

7.4 THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MODEL

The research study culminated in the development of a model to assist CTs in supporting SMTs of underperforming high schools towards WSD. Information obtained through the literature review, as well as the fieldwork, informed the structure and content of the model. The model is in the form of a spiral and consists of three distinctive phases: a Preparatory Phase, an Implementation Phase and a Maintenance and Dissemination Phase. Each phase consists of a number of loops which represent the required sequential steps to be followed when schools are supported towards WSD.

The model is also in essence a structure that enables action learning and constant reflection to take place during each loop. The reflective practice that cuts through each loop is supported by the five disciplines that Senge identified for a learning organization: personal mastery, mental models, building shared vision, team building and systems thinking. In addition, the "5 Cs" of action learning have been identified as fundamental for operationalizing the model: collaboration, critical reflection, communicative action, co-accountability and commitment. These five principles can only be attained if a relationship of trust and honesty prevails between the CT members, the SMT members, and the interaction of the CT and SMTs with each other.

7.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

This sub-paragraph answered the third secondary research question: *"What recommendations can be made to improve service delivery to schools?"* and is based on the findings gathered through the AR process. Based on the exposition in par. 7.3 above, I

identified a number of recommendations for District and Circuit Offices, for SMTs and for future research:

7.5.1 Recommendations for implementation at the levels of the National and Provincial Departments of Education

- It is recommended that the National and Provincial Departments of Education in South Africa investigate the possibility of implementing a CT approach to support underperforming schools towards WSD. (The WCED took the lead in establishing these structures in 2008 and I am aware of three Provincial Departments of Education who expressed interest in this initiative recently. Some of these Departments already sent delegations to the WCED to investigate how CTs operate and are considering the possible implementation of this approach in their respective Provinces.);
- It is recommended that the National and Provincial Departments of Education assist the CTs with the development and implementation of their CIPs;
- It is recommended that the National and Provincial Departments of Education launch a strong advocacy campaign country-wide on the importance and value of SSE and SIPs, and
- It is strongly recommended that Provincial Departments of Education establish forums, or organize workshops, meetings and other relevant platforms for CTs to share their knowledge, skills and experiences with one another (in cases where the CT approach has been officially implemented).

7.5.2 Recommendations for implementation at District and Circuit levels

- It is recommended that an entire District Office, with all its components, be brought on board to assist CTs in their endeavours to support schools in need;
- It is recommended that the District Director ensures that each CT has a fully-fledged CIP in place for supporting the schools in the circuit (with the interventions been identified by the schools themselves – i.e. a bottom-up approach);
- It is recommended that CTs assist and support schools with their SSE and development of their SIPs;
- It is recommended that, where a particular school underwent WSE, the CT is specifically tasked to ensure that all the recommendations in the WSE report are implemented;
- It is recommended that CTs assist schools with the analysis of their examination results and the development of specific strategies that need to be incorporated in both the CIPs and SIPs;

- It is recommended that CTs prepare a positive message of support when they interact with the underperforming schools. Such a message has to include the fact that the school is underperforming, that they have the capacity to improve, that the CT will support and develop them, and that both the CT and school are co-accountable for the improvement that needs to take place;
- It is strongly recommended that CTs assist underperforming schools to ensure that basic functionality, as a first priority, is restored in the school;
- It is recommended that the CT and schools cooperate to find ways in which the language barriers that learners experience can be eliminated, and
- It is strongly recommended that the CT organizes workshops, meetings and other suitable platforms where schools can share the knowledge, skills and experiences learnt during the process of WSD with other institutions.

7.5.3 Recommendations for implementation at school level

- It is recommended that schools make their needs for support explicit. Such needs have to take into consideration (but are not limited to) management issues, teacher development issues, school governance, school administration (including finance), and learner issues;
- It is recommended that the SIP contains specific activities which the school will implement, whilst the CIP will contain activities that the CT will attend to;
- It is recommended that the SMT takes the lead in developing the SIP and be held responsible and accountable for the successful implementation thereof;
- It is recommended that HODs make their needs for subject-specific interventions explicit, and that these are incorporated into the SIP, and
- It is recommended that the following template be used for the construction of both the CIP and SIP:

Priority	Action steps	Timeframe	Person(s) responsible	Resources needed	Costs involved

7.5.4 Recommendations for the training of CTs and SMTs

- It is recommended that CTs and SMTs be trained on the following topics and issues: participative management, participatory action research, action learning, project management, group dynamics and the interpretation and analysis of data;

- It is strongly recommended that CTs undergo specific training and orientation in their roles and responsibilities, as well as the crafting of their vision, mission and values, and
- It is strongly recommended that CTs and other District Officials not aligned to CTs, be trained on conducting on-site support to schools. In this regard, the information provided in table 5.12 (which refers to strategies for CAs to perform on-site support to teachers) can serve as a useful guide for all pillars of the District Office to develop their own interventions.

7.5.5 Recommendations for future research

- It is recommended that a model to assist Circuit Teams in supporting School Management Teams towards whole-school development be developed for *rural areas* where other dynamics such as long distances have to be addressed – taking into account that the model developed for this study was based on a circuit in an urban area;
- In the light of the extremely limited research available on Circuit Teams, it is strongly recommended that more research is conducted on this aspect of the education system. Issues that can be addressed in this regard include (but are not limited to) problems that CTs experience in supporting schools, the development of a comprehensive training programme to prepare CTs for the tasks they have to perform, and the identification and development of appropriate strategies to enable CTs to turn underperforming schools around;
- It is recommended that the problems which SMTs experience with the development and implementation of their SIPs be investigated;
- It is recommended that research be done relating to a comprehensive and sequentially-organized training programme to capacitate SMTs of underperforming schools, and
- It is recommended that research be done on how schools can be assisted to develop and implement SDPs.

7.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

A limitation of this study was the small sample of schools and only one CT which were involved in the research, which is typical of qualitative research. More schools and CTs could perhaps have produced different research results.

The fieldwork was undertaken within an urban setting. As the majority of schools in South Africa are located in rural areas, this model could perhaps not be suitable for such

conditions, hence the recommendation in par. 7.5.5 above that further research be done within a rural context.

The research focused exclusively on the nine areas of WSE for the purposes of developing the SIPs and CIP, and did not take the teacher developmental needs identified through the Performance Measurement Assessments (commonly known in education circles as the IQMS), as contemplated by Westraad (2011:14) into consideration.

Despite these limitations, the data gathered from the research contributed to a better understanding of how CTs need to assist SMTs towards WSD.

7.7 CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY

One of the most pertinent questions I have to ask myself as a candidate for a Doctoral degree is whether my research contributes to the existing body of knowledge, and whether it will make a contribution to school management theory as well as actual practice. In this regard, I have to answer positively, based on the following:

The research introduced and explained the CT approach to WSD, which is an initiative of the WCED, and of which hardly anything has been written. In the course of the research it was explicitly proven that this concept made a positive difference in one aspect of WSD, i.e. learner achievement. In addition, taking the lead from MacMaster (2010) the concept of a CIP (which has not at all been attempted in academic writings and research studies) was formally introduced, explained and operationalized within the context of WSD.

Very little has been written or researched on the interaction between SMTs and CTs in terms of support to WSD, and linking this to the CIP and SIP. One of the major aspects dealt with in this thesis was describing this interaction, and integrating the two sets of improvement plans to achieve the ultimate outcome of WSD. My personal opinion is that, with further research into the CT approach and the utilization of the CIP in supporting schools, the Education Department in South Africa will have a powerful tool to turn underperforming schools into self-managing institutions.

The model that was developed as the outcome of the research study has also not yet been attempted in research and academic writings. It entails a vivid description based on the fieldwork and literature review of how CTs can assist underperforming schools to become fully functional institutions of learning. In addition, the model represents a step-by-step

guideline to operationalize the CT approach in practice and ensure that SMTs cooperate towards the ultimate goal of self-managing schools.

This study also filled the gap in knowledge by providing explicit directions on how SIPs and CIPs need to be constructed, and how these sets of documents interact with each other in terms of effective service delivery to schools. The practical problems that the CT encountered in everyday life, were identified and discussed, and practical solutions were provided for overcoming these. In addition, the participants were empowered through the skills and knowledge imparted to them.

7.8 CONCLUSION

This research study took me on a journey of intense self-discovery and learning on a whole range of issues that I was previously unfamiliar with. Concepts such as AR, action learning, reflection, and WSD (to name only a few) became real and personal to me. As I journeyed through the various chapters of the thesis, my life-long learning took root and I challenged myself to implement these concepts at the school where I am currently employed as principal in the WCED. As a result, my own management and leadership improved significantly, and during the fieldwork I was able to impart the knowledge and skills with the CT and SMTs who participated in this research study.

In the beginning of this thesis (par. 1.1) the question was posed: *"Can the high percentage of underperforming schools in South Africa be improved, and if so, what can be done to turn the situation around?"* Based on the findings that emanated from this research study, I can confirm that the situation can indeed be turned around, and that one of the avenues to achieve this outcome lies in the implementation of the CT approach to WSD.

The learners of South Africa have a constitutional right to quality education. All role players, but especially the District Offices and Circuit Offices, have a pivotal role to play in this regard. Empowerment and capacity-building programmes have to be provided to ensure that these key agents are equipped with the required knowledge and skills to know and understand what WSD entails, and how a systems theory approach to education can facilitate the required change at underperforming institutions.

SMTs also have a pivotal role to play with regard to WSD. Through training and mentoring they need to be assisted to ensure that their schools develop into learning organizations, characterized by critical reflection on their activities and constantly seeking ways to improve

their performance. SSE has to be an integral part of every school's operations so that priorities can be identified and appropriate activities put into action to ensure that underperforming schools graduate towards self-managed institutions.

At the core of these anticipated improvements lie the SIPs and CIPs. Without these management and accountability tools no attempt to transform schools will have any lasting impact. It is only when the CT members and SMTs combine their efforts and work together in a relationship characterized by professionalism, honesty and trust that institutions of learning can develop towards WSD.

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APPENDIX A:

Information and informed consent form (blank)

Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University
for tomorrow

NELSON MANDELA METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

INFORMATION AND INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Title of the research project	A model to assist Circuit Teams in supporting School Management Teams towards whole-school development.
Reference number	
Principal investigator	G. H. Van Der Voort
Address **Postal Code**	PO Box 358 SOMERSET WEST 7129
Contact telephone number (private numbers not advisable)	083 242 4978

A. DECLARATION BY OR ON BEHALF OF PARTICIPANT (Person legally competent to give consent on behalf of the participant)	**Initial**
I, the participant and the undersigned I.D. number	
A.1 I HEREBY CONFIRM AS FOLLOWS:	
1. I, the participant, was invited to participate in the above-mentioned research project that is being undertaken by Geoffrey Van Der Voort of the Department of Educational Psychology in the Faculty of Education of the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University.	
2. **The following aspects have been explained to me, the participant:** 2.1 **Aim:** The investigator is studying: *The construction of a model that will assist District officials working in Circuit 1 of Metropole East Education District (MEED) of the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) to support under-performing high schools towards whole-school development by working together as a multi-functional team.* The information will be used to/for: *Empowerment of the participants in the research study to support schools more effectively towards whole-school development, and the findings of the study to be used to disseminate to other researchers and Departments of Education.*	
2.2 **Procedures: I understand that** *I will be involved in a research project which aims to construct a model for effective service delivery to schools, and that I will make contributions to this end from my area of expertise (e.g. IMG, Curriculum, SNE and Corporate Services), whilst working within a matrix management system. I also understand that I will share my experiences, knowledge, learning and insights with the team, without my identity being revealed. I also realize the importance of attending and participating in meetings and reviews of the Circuit Team. I also understand that I can withdraw from the research study at any given time.*	
2.3 **Risks:** *I understand that there will be no risk of harm, embarrassment or offence, however slight or temporary, to me, any third parties or to the community at large.*	
2.4 **Possible benefits:** As a result of my participation in this study *I will receive "on-the-job-training" to support schools effectively towards whole-school development.*	
2.5 **Confidentiality:** My identity will not be revealed in any discussion, description or scientific publications by the investigators.	
2.6 **Access to findings:** Any new information/or benefit that develops during the course of the study will be shared as follows: *The researcher will provide feedback to the members of the Circuit Team on a regular basis, as well as make presentations to District Management on a regular basis.*	

2.7	**Voluntary participation/refusal/discontinuation:** My participation is voluntary ☐ YES ☐ NO My decision whether or not to participate will in no way affect my present or future care/employment/lifestyle ☐ TRUE ☐ FALSE	
3.	The information above was explained to me by Geoff Van Der Voort in Afrikaans ☐ English ☐ Xhosa ☐ Other ☐ I was given the opportunity to ask questions and all these questions were answered satisfactorily.	
4.	No pressure was exerted on me to consent to participation and I understand that I may withdraw at any stage without penalisation.	
5.	Participation in this study will not result in any additional cost to myself.	

A.2	**I HEREBY VOLUNTARILY CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ABOVE-MENTIONED PROJECT**

Signed/confirmed at Kuilsriver on 19 August 2011

Signature or right thumb print of participant	Signature of witness
	Full name of witness

B. STATEMENT BY OR ON BEHALF OF INVESTIGATOR

I, *Geoffrey Van Der Voort,* declare that

- I have explained the information given in this document to

  (name of patient/participant)

- he/she was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions;
- this conversation was conducted in

Afrikaans		English		Xhosa		Other	

  and no translator was used /

- I have detached Section D and handed it to the participant

	YES		NO

Signed/confirmed at

Kuilsriver	on	19 August	2011

Signature of interviewer	Signature of witness
	Full name of witness

D. IMPORTANT MESSAGE TO PATIENT/REPRESENTATIVE OF PARTICIPANT

Dear participant/representative of the participant

Thank you for your/the participant's participation in this study. Should, at any time during the study:

- an emergency arise as a result of the research, or
- you require any further information with regard to the study, or
- the following occur

(indicate any circumstances which should be reported to the investigator)

Kindly contact Geoff Van Der Voort
at telephone number 083 242 4978
(it must be a number where help will be available on a 24 hour basis, if the research project warrants it)

APPENDIX B:

Ethics approval letter

Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University
for tomorrow

FACULTY OF EDUCATION
Tel . +27 (0)41 504 2125
Fax. +27 (0)41 504 9383

11 March 2010

Prof L Wood and Mr G van der Voort
Education Faculty
NMMU

Dear Prof Wood and Mr van der Voort

A MODEL TO ASSIST CIRCUIT TEAMS IN SUPPORTING SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAMS TOWARDS WHOLE-SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT

Your above-entitled application for ethics approval served at the March meeting of the Faculty Research, Technology and Innovation Committee of Education (ERTIC).

We take pleasure in informing you that the application was approved by the Committee.

The ethics clearance reference number is **H10-Edu-ERE-006**.

We wish you well with the project. Please inform your co-investigators of the outcome, and convey our best wishes.

Yours sincerely

Ms J Elliott-Gentry
Secretary: ERTIC

APPENDIX C:
Letter from WCED approving the research study

Western Cape Government
Education

Directorate: Research

Audrey.wyngaard2@pgwc.gov.za
tel: +27 021 476 9272
Fax: 0865902282
Private Bag x9114, Cape Town, 8000
wced.wcape.gov.za

REFERENCE: 20120227-0103
ENQUIRIES: Dr A T Wyngaard

Mr Geoffrey Van der Voort
Hottentots Holland High
Somerset West

Dear Mr Geoffrey Van der Voort

RESEARCH PROPOSAL: A MODEL TO ASSIST CIRCUIT TEAMS IN SUPPORTING SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAM TOWARDS ENHANCED SCHOOL MANAGEMENT

Your application to conduct the above-mentioned research in schools in the Western Cape has been approved subject to the following conditions:

1. Principals, educators and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation.
2. Principals, educators, learners and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.
3. You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.
4. Approval for projects should be confirmed by the District Director of the schools where the project will be conducted.
5. Educators' programmes are not to be interrupted.
6. The Study is to be conducted from **01 March 2012 till 01 July 2012**
7. No research can be conducted during the fourth term as schools are preparing and finalizing syllabi for examinations (October to December).
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey, please contact Dr A.T Wyngaard at the contact numbers above quoting the reference number.
9. A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the principal where the intended research is to be conducted.
10. Your research will be limited to the list of schools as forwarded to the Western Cape Education Department.
11. A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Research Services.
12. The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to:

    The Director: Research Services
    Western Cape Education Department
    Private Bag X9114
    CAPE TOWN
    8000

We wish you success in your research.

Kind regards.
Signed: Audrey T Wyngaard
for: **HEAD: EDUCATION**
DATE: 28 January 2012

APPENDIX D:
Structured questions posed to participants at very first interviews

SOME OF THE QUESTIONS TO BE POSED DURING THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

1. Questions to the IMG managers at the start of the fieldwork:

1: How did you experience the restructuring of MEED at the beginning of the 2011 academic year and in what way did this influence (affect) your role as IMG?

2: How did Circuit 1 take off as a team at the beginning of 2011 and what was done to ensure that the new circuit functions as a coherent team?

3: How did the team approach the dysfunctional schools at the beginning of 2011, when you had to visit them for the first time, and also share the news to them that they were underperforming and therefore would be under the eye of the CT?

4: Looking back, what would you say were the greatest challenges at these underperforming schools?

2. Questions to the School Principals at the very first interview session with them:

1. What does the name of the school mean?

2. How long have you been Principal:
   - In general?
   - At this school?

3. Did/do you have a mentor who inspired you in your task as Principal?
   - Who is this person?
   - What role did he/she play in your life?
   - What are the most important lessons that he/she taught you re teaching in general and school management in particular?

4. Looking back at your time at this school, what would you say were your personal achievements as Principal?

5. Looking back at your time at this school, what would you say were your personal achievements as Principal?

6. At the moment, what are the school's main priorities for 2012?

7. How would you describe the working relationship between the SMT and yourself?

8. How would you describe the working relationship between the SMT and the staff?

9. Looking back at January 2011, the circuits in MEED were restructured.
   - How did this restructuring affect the school (seeing that you were taken out of your previous circuit)?
   - How did it affect you to operate in an entire new circuit, with new CT members?

10. When the CT visited the school at the beginning of the 2011 year:
    - How did they introduce themselves as the new CT to the school?
    - What was the message that they brought (especially in the light of the 2010 matric results)?
    - How did the school receive/interpret this message?
    - How did you experience working with these "new" people in the first couple of months of 2011?

3. Questions to the SMTs at the very first interview session with them:

1. In your opinion, what are the main functions of an SMT at a high school?

2. What are the biggest successes and breakthroughs that you as SMT have made at this school?

3. What are the biggest challenges that the SMT has to deal with at the moment?

4. How would you rate the working relationship between yourselves and the staff?

5. Have you done School Self-Evaluation at the end of 2011? If so, can you please explain to me how you went about it?

6. Please answer the following questions re the SIP:
   - What is your view on the importance or not of the SIP?
   - What does the SMT do to ensure that the SIP is a living document in the everyday activities of the school?
   - What were the problems you experienced when compiling the SIP?

7. How do you as SMT see your working relationship with the CT? Also: what kind of support do you require from the CT for this academic year?

4. Questions to the CTM at the very first interview session:

1. You took up office as CTM for Circuit 1 in Jan 2011. What was the vision you set for yourself and how did you "sell" this vision to the CT?

2. Were there any particular challenges you faced when you took control of the CT, and how did you deal with such issues?

3. Please inform me of specific strategies you implemented to build a team spirit among the CT members.

4. Explain to me how the CT went about to introduce themselves to the 4 underperforming schools, and the strategy used to inform them that they were identified for specific support by the WCED because of their underperformance.

5. Did the CT compile a CIP for these schools in 2011? If so, please explain in detail to me the process that you underwent to compile the CIP.

6. Did the 4 underperforming schools hand in a SIP for 2011? What was the quality thereof and what problems did they experience in developing the document? How did the CT assist them in this regard? How does their 2012 SIP look and what noticeable differences are there between the 2011 and 2012 versions?

APPENDIX E:
Questionnaire for FET CAs

RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE FOR FET CURRICULUM ADVISORS

NAME: _____
(Please note that you will remain anonymous – this is just for my personal records and info)

SUBJECT: _____

CELL NUMBER: _____

EMAIL ADDRESS: _____

++

1. When you visit these schools, what is normally the nature and agenda of your interaction with the HOD and subject teachers?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

2. What are the specific breakthroughs you've made at these schools, and how did you go about it? (If necessary, please refer to specific schools by name – they will remain anonymous when I report back)

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

3. What are the most challenging situations you've experienced at these schools and what plan of action did you put in place to resolve the issues? (Again, please name specific schools where necessary.)

_____
_____
_____

4. How do you interact with the members of Circuit Team 1, and how has such interaction enabled/not enabled you to reach the goals/ outcomes of your subject-specific support to these schools?

5. Are there perhaps any improvements you want to suggest that can enhance the quality of the interaction between you and the Circuit Team?

6. Do you have a database of the specific subject needs of the subject teachers at the four schools that are part of the research? If so, what are these needs you are supporting and how did you go about finding them out? If not, on the basis of what information are you rendering support to these schools?

7. What support are the SMTs of each of the four schools giving you in carrying out your task, and in what way are the SMTs assisting (or not assisting) your efforts to improve the quality of teaching and learning in your subject at these schools?

8. What are the most important lesson(s) you have learnt in your interaction with underperforming schools in terms of supporting them and getting the desired results you've planned for?

9. Any other stories you would want to relay or experiences that you want to share?

Thank you so much for your time and effort – it is sincerely appreciated.
Contact me: 083 242 4978 or vdvoort.g@gmail.com

APPENDIX F:
School self-evaluation documents used at workshop

School: _____

Document 1: First three areas:

- Basic Functionality
- Leadership and management
- Governance and Relations

4.3 AREAS FOR EVALUATION

4.3.1 Basic functionality of the school

Purpose: To evaluate whether the school can function efficiently and effectively and realise its educational and social goals.			
Sources of information:	•The school' policies and procedures, (language policy, policy on religion, admission policy) •Attendance records of staff and learners •Staff duty lists. •Responses from parents and learners •Timetables		
Criterion 1	**• Does the school have appropriate policies and procedures in place to enable it to run smoothly?** The supervisor must look at: The policies, procedures, regulations, duty lists, time-tables, attendance records in order to judge whether they are appropriate and implemented successfully. The willingness of staff to implement policies and procedures consistently needs to be assessed and the impact this has on the learners. The extent to which the school addresses the transformational goals of equity, access, redress and quality.		
Descriptors	Rating 4: The school has appropriate policies and procedures that are clearly communicated and accessible to learners, educators and parents. The policies are consistently implemented by all stakeholders and are helping the school to run smoothly. The composition of the staff and the SGB reflects the demographics of learners. The timetable is well structured and enables the school to run smoothly.	Rating 3: Policies and procedures are in place and are occasionally communicated to learners, educators and parents. The policies are sometimes implemented. The timetable/school programme is satisfactorily organised.	Rating 2: The school has policies and procedures that are not communicated to learners, educators and parents. The policies are not implemented. Lessons often start late and the timetable is disorganised.
Criterion 2	***• Does the school have effective procedures for dealing with absenteeism, late coming and truancy?*** The supervisor checks that registers are kept up to date and regularly monitored. The school's systems for checking on absenteeism and lateness and the reasons for them to be judged as to their effectiveness and any rewards or sanctions that are applied to encourage prompt attendance will need to be evaluated as to how well they work.		
Descriptors	Rating 4: Absenteeism and lateness are followed up and appropriate sanctions and rewards are effectively used to encourage an appropriate response from learners. Attendance is rarely below 94 per cent and learners are mostly on time for school and lessons.	Rating 3: The school is concerned about absenteeism and late coming but does not put sufficient pressure on learners and educators to mend their ways permanently. The school is satisfied with about a 90 per cent attendance rate.	Rating 2: Attendance is poor, often below 90 per cent and some learners are frequently late. There is confusion as to what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour and learners are not sufficiently checked when they go beyond the rules.

Criterion 3	• **Do learners respond to the school in a positive way, contributing to an ethos that is orderly and work oriented?** Supervisors will need to assess how much interest learner's show in school, how keen they are to make progress and how keen they are to be involved in lessons. Reasons why learners like or dislike the school need to be investigated		
Descriptors	Rating 4: Learners take on responsibilities willingly and contribute to the positive working and caring ethos of the school.	Rating 3: Learners have a sound attitude to learning. They are interested in their work, though they do little beyond what they are asked. They participate in extracurricular activities in moderate numbers. They respect the rules and school regulations, but do not always abide by them. Most learners contribute to an ethos characterised by support for one another and a willingness to do as asked.	Rating 2: Learners show limited interest. They show no interest in their own development and few participate in extracurricular activities.
Criterion 4	• **How well behaved are learners?** The behaviour of learners in lessons and around school needs to be evaluated. The supervisor needs to comment on the respect learners show their educators, peers and other stakeholders. The contribution the learners make to the positive learning environment in the school needs to be considered, along with their respect for the school equipment, materials, furniture and premises. For example, the level of graffiti and of damage to school property, caused by learners, needs to be commented upon.		
Descriptors	Rating 4: Behaviour is good and learners are interested in the learning activities. They show initiatives in their approach to their studies and are keen to make progress. They keep the buildings and furniture in good shape.	Rating 3: Behaviour is satisfactory, but there are some instances when learners challenge their educators and cause minor disruption. Generally, they respect equipment and furniture, but examples of damage and graffiti exist.	Rating 2: Learners display violent behaviour to one another, have no respect for their educators and damage the school's furniture. There is a good deal of graffiti around the school. The ethos is characterised by a lack of care and a reluctance to learn.

4.3.2 Leadership, management and communication

Purpose: To evaluate the effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school			
Sources of information:	•The school's vision and mission, aims, policies and management structure •The financial management records and auditing processes •School's statistical information to show how it is performing •The school's development and improvement plans. Procedures for communication with various stakeholders •Minutes from staff, governance, management, RCL, subject and phase meetings •Discussion with staff and learners •Questionnaires		
Criterion 1	**• Does the school have clear direction?** The supervisor judges how appropriate the school's vision and mission statement, aims, policies and procedures are. The supervisor judges whether the principal and the school management teams are giving clear direction.		
Descriptors	**Rating 4:** The school has well-established aims. All policies required by law and the orderly management of the school are in place. The methods by which policies are implemented are well defined and understood. The management structure is clear, well understood and participative. Managers at different levels look for means of improving the school. The principal is not afraid to take action if things are unsatisfactory. The accommodation is well maintained and efforts made to ensure that the school has sufficient resources, human and material.	**Rating 3:** The school has defined its aims and policies, but the methods by which they are to be achieved are not clearly set out. The principal gives direction to the school, but does not ensure that appropriate systems are in place to monitor to what extent the school is on course. Evaluation tends to be superficial and does not lead to modification of policies that are not working. The principal is committed to staff development, but it is not planned. The school's resources are adequate, and they are shared equitably amongst the various subjects/learning areas/learning programmes. School buildings are repaired and sensible use is made of the accommodation.	**Rating 2:** The school may have aims but they do not influence its activities sufficiently. The school has gaps in its policies and procedures and implementation is ineffective. The principal either shows little interest in or is incapable of giving clear direction to the school.
Criterion 2	**• Are the leaders operating at various levels fully utilized?** The supervisor judges whether all promotion posts are filled and if leaders at different levels are effectively utilised in the management of the school. The supervisor needs to judge the effectiveness of communication between different levels of leadership.		
Descriptors	**Rating 4:** The principal consults before finalising decisions and delegates effectively.	Rating 3: The principal delegates, but does not supervise this carefully enough and participative management is limited.	**Rating 2:** A management structure may be in place, but it lacks clarity and it is left to individuals to cover for inefficiencies. The management team does not think through decisions and so the school is run inefficiently. Decisions are not transparent.

Criterion 3	• **Does the school management communicate their intentions clearly to all stakeholders?** The supervisor judges whether the leaders operating at various levels in the structure are making their intentions clear, communicate these intentions clearly to the relevant stakeholders and the extent to which the staff and school community understand those intentions and carry them out.		
Descriptors	Rating 4: The principal co-operates with the parents and the representatives of the local community in the interests of the learners. Managers set example of effective working styles to others on the staff.	Rating 3: The implementation of policies and procedures depends on the attitude of individuals and so are not always applied consistently. The management structure is adequate, though job descriptions are usually not well thought out enough to avoid overlap. There is some confusion in responsibilities. Links with the community and parents are satisfactory.	Rating 2: Morale is low and this affects the way learners and parents view the school. Relationships with parents and the community are poor and little encouragement is given to them to support learners.
Criterion 4	• **Are the policies and procedures helping the school to attain its aims?** The supervisor judges whether appropriate policies are in place and whether they are helping the school improve. Consideration must be given to how policies and procedures were formulated, who was involved and when last were they reviewed. The supervisor judges whether policies etc. are still relevant, understood by the school community, and implemented consistently.		
Descriptors	Rating 4: Systems exist to ensure that the school's resources are used in line with its aims and policies and for the benefit of the learners. Managers support the development of staff through training, and this is planned to meet the needs of the school, learners and that of individual educators. Good management enables to achieve high standards.	Rating 3: On occasions, management operates very successfully in one area, but unsuccessfully in others. As a result, its effectiveness is not consistent enough.	Rating 2: Some policies do exist but stakeholders were not involved in its development. Existing policies are outdated and not adequately communicated to stakeholders.

4.3.3 Governance and relationships

Purpose: To evaluate the effectiveness of the governing body in giving the school clear strategic direction			
Sources of information:	• The school's vision, mission and aims • SGB constitution document • Recent minutes, reports from the school governing body's meetings and representative council of learners • The financial policy, school budget and financial plan • Discussion with selected school governing body members • The school development and improvement plans		
Criterion 1	**• Does the School Governing Body (SGB) have a constitution?** The supervisor needs to read the constitution of the SGB and any terms of reference and make a judgement on the appropriateness thereof.		
Descriptors	Rating 4: The constitution of the SGB has clear terms of reference that are in line with the mission and vision including the SASA requirements.	Rating 3: The constitution of the SGB is in place, but with the terms of reference, which are difficult to implement.	Rating 2: The constitution of the SGB is in place, but with the terms of reference not in line with SASA.
Criterion 2	**• Is the SGB properly constituted?** The supervisor will need to establish whether the membership is complete and representative of all stakeholders.		
Descriptors	Rating 4: The SGB has full membership. Meetings are properly minuted and decisions recorded.	Rating 3: The SGB has more or less full membership and meetings are held and properly recorded.	Rating 2: The SGB does not have a full complement of members and often has difficulty recruiting new members. Attendance at meetings is irregular and proper records are not kept.
Criterion 3	**• Has the SGB received training in its roles and responsibilities?** The supervisor needs to establish whether the SGB members know their roles and responsibilities (induction) and whether they have received training to enable them to perform their duties.		
Descriptors	Rating 4: Most of the SGB members are inducted and trained in their roles and responsibilities and the SGB is performing its duties well.	Rating 3: A few members of the SGB have been trained, but the SGB is still performing its duties at a satisfactory level.	Rating 2: The SGB has been inducted and trained but are not performing their roles and responsibilities effectively

Criterion 4	• **Does the SGB provide the school with clear strategic direction?** The supervisors will have to look at the school's aims, policies and any plans for further development, and estimate to what extent the SGB members have played a part in their formulation. The supervisor needs to establish whether sub-committees exist and if they are functional. Assess how well they share their intentions with staff and school community, and how well they carry them out.		
Descriptors	**Rating 4:** The SGB has appropriate committees to help it carry out its work. The SGB meets regularly and the minutes are properly kept. The resolutions in the meetings give clear strategic direction.	**Rating 3:** The SGB members rely on reports from the principal more than on their own observations and evidence. The SGB members do not stand out as strategic leaders, but can be called upon by the principal to offer support at critical times. They carry out most of their legislative responsibilities and do not knowingly break the law.	**Rating 2:** The SGB has not been involved in establishing the school's aims or policies and shows little interest in directing the school's development. One or two members may be highly committed and supportive of the principal, but the governing body as a whole has little interest in carrying out its responsibilities properly. They neither provide a clear direction for the school needs, nor do they ensure that resources are used in the interests of the learners.
Criterion 5	• **Are the policies of the SGB helping the school to attain its aims and contributing to learners' learning?** The supervisor will have to judge whether the school governing body's policies are appropriate, helping the school to improve, and creating a positive learning environment.		
Descriptors	**Rating 4:** The SGB is involved in formulating policies in co-operation with the school's management and supporting the school management team in implementing them. Relationships with the principal are good. Together, they seek to ensure that the school's policies and resources are used efficiently and in the interests of the learners. There is a clear policy on language and the multi-cultural approach.	**Rating 3:** The SGB has appropriate aims and policies, but they play only a limited role in their formulation or implementation, for example, in drawing up the budget. They rely greatly on the leadership of the principal and other staff in formulating policies. They support the principal and staff and the school's policies, but do not get closely involved in monitoring or evaluating their success. The policy on language and the multi-cultural approach.	**Rating 2:** Legal requirements are not always met and some of the key problems at the school are not tackled. There is no policy on language and the multi-cultural approach.

Criterion 6	• **What mechanisms do the SGB members have for monitoring the quality of education provided by the school?** The supervisor will have to judge to what extent the SGB members know what is happening in the school and what systems they have in place to enable them to collect the evidence to help them make their judgements. Assess how well informed the SGB members are about the curriculum and the quality of curriculum delivery.		
Descriptors	**Rating 4:** The SGB members do not interfere in the day-to-day running of the school but have sound systems in place for monitoring and evaluating how well the school is doing. For example, some SGB members visit the school, talk with learners and educators, and observe some of the school's activities. They usually report at the SGB meetings on what they have seen .	**Rating 3:** The SGB has mechanisms for monitoring the quality of education. These mechanisms are not applied consistently. For example, on some occasions the SGB report on what they observed.	**Rating 2:** The SGB has few or no systems in place to monitor the school's performance and they provide only very limited support and direction. They neglect important aspects of their role, such as the repair and maintenance of the buildings and rely on others to ensure that efforts are made to improve working conditions for educators and learners.
Criterion 7	• **What systems do the SGB have for managing and monitoring the human and financial resources of the school?** The supervisor needs to make a judgement on the appropriateness of the financial policy, the effectiveness of the financial committee and whether SGB plans contribute towards the efficient use of available human and financial resources.		
Descriptors	**Rating 4:** The SGB has an appropriate financial policy with details on how they draw up the budget. The financial committee has effective systems, for example, financial reports and monthly meetings to monitor the human and financial resources of the school.	**Rating 3:** The SGB has a financial policy and they are satisfactorily involved in drawing up the budget. The financial committee has systems to monitor the human and financial resources of the school.	**Rating 2:** The SGB has a financial policy, which is not followed, and they are rarely involved in drawing up the budget. The financial committee has no systems to monitor the human and financial resources of the school.

School: _____

Document 2: Second of the three areas:

- Quality of teaching and learning and educator development
- Curriculum Provisioning
- Learner achievement

4.3.4 Quality of teaching and learning and educator development

Purpose: To evaluate the quality of teaching and learning and educator development			
Sources of information:	•Lesson observation •Developmental Appraisal and Performance Measurement documents and reports •SDT plan •Records of the educators' initial qualifications and subsequent training •Subject/Learning Area/Programme policies and plans •Educators' lesson plans •Educators' assessment policies •Educators' records of learners •Learners' portfolios •Examples of homework •Displays of learners' work		
Criterion 1	**• How well do educators plan and do they have high enough expectations?** Supervisors will need to decide how closely the educator is following the Learning Programme and are covering all the relevant work. They will need to assess whether the educator plans lessons effectively and has appropriate expectations for all learners, including learners experiencing barriers to learning. The extent to which the school provides for learners of all abilities		
Descriptors	**Rating 4:** They have plans, which show how they intend to teach the knowledge, skills and understanding over a year, term and a week. Plans have clear objectives and a good range of strategies. They have high expectations and their learners achieve good results.	**Rating 3:** Plans have outcomes but they are not always clear enough and the teaching strategies, though they enable progress, rarely stimulate excitement or motivate learners. Their learners usually achieve satisfactory results.	**Rating 2:** Educators rarely plan conscientiously and rely on others to provide them with an overview of what has to be covered. They have plans, but they have not thought them through carefully. As a result, objectives are unclear and the strategies employed are unsuitable. Their expectations are low and learners and learners achieve results below their potential.
Criterion 2	**• Are educators knowledgeable about the subjects/learning areas/programmes?** The supervisor evaluates the extent of the educator's subject/Learning Area/Programme knowledge in lessons, using information gathered from the lesson observation instrument during the IQMS process.		
Descriptors	**Rating 4:** Educator uses knowledge to diagnose learner strengths and weaknesses in order to develop teaching strategies.	**Rating 3:** Educator is able to use knowledge and information to extend the knowledge of learners.	**Rating 2:** Educator's knowledge is adequate but not comprehensive.

Criterion 3	**• Do the educators employ appropriate teaching strategies to accommodate all learners?** The supervisor evaluates the effectiveness of teaching strategies and styles used by educators. The suitability of questioning learners, of explaining content, and of organising the learners in a range of different ways. The creativeness of the educators will aid the supervisor in judging the quality of teaching.		
Descriptors	**Rating 4:** Teaching strategies are chosen according to the content to be covered, the resources available and the levels of achievement of the learners.	**Rating 3:** Plans have outcomes but they are not always clear enough and the teaching strategies, though they enable progress, rarely stimulate excitement or motivate learners.	**Rating 2:** They have plans, but they have not thought them through carefully. As a result, objectives are unclear and the strategies employed are unsuitable.
Criterion 4	**• Do the educators use resources appropriately?** The supervisor should know from the educator's plans what resources (books and equipment) are to be introduced at various stages of the lesson. How they are used to increase learners' knowledge, understanding and skills will have to be judged. Consideration of the way the educators organise the accommodation and to what extent this helps learners' learning is important. The structure and pace of a lesson and the way an educator makes use of time to improve learning have to be judged.		
Descriptors	**Rating 4:** Organisation of learning space enables effective use of time, teaching resources and encourages and supports individual and group activities.	**Rating 3:** The educator uses time effectively, organises the accommodation appropriately and selects relevant resources to support individual and group activities.	**Rating 2:** The educator organises accommodation even though the selected resources do not lead to the effective use of time and support individual and group activities.
Criterion 5	**• Do the educators manage the class well and create a good learning environment?** The supervisor has to assess how well the educator manages learners, how effectively the educator relates to the learners, recognises their needs and challenges them appropriately. The supervisor has to judge the effectiveness of arrangements for learners of different abilities, especially the most able and those experiencing barriers to learning.		
Descriptors	**Rating 4:** Educators organise and manage effectively, creating a good ambience for learning based on mutual trust. Classrooms are clean.	**Rating 3:** Educators control their classes in an orderly manner and deal with any disruptions effectively. Learners know what is expected of them and behave accordingly. The classroom is tidy, but has little on display.	**Rating 2:** Educators show little interest in their work and this has a negative impact on learners. Lessons are boring and this sometimes leads to educators losing control of the class. The classroom is dirty and display is poor.

4.3.5 Curriculum provision and resources

Purpose: To evaluate the quality of the curriculum and how closely it matches the teaching and learning needs in relation to local or national requirements, including, how the co-curricular and extra-curricular activities enhance the curriculum.			
Sources of information:	•The school's curriculum plan •The school's year plan •The school development and improvement plans •Learners' and educators' portfolios •Reports and minutes of subjects / Learning Areas / Learning Programme meetings •The assessment policies and records of assessments •Promotional schedules including any other records, interviews schedules and questionnaire reports with the principal and a sample of educators, learners and parents •Evidence of participation in and results from any competitions entered by learners or extra-curricular activity such as sports, cultural activities, drama and debates.		
Criterion 1	**• Does the school curriculum follow the national curriculum requirements?** The supervisor will need to evaluate whether there is compliance with the national policy prescripts in deciding the curriculum offered by the school. The supervisor will also evaluate whether the curriculum provision is in line with transformational goals.		
Descriptors	**Descriptor for Rating 4** The school provides learners with a well-balanced curriculum, observing the ratio of the different subjects/Learning Areas/Programmes.	**Descriptor for Rating 3** Learners are provided with a balanced curriculum that has appropriate elements of the national curriculum requirements.	**Descriptor for Rating 2** The curriculum of the school is not balanced; it does not take into account needs, wishes aspirations, or capabilities of the learners. There is very little consultation with the parents' representatives. The diversity of cultures in the country is not reflected.

Criterion 2	• **Is planning for the curriculum well structured and effective?** The supervisors will need to evaluate whether the curriculum provided is appropriate for different ages and abilities and that it is constantly reviewed. He or she will need to establish the extent of stakeholder involvement in the planning process.		
Descriptors	**Rating 4:** The curriculum is well designed and considers the ages of the learners, their assessed standards of attainment, and the school's circumstances. It also reflects the school's previous record and experience. The overall curriculum caters for equal opportunities and the educational development of all learners. The timetable for classes is designed such that the curriculum is effectively implemented. The curriculum is regularly and effectively evaluated and reviewed, to ensure that it continues to provide for the needs of various stakeholders and is in line with national goals. Educators develop and observe their plans (projects), short-, mid- and long-term, with other colleagues and work in line with the requirements of the agreed upon curriculum.	**Rating 3:** The design of the curriculum takes into account the previous experience of the school and the needs of the learners, though it is not always systematically planned. The effectiveness of the curriculum is occasionally evaluated and reviewed, although with limited stakeholder participation. The basis of any revision is not always sufficiently justified or articulated. The timetable/school programme is satisfactory and allows for the implementation of the planned curriculum. Educators have appropriate plans for the long-, mid- and short-term, although these have not always been agreed upon with colleagues and thus good continuity is not assured.	**Rating 2:** The curriculum is not appropriate for the different learner ages and abilities in the various phases, thus the wishes of the educators and the needs of learners are not met. There are no efforts made to review the curriculum and to involve the stakeholders. The timetable for the various classes/grades are not properly structured, thus there is bunching of periods for certain Learning areas at particular times of the week, and it does not always provide for effective learning.
Criterion 3	• **Do the various assessment tasks grow from the curriculum and are they used to assist planning?** It will be important to look at the assessment and the range of procedures implemented in all the phases whether it enables learners to perform to their best. Supervisors also need to assess the procedures for monitoring progress of learners and measures taken towards their improvement. Supervisors will need to establish if the school keeps accurate records of assessments.		
Descriptors	**Rating 4:** The school has a comprehensive assessment policy, which shows that assessment tasks grow naturally as a component of the teaching and learning process. Baseline assessment is used to determine the level of teaching and learning. CASS and CTAs are implemented in Grade 9 and a variety of assessment techniques are used in all grades. The requirements of the portfolio guidelines in Grades 9 and 12 are met. Learners are aware of assessment criteria and standards and there is continual monitoring.	**Rating 3:** The school has an assessment policy, although it does not show that assessment tasks grow naturally as a component of the teaching and learning process. Baseline assessment is not used to determine the level of teaching and learning. CASS and CTAs are not fully implemented in Grade 9, but a variety of assessment techniques are used in all grades. The requirements of the portfolio guidelines in Grades 9 and 12 are met. Learners are aware of assessment criteria and standards. However, monitoring is not continually done.	**Rating 2:** The implementation of the assessment policy in the various phases does not indicate the levels that learners are achieving in their performances, thus the objectives and strategies they adopt fail to meet the assessment requirements. The records of CASS and CTAs are not properly kept and controlled. The standards for learner performances are not monitored.

Criterion 4	**• Does the school provide co-curricular and extra-curricular activities to enhance the curriculum?** The supervisor will need to evaluate whether the school provides effective co-curricular and extra-curricular activities and to what extent those activities contribute to the enhancement of the curriculum.		
Descriptors	**Rating 4:** A good range of co- and extra-curricular activities is provided by the curriculum of the school. Learners can choose and participate in a variety of sports and cultural activities.	**Rating 3:** There are co- and extra-curricular activities, but their contribution to the curriculum is not systematically planned in order to involve and meet the needs of most learners. Only a few learners are involved in the sports and cultural activities.	**Rating 2:** The curriculum does not provide a satisfactory education for the diverse learner backgrounds and is not enriched by a suitable range of co- and extra-curricular activities.
Criterion 5	**• Is the curriculum supported by appropriate resources?** Supervisors will need to evaluate whether the school has the appropriate and relevant resources required to enable educators to teach the curriculum effectively.		
Descriptors	**Rating 4:** The school has sufficient learning and teaching support material (LTSM) and other resources (media centre, laboratories, etc.) to enable educators to present the curriculum in interesting and varied ways that recognize the diversity of cultures in the country positively.	**Rating 3:** LTSM and other resources are usually suitable to sustain learning and teaching although with limited recognition of the diverse cultures.	**Rating 2:** LTSM and other resources do not match the curriculum. Implementation of the curriculum makes a limited impact on learners in view of socio-cultural and economic circumstances.

Criterion 6	**• Do the educators assess learners in such a way as to help their teaching to be effective?** Judgement needs to be made on how the educator assesses learners' progress and levels of performance achieved. Supervisors evaluate the accuracy of the assessments, and how well the information is used to provide different work for learners with different levels of achievement. Consideration needs to be given to the educator's use of learners' self-assessment to improve their learning.		
Descriptors	**Rating 4:** Different assessment techniques are used to cater for learners from diverse backgrounds and with different abilities.	**Rating 3:** Educators assess learners sufficiently and use some of the results to improve the effectiveness of their teaching.	**Rating 2:** The educator has a basic understanding of different types of assessment, but does not use it effectively.
Criterion 7	**• Do the educators make good use of homework?** The supervisor needs to scrutinise homework to decide if it is appropriate and is contributing to learning.		
Descriptors	**Rating 4:** Educators mark learners' work regularly and monitor their progress carefully. They use homework and visits to places of interest well to enrich the curriculum.	**Rating 3:** Educators follow the homework timetable, but rarely set work, which is stimulating and demanding. They mark work regularly and give encouragement, but do not comment in sufficient detail to show how learners can improve their work.	**Rating 2:** Educators often leave learners' work unmarked and assessment and recording is either omitted or is not systematic.
Criterion 8	**• Have the educators any means of evaluating the success of the lesson?** The supervisor needs to look at the educator's plans to see if there are any strategies for evaluating the lesson, discuss with the educator how s/he intends to measure the success of the lesson and what will be done as a result of the findings.		
Descriptors	**Rating 4:** The educator's plan has a variety of strategies to evaluate the success of the lesson, e.g. assignments, tests, discussions, etc. There are multiple intervention strategies to address specific needs of all learners.	**Rating 3:** Lessons are appropriately designed to address learners' strengths and areas of weaknesses.	**Rating 2:** There is some evidence of corrective measures and remedial activity based on assessment results.

Criterion 9	• **Does the school provide development initiatives for educators?** To assess the extent to which the school provides development opportunities to educators, the supervisor needs to have a record of the educator's qualifications, experience and any subsequent training.		
Descriptors	**Rating 4:** The school has records of educators' qualifications and attendance of professional development activities. The school takes initiative in delivering professional development opportunities involving the district/region, teacher centres and NGOs.	**Rating 3:** The school has records of educators' qualifications. Educators attend professional development activities, but records are not kept. The school takes initiative in delivering professional development opportunities without the involvement of the district/region, teacher centres and NGOs.	**Rating 2:** The school has records of educators' qualifications. There is little or no evidence of professional development.

4.3.6 Learner achievement

Purpose: To evaluate the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that learners have acquired			
Sources of information:	•Samples of learners' workbooks and portfolios, including a sample of learners' reading in primary schools •The school's external examination results •CTAs and CASS records •Educators' assessment records and examples of learners' self-assessment tasks/activities •Interviews with learners and educators •Educator questionnaires •Discussions with learners •Any display of learners' work, learner profiles •Evidence of participation in national and international ceremonies and extra-curricular activities (sports, cultural, debates) and any competitions •Evidence collected from co-curricular activities (excursions, projects and visits to the school).		
Criterion 1	**•Are learners reaching the expected outcomes for their age and ability in the different learning areas and phases of the school system?** Supervisors will need to evaluate and report on the effectiveness of learner achievements in both the formal and informal assessments. Supervisors will need to evaluate whether learners achieve in accordance with expected levels of performance at the end of Grades 3, 6, 9, and 12. In all learning areas, supervisors need to evaluate what outcomes the learners achieve in relation to national expectations. Supervisors need to establish whether learners experiencing barriers to learning and those with exceptional abilities are reaching expected levels of performance. The supervisors need to evaluate how well learners can read, speak, listen and write in the language of learning and teaching and in one other additional language. Also to evaluate how well the language of learning and teaching helps or hinders achievement in other subjects. They need to evaluate how easily learners handle numbers, calculate mentally and with electronic devices, apply numeracy skills to solve problems in different learning areas, and whether their numeracy skills help or hinder their other studies.		
Descriptors	**Rating 4** Learners read and write fluently in the language of teaching and learning and in the other additional language. They have sufficient skill to enable them to communicate clearly and concisely in other learning areas. They speak well and confidently, answer and ask questions and express their ideas. They are curious and often request the teacher for further information. They are willing to express a point of view. Learners have good listening/receptive skills, being able to use what they hear to further their learning. They show good capacity to solve problems.	**Rating 3** Learners read and write at a reasonable standard in the language of teaching and learning, in the mother tongue and another additional language. They make mistakes, but can correct them fairly quickly. The level of their communication skills does not hinder their learning in other learning areas. They answer questions, generally without expanding beyond a short response. They rarely ask questions other than to ask how to tackle a task. Learners can listen/decode and extract the basic message that is being passed on to them. They rarely extrapolate, but when probed by the educator will express ideas. They reach acceptable levels of performance in mathematics/numeracy in relation to their ability. Learners can use the new knowledge they acquire, but need almost continuous guidance from the educator. They frequently seek help when they meet a problem. The level of co-operation when in groups is often hesitant.	**Rating 2** Learners read, write or communicate in the language of teaching and learning and their mother language, slowly and with many inaccuracies. They struggle to understand because of their poor literacy skills. Learners may listen, but do not fully understand or use the knowledge to tackle problems. They rarely show confidence in their knowledge or oral skills and answers to questions are simplistic or inaccurate. Their numeracy skills are low. Their progress is often slower than expected in relation to their ability/disability.

Criterion 2	• **Are learners learning effectively and making as much progress as could be expected in light of their known prior achievements?** By looking at learners' previous work, supervisors need to evaluate whether learners are learning at an appropriate pace in lessons. Supervisors will have to be satisfied that learners of all ability are being appropriately challenged and learning at an appropriate rate.		
Descriptors	**Rating 4:** Learners use effectively what they have learned to cope well with new learning. They have good skills in research, ordering information and producing well-formulated solutions. Learners can use information from different subjecs/Learning Areas in tackling new learning. They are able to make good progress with minimal supervision. They participate in group work, co-operate effectively and respect others' cultural values and opinions. They achieve good levels of performance for their age and ability.	**Rating 3:** Learners have a basic knowledge in each Learning Area, but rarely make a cross reference in order to improve their learning. They reach average levels of performance in their grade examinations and progress at a satisfactory rate.	**Rating 2:** Learners don't absorb or internalise new knowledge easily They have difficulty retaining knowledge from one lesson to another. Learners often leave a learning task uncompleted. They achieve below average levels of performance. .
Criterion 3	**Are learners encouraged and supported to participate in extra-mural activities?** The supervisors need to evaluate whether there is a balance between academic and extra-curricular activities and the extent at which the learners are achieving.		
Descriptors	**Rating 4:** The school has a variety of extra- and co-curricular activities and the learners participate fully.	**Rating 3:** There is no balance between academic and extra/co-curricular activities	**Rating 2:** Learners are not encouraged to participate in extra/co-curricular activities. There are no sports and cultural facilities, and these activities are not offered by the school.

School: _____

Document 3: Third of the three areas:

- School safety, security and discipline
- School infrastructure
- Parents and the community

4.3.7 School safety, security and discipline

Purpose: To evaluate the extent to which the school knows about legislation and human rights and implementation thereof; to check that the school is secure and that the learners, educators and support staff are safe; and to evaluate the effectiveness of the school's disciplinary procedures			
Sources of information	•The school's policies and regulations concerning the welfare and safety of learners •HIV/Aids policy •Safety, security and discipline policy •Codes of conduct for staff and learners, including sanctions and rewards •The procedures for dealing with learners in difficulty and those who are causing difficulties •Records of any accidents, breaches of security and any emergency practices •Health and safety measures and those persons responsible for them •Regulations regarding the supervision of learners on school visits •Any regulations and procedures related to child protection •The procedures and regulations associated with boarding, if relevant •Discussions with staff, parents and other welfare services associated with the school •The school's security systems		
Criterion 1	**• Does the school have appropriate, policies, regulations and procedures designed to protect learners and staff?** The supervisor needs to evaluate whether the school has suitable procedures and how well they are implemented, for example, how well specific cases of child abuse, if there have been any, are identified and have been dealt with. The relationships the school has with any local services with responsibility for the welfare of children will have to be evaluated. Appropriateness and effectiveness of disciplinary procedures to ensure a safe learning environment, including sanctions against and rewards for learners.		
Descriptors	Rating 4: The school complies fully with the regulations and legislation in force regarding the state and safety of the buildings, learners' rights and their protection, particularly with regard to health and safety. These issues are a regular feature on the agenda of the governing body and the learner representative council, which have a responsibility to discuss and revise them. Disciplinary procedures are good and implemented consistently, with the result that behaviour is good and learners are safe. Regular practices occur in relation to emergency procedures, especially regarding transport.	Rating 3: The school complies with the legislation and regulations in force to a satisfactory level. It has sound systems and procedures in place for monitoring and evaluating its procedures and regulations. These are discussed from time to time by the learner representative council and governing body and occasionally revised. The school has disciplinary procedures that are implemented, but not always consistently, with the result that there is occasional misbehaviour. The school is generally orderly and sanctions are used against learners who disrupt. Transport safety regulations are satisfactory.	Rating 2: The school does not comply with all the legislation and regulations in force. It adopts systems and procedures that have not been checked to see if they satisfy the law and many of them are slipshod. A number of procedures are omitted from the school's documentation and much is left to chance. The senior management does not give sufficient importance to the state of the school and the threats to learners' health and safety. Transport regulations are not satisfactory.

Criterion 2	• **Does the school have appropriate procedures and regulations to ensure the health and safety of the learners and staff?** An evaluation of the safety regulations in laboratories, workshops, ablution facilities and other areas of the school need to be made and of the extent to which extent proper safety regulations exist. The quality and effectiveness of emergency procedures needs to be judged, as well as how well learners and staff know procedures. The quality of provision made for the safety and security of educators and support staff need to be assessed.		
Descriptors	**Rating 4:** The school has good policies, procedures and regulations regarding staff and learners' health and safety and for monitoring and evaluating how well it implements them. Records of incidence are thorough. The laws and regulations are displayed in suitable places (clipboards, laboratories, and classrooms) and guidance is provided for learners and educators. The school ensures that staff and learners know what is expected, and that they consistently apply the rules and regulations. Staff fulfils health and safety duties in accordance with a roster conscientiously. Regular monitoring for weapons and drug substances occurs.	**Rating 3:** A member of staff is designated as health and safety officer. The regulations and procedures are displayed in certain parts of the school, especially in laboratories, but other than giving staff and learners an initial briefing on their application; little is done to ensure that they know them well. Monitoring for dangerous substances and weapons is done, but not systematically and records are not complete.	**Rating 2:** Practices in emergency procedures occur, but they are irregular and what may have been learned is not always recorded to help improvement. Its regulations on health and safety are such that learners may be placed at risk. Staff and learners are mostly oblivious to legislative requirements, especially in relation to health, safety and child protection.
Criterion 3	• **Are boarding arrangements for learners suitable?** Assessment must be made of whether learners are provided with reasonable facilities for sleeping and for general living needs, the quality of care provided for learners and whether it is available at all times. The extent to which learners feel cared for and safe will need to be assessed.		
Descriptors	**Rating 4:** Boarding accommodation is of a good standard; the children feel safe. They recognise that the school is taking care of them. The services the school provides are of good quality and are regularly available.	**Rating 3:** The school offers acceptable accommodation to boarders, but there is no regular provision of medical care.	**Rating 2:** Accommodation for boarders is dirty and cramped and does not provide decent living conditions in line with general requirements.

Criterion 4	• Does the school make provision for the support and care for learners, displaying sensitivity to diversity and including those experiencing barriers to learning? The supervisor needs to judge to what extent additional provision is made to ensure the health and safety of learners, including those experiencing various barriers to learning, and whether the premises are suitable for the school's various activities and human rights considerations		
Descriptors	Rating 4: The school uses additional inclusive strategies to promote respect for individuality and diversity.	Rating 3: The school acknowledges and respects individuality and diversity.	Rating 2: The school is not sensitive enough to diversity and does not sufficiently respect the dignity of individual learners.

4.3.8 School Infrastructure

Purpose: To evaluate to what extent the school has sufficient and appropriate staff, resources and accommodation for its purpose.			
Sources of information:	• •The school's record of its educators and support staff, including qualifications, experience and training •The school budget, income and expenditure •The number and range of textbooks and library books •The number and suitability of equipment, including computers and audio-visual aids •Observation of the accommodation and premises, including hostels •Any reports on them held by the school in order to check sufficiency of accommodation and state of repair •Inventory/stock register •Learner and teacher support material policy •Maintenance policy • Procedures for the retrieval of textbooks and equipment		
Criterion 1	**• Has the school adequate resources e.g. finance, staff, accommodation, learning materials, equipment and access to support services? Are they used efficiently?** The supervisor will need to look at the school's income, how well it is controlled, and how it is spent, to judge whether sound decisions are being made about the use of financial resources. S/he will have to judge provision of the following and how effectively they are used: - sufficient and appropriately qualified teaching staff - number of support and technical staff - arrangements for development of the human and physical resources - sufficient and appropriate accommodation - sufficient books and equipment - procurement, distribution and retrieval policies and procedures - equipment in a good state of repair		
Descriptors	Rating 4: The principal uses the financial resources of the school wisely and in a transparent way. The school has a generous learner to educator ratio, perhaps 20:1, and educators are suitably qualified, experienced and trained. The management team supervises the maintenance and the good operation of the buildings, including any recreational areas. Buildings and premises provide a good environment for learning and are in good repair and clean. Learners and educators have a good supply of appropriate books, materials and equipment, all of which are used effectively to help learner's progress. Good support is given to the library, and it contributes well to learners' learning. The school's finances are used efficiently and in the interests of the learners.	Rating 3: The principal uses the school's financial resources according to legal requirements and in a satisfactorily transparent way. He or she seeks to provide sufficient basic materials and equipment for learners and educators. The school has enough suitably qualified and experienced educators that are appropriately allocated. Some areas of the school are in need of repair.	Rating 2: The principal does not fully observe the law in relation to the management of the school's funds and does not keep careful financial accounts. The budget allocations are not transparent. As a result the school's accounts are not well managed and the school funds are not related to a school development plan. The maintenance and organisation of the buildings and teaching areas are not planned and this leads to some neglect, which may lead to deterioration in working conditions. Resources may or may not be scarce, but they are not used in the best interests of the learners.

Criterion 2	• **What systems are there for monitoring and evaluating the use and maintenance of the school's total resources and the quality of education provided?** The supervisor will have to assess to what extent managers know what is happening in areas for which they are responsible. Do managers monitor and evaluate? How are funds allocated and who monitors how they are spent?		
Descriptors	Rating 4: Even where there is a shortage of books and equipment, and the school buildings have been planned poorly, the principal manages them well and in such a way that learners are still able to make progress in their learning. Resources are well ordered. The principal strives with some success to provide good conditions to help learners reach high standards and teachers to be effective, and their work is well monitored and evaluated. Buildings	Rating 3: The management team has a satisfactory oversight of what happens in the school, but does not have systematic methods of checking on the state of buildings or teaching and learning resources. As a result, learners and educators experience some shortages in books, materials and equipment, which are not explained by limited funds.	Rating 2: The management team shows little interest or expertise in acquiring new resources or equipment or of updating library resources. Even where resources are plentiful and the accommodation good, a "need improvement" rating will result if their use is not properly planned and used in the best interests of the learners.
Criterion 3	• **What systems are in place to register, maintain, retrieve and repair stock?** The supervisor will have to judge whether systems are in place for maintenance and retrieval of stock		
Descriptors	Rating 4: The school has a properly controlled and audited stock register that enables it to maintain, retrieve and repair stock with ease.	Rating 3: Systematic records or plans for their improvement are kept. The school has a stock register that is reasonably effective. The retrieval of books is satisfactory.	Rating 2: Not sufficient systems are in place for stock control maintenance, retrieval and replacement.
Criterion 4	• **Are resources and facilities accessible to learners and staff?** The supervisor will need to judge if resources and facilities are easily accessible to learners and staff.		
Descriptors	Rating 4: The school is sensitive to diversity. The school facilities are easily accessible to a variety of users.	Rating 3: The school acknowledges diversity. Some provision is made for a variety of users.	Rating 2: Minimal provision is made for a diversity of users.

4.3.9 Parents and community

Purpose: To evaluate the extent to which the school encourages parental and community involvement in the education of the learners and how it makes use of their contributions to support learners' progress			
Sources of information:	•Discussions with the departmental officials and others involved in contact with parents •Discussion with parents and questionnaire responses •School documentation relating to contact with parents. •Any recent information from a parents' committee •Marked cards, reports and notebooks sent to parents •Any guidance issued to parents, for example on attendance or the school curriculum •Any written evidence of the school's links with the local community •Any other evidence e.g. reports of meetings, workshops, photographs, newspaper cuttings, showing links with the community and other schools •Discussions with stakeholders from other schools and the community.		
Criterion 1	• **How effectively does the school communicate with parents?** The supervisor needs to find out how often the school communicates with parents and in what form. Consideration needs to be given to the way the school responds to parents' complaints and suggestions The supervisor needs to evaluate the quality of reports the school makes to parents about learners' progress standards.		
Descriptors	**Rating 4:** The school ensures good communications with the parents. Written reports on learners' progress are regularly sent to parents. Information about the school's activities is also sent home. The parents are given good advice about their children, the way they are progressing and their potential for the future. The school manages to ensure an education partnership and sees itself as co-responsible with the family.	**Rating 3:** The school communicates with parents in an acceptable way. Written reports are sent to parents, but they are not detailed enough to provide all the necessary information about their children's progress and future. There is no clear programme or procedures for communicating with parents. The school does make efforts to improve communication with parents.	**Rating 2:** The school rarely communicates with the parents. The school randomly sends parents reports on school activities and the progress made by individual children.
Criterion 2	• **Are parents involved in the management of the school in any way?** The supervisor needs to find out if there is a parents' committee, if there are parents on any school management committees, and if parents contribute to the school's resources.		
Descriptors	**Rating 4:** The school responds well to parents' suggestions and proposals and encourages them to contribute to its plans.	**Rating 3:** Parents are allowed to make suggestions on how the school should be run, but there are no mechanisms in place to implement these suggestions in a systematic way.	**Rating 2:** The school manages to establish an adequate partnership with the family and regards this as fairly important.

Criterion 3	• Does the school provide any education for parents? The supervisor needs to judge whether the school guides parents about the work their children are doing and about their futures.		
Descriptors	Rating 4: The school has established good partnerships with local services and their representatives visit the school regularly to improve learner's educational experiences.	Rating 3: The school uses the cultural institutions in the local community satisfactorily to improve learners' educational experiences and calls on the various services in the community to give advice to learners from time to time.	Rating 2: The contribution of the local community is limited. Minimal local services are used to broaden learners' educational experiences.
Criterion 4	• How well do parents respond and do they contribute to learners' learning? The supervisor needs to measure parental response through attendance at meetings and involvement in school.		
Descriptors	Rating 4: Parents make a good contribution to the school through helping educators where they can. They often raise money for the school.	Rating 3: Parents feel they can visit the school if they wish.	Rating 2: The suggestions and proposals coming from the parents are often neglected. The school does little to encourage material, financial or human support from the parents and, on occasions, neglects any contribution they wish to make.
Criterion 5	• What does the school do to improve its links with the local community? The supervisor will need to assess to what extent local services, such as the police or fire brigade, are used to help understand their community better, and also the extent to which the local and more distant museums, galleries, theatres, etc are used.		
Descriptors	Rating 4: Representatives from the community serve the school effectively through membership of the governing body. The school has established good partnerships with local community services and their representatives visit the school regularly to talk about their work.	Rating 3: The school uses the cultural institutions in the local community satisfactorily to improve learners' education and calls on the various services in the community to give advice to learners from time to time. However, none of this is planned in a thorough or systematic way.	Rating 2: The contribution of the local community to the governing body is limited and little or no local services are used to broaden learners' educational experiences.
Criterion 6	• To what extent does the school encourage its learners to respect the local environment? The supervisor needs to evaluate how learners are educated in using the local environment well.		
Descriptors	Rating 4: The school has a good environmental education programme that has academic and practical significance, and which encourages parents and learner participation.	Rating 3: The environmental education programme has sufficient activities for parents and learners to promote awareness of a healthy environment.	Rating 2: The school has an environmental education programme , which does not encourage parent and learner participation.

Criterion 7	• To what extent does the school serve the needs of the local community? The supervisor needs to assess links with the community that help learner's see what career opportunities exist. The extent to which the school's facilities are made available for the use of the local community needs to be considered. The supervisor needs to discover and comment on the range of joint activities undertaken by the school and community in the interests of the learners.		
Descriptors	Rating 4: It also guides its learners on career opportunities effectively. Parents are welcome, but within clear guidelines.	Rating 3: The information it collects on local career opportunities is sound, but local contacts are not fully exploited.	Rating 2: Little or no advice is provided for learners about local career opportunities. The school's work is promoted to a limited extent in the community. Some parents feel unwelcome, and are sometimes disruptive.
Criterion 8	• What does the school do to improve its links with other schools and with the academic community? The supervisor needs to establish to what extent the school organises or participates in inter-school academic, sports and cultural activities.		
Descriptors	Rating 4: The school participates enthusiastically in inter-school sport and cultural activities and makes good use of local cultural institutions (museums, theatres and libraries).	Rating 3: The school participates occasionally in sports and cultural activities with average success. The school seldom communicates with other schools in the area.	Rating 2: The school is rarely involved in school excursions, inter-school sport and cultural activities.

NAME OF SCHOOL: _____

1. LIST AT LEAST ONE PRIORITY ISSUE FROM EACH OF THE 9 AREAS:

1.1 Basic functionality:

- _____
- _____

1.2 Management and communication:

- _____
- _____

1.3 Governance and relationships:

- _____
- _____

1.4 Quality of teaching and learning and educator development:

- _____
- _____

1.5 Curriculum Provisioning:

- _____
- _____

1.6 Learner achievement:

- _____
- _____

1.7 School safety, security and discipline:

- _____
- _____

1.8 School infrastructure:

- _____
- _____

1.9 Parents and the community:

- _____
- _____

2. IDENTIFICATION OF MAIN (OVERRIDING PRIORITIES)

From the analysis above, please identify three to four main priorities without which the school would not be able to move forward in 2012. In each case list what you have already done to address the issue and what still needs to be done:

2.1 Priority 1:

Name: _____

What has been done:

- _____
- _____
- _____

What needs to be done:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

2.2 Priority 2:

Name: _____

What has been done:

- _____
- _____
- _____

What needs to be done:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

2.3 Priority 3:

Name: _____

What has been done:

- _____
- _____
- _____

What needs to be done:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

2.4 Priority 4:

Name: _____

What has been done:

- _____
- _____
- _____

What needs to be done:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

APPENDIX G:
Sample of interview transcript

INTERVIEW WITH THE PRINCIPAL: K HIGH SCHOOL
31 JANUARY 2012
VENUE: PRPRINCIPAL'S OFFICE

KEY:	
GV:	Researcher
PR:	Principal

GV: Good morning, Sir. Thanks so much for having me with you this morning. As we discussed last week after the CTM's meeting, I will be meeting the four Principals involved in the research this week as the start-off to the research. I appreciate your time to speak to me about a few issues that will introduce me to the school and its dynamics.

Could we start off with what the meaning of the school's name is? From my previous working experience in the Eastern Cape, I know that the Xhosa people give names with specific meaning to people and to places.

PR: Well, Geoff, I must say that it is good having you with us. You know, since the CTM informed us of your involvement with the research in our schools, man, we've really become very excited because we hope that this research will be able to help us perform much better. Well, to answer your question, the school's name means *"a place of learning."* And yes, we want to do all we can to indeed make this a place of learning.

GV: Tell me, how long have you been Principal?

PR: This is the first school where I've been Principal. I was first Acting Principal for 2 years and I've been permanent as from 2008. That is 5 years plus the 2 years of acting, which then makes it 7 years in total.

GV: Did you have a mentor who inspired you in your task as a Principal, and if so, what were the most important lessons that this person taught you regarding teaching in general and school management in particular?

PR: I did not have a mentor per se, but rather I had a lot of people who were very supportive. The previous Circuit Manager (JP) was very supportive in the time when I was acting. I could easily engage with her on many of the problems I experienced at school and she would give me advice. She visited the school regularly. She helped me meet the pressure of dealing with the deadlines to Head Office and the District. There were also other Principals who inspired me through the way in which they faced up to their challenges. These people were much more experienced and they really helped a lot.

GV: Looking back at your time at this school, what would you say were your personal achievements as Principal?

PR: Well, yes, you see: there were quite a number of things that I accomplished. The very first thing I did was bringing down the numbers. The school was very, very big: 1603 learners in 2006. This even went up to 1705 when I started. Classes were overflowing: 50 – 60 learners which really made teaching impossible.

At the end of last year we stood at 1219. Many of the classes now have less than 50 learners. Only 7 out of 30 classes have more than 50. The gr. 8s responded to the call that we would only have a maximum of 40 learners per class. The gr. 10s are 41 – 42 which is not bad. All gr. 12 classes, except 1, are less than 40 learners.

Then, when I started at the school, the school had many contract teachers, and renewing the contracts really took a lot of time. This also brought a lot of instability to the school. You never knew if these people would come back or not. Today the situation is such that I have only one teacher on contract.

Also, the school is in dire need of qualified Maths teachers. We only had 2 at that time. Now I've got at least 5 qualified Maths teachers. We are also a Dinaledi school, which, as you know, places a strong emphasis on Mathematics.

Man, I tell you, the school has many debts. I had to deal with a number of them. The stationary especially is quite expensive, as it is a bulk order. Then there is also debt to the management itself. Many HODs were acting at one stage. They are now permanent. I've been able to balance things out and to qualify for gender equity. Following the involvement of the parents, I managed to have the debts settled for the stationary. There is only one debt left now: the City Council rates.

Geoff, there is one thing you must know about this community: the big, big problem we as the four schools in your research have with safety. I inherited a safety risk, especially re violence. The gangsters, they really make life very difficult for all of us, especially the learners. Recently, we were able to employ the services of a security group which has helped a lot with this nightmare.

Then there are the sports fields at the back of the school which is now in a working condition thanks to sponsors that we've got. The City Council and Community structures are also involved in maintaining the field.

We also have a resource centre, you know. I will like to show it to you when we are done here. My challenge is that we need to ensure that the thing is working. Maybe you will be able to help me in this regard.

GV: Yes, I'd like to see it. I have a member of staff (JB) who is excellent with these things and I'm sure that she would gladly offer any assistance. I've talked to the CTM and we need his involvement in assisting to sort out how we can take this partnership between the four schools and my school forward in the future, beyond this research project. Are there any other achievements, perhaps, before we move on?

Yes, we have a mobile kitchen that the learners have access to.

And oh yes, then there is the choir. I inherited a choir that was competitive and I ensured that it continued to win at district and provincial levels, but the huge challenge is that I could not retain the choir conductor. Now I am frantically trying to find a suitable replacement which is very challenging.

GV: Looking back at your time at this school, what would you say were the biggest challenges you had to face?

PR: *(He laughs)* Man, politics, I tell you, staff politics. Look, as a Principal you know about this as well. It was really a challenge. This caused havoc in the school. I think the problem mostly lay with accepting my shift from being a Deputy Principal to Principal in the same school. The people had the expectation that the Principal would come from outside the school and then it happened that the Principal was appointed from inside the school, which (as I have said) caused an internal conflict in itself.

Another thing was the implementation and management of the NSC with the aim of getting the results to be better.

Then there were the financial constraints, but we are stabilizing the budget.

Also, internal conflict, but at least this has subsided because of interventions.

There is also the issue of an intercom system: this is an old school, but the school does not at all have such a system and it really makes communication difficult.

We also had the challenge of controlling learner numbers per class. After many efforts, we have now succeeded in having no more than 40 learners in a class.

GV: Tell me, what would you say are the school's main priorities for 2012?

PR: Well, firstly it is the results. We are looking for an improvement in the results. That is for us the main thing.

Secondly it is stabilizing the budget.

Then there is the maintenance of the infrastructure at its best. We still have a problem of painting classrooms. Doors have to be changed. There is also a shortage of desks.

GV: How would you describe the working relationship between the SMT and yourself?

PR: The relationship was not good at all. There is a division in which you find that some did not have problems with my style (of management) while others did. They felt I was too hasty with the changes I wanted. There is also the question of mindset. They did not want to move outside of their comfort zones and were always suspicious and then eventually would resist everything you are trying to do. It has been a challenge to get the people to comply with the legal issues. The old order still exists.

GV: And how would you describe the working relationship between the SMT and the staff?

PR: They have their own differences. The staff is at times even more cooperative and understanding than the SMT. They were instrumental in helping me steer the school forward.

GV: Looking back at January 2011, the circuits at the District Office were restructured. How did this restructuring affect the school (seeing that you were taken out of your previous circuit) and how did it affect you to operate in an entire new circuit, with new CT members?

PR: *(He laughs loudly)* Hey, that's another one! There were problems in the previous Circuit, and they also affected my school as well. In a way, moving to Circuit 1, I felt the change. There were differences in perspectives in the old circuit. With the new circuit I found a new group of people: people who understand roles, strategies and experience better. I just accepted this change because of the good spirit.

GV: When the CT visited the school at the beginning of the 2011 year:

- How did they introduce themselves as the new CT to the school?
- What was the message that they brought (especially in the light of the 2010 matric results)?
- How did the school receive/interpret this message?
- How did you experience working with these "new" people in the first couple of months of 2011?

PR: They introduced themselves as people who are eager to help and support. The message they brought was working towards an improvement in the results. And that support they promised came forth.

The IMG got to know about the conflict in the school and continued the work of the previous IMG who did not finish on this. Also, she reminded the people of their roles and responsibilities and what they should be doing in the various months. She had a clear focus on uplifting the school management.

The CAs came in and offered advise, sent reports and did class visits.

The school social worker visited the school and assisted with cases.

The CTM had lots of conversations with me, made many phone calls and sent emails to check on where we are with the work, what we've achieving and not achieving, and looking at the strategies we're putting in place.

There was that stage that we just clicked and learnt to know each other. Now we are through that stage. There is a greater trust between the CT and the school. Also there is now a positive mindset: we are seeking and wanting more from the CT involvement and believe you me, we are getting the sense that the CT is also thinking in that direction as well.

GV: Sir, thank you so much for this information and for what you've shared with me. I especially appreciate the way in which you highlighted the specific areas of intervention done by the CT as it really gives me a much clearer idea of their work at the school. This then brings to an end the formal part of the interview. If there is anything important that you feel we have not touched yet (bearing in mind that the purpose of the interview was to get explore the surface broadly with each other) I would give you the opportunity to list such issues now.

PR: Thanks, Geoff. You see, the CT must develop an ADA, i.e. an Admin Development Assistant for the school. My main objective with the school is to lead it to Section 21 status.

Then I strongly feel that the CT must assist in an exchange programme between Model C and Township schools, also around cultural and sporting activities. The parents and learners will certainly benefit from such interaction.

The placement of learners in subjects is another challenge, e.g. Accounting, Physical Science and Maths – learners must be able to do those subjects. Then also teacher development in the same subjects is critical – teachers must have the necessary mastery of these subjects.

Another issue is the standard of assessment. Teachers must be able to be on par with the standard of the National examiners, especially with regard to tests. Teachers must build learners in such a way that they can pass at a good level. To me a test is nothing more that a reflection of a micro-examination. The CT must build a strong working relationship between the High School and its feeder Primary Schools in as far as curriculum and assessment are concerned. Languages and Maths are the two main ones in this regard.