

The Views of School Management Teams on Self-reflection Practices: Towards Fulfillment of Management Functions

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ABSTRACT The study investigated the views of school management teams on self-reflection practices. The purpose of the study was to establish self-reflective practices employed by SMT in fulfilling their management functions. The study followed the qualitative approach with a case study research design. The population consisted of SMT from primary, secondary and special schools. Purposive sampling was used to select participants from less experienced to more experienced in the management positions. The study found that SMT members were not aware of self-reflection practices. The study introduced new knowledge that provided insights into the practice of self-reflection and how to become reflective practitioners. The new model was introduced to assist SMT to reflect on their practice and fulfill their management functions. The study recommended that SMT be trained and orientated about management functions prior to their appointments in the management positions. The study further recommended that SMT consider self-reflection as part of their daily activities.

INTRODUCTION

The process of self-reflection enables the practitioners to develop a greater level of self-awareness about the nature and impact of their performance. This awareness of one's performance makes individuals think about and mull over their experiences, management activities and leads to improved practice (Malatji et al. 2016). This process (self-reflection) can be seen as a vehicle that allows school managers the ability to explore, contemplate, and analyze experiences in the schools. Malatji (2016) emphasizes these experiences as a cyclical process through stages, that is, observing oneself as a manager, thinking about the observed experience to gain understanding and meaning of what is happening, and applying the insights gained to future management experiences. The practice of self-reflection helps individuals improve their actions and professional practice. The purpose of the study was to establish the self-reflection practices employed by school management teams (SMT) in performing their school management functions and suggest a suitable self-reflective model for the enhancement of SMT performance.

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

management of schools becomes central in making sure that schools are well managed. The concepts of leaderships, management and headship or being a principal are often used interchangeably in the context of schooling (Bush 2016). However, functions of School Management Teams are viewed and practiced differently in countries, both nationally and internationally.

Due to apparent lack of self-reflection, it was difficult for SMT members in Capricorn District to explain and outline duties and responsibilities of teachers, as they too are not clear of theirs, and these results in many problems in the school. One of the key challenges for SMT members in rural provinces, according to Bedenhorst and Scheepers (2015), was to develop leadership as an act that would encourage all members of the school community to take responsibility for making a difference within the school. This includes regular reflective practice and fulfillment of their functions to improve schools and make them institutions where the focus was on providing quality teaching and learning. In the context of this study, the researchers have observed SMT members in the schools of Capricorn District and found that they do not reflect of their practices, and this resulted in poor management of their schools and inability to fulfil their expected functions.

Clarke (2015) suggested that reflection is not about a single event in time but occurs over time as School Management Teams (SMT) begin to construct meaning for them. Reflective practitioners take responsibility to consider and accept the consequences of their decisions and the changes they make in management style, in the working environment, or in the school culture. Furthermore, reflective SMT members are sincere as they closely investigate their leadership style and see if they fulfill their functions. They take reflection seriously.

The present study was conducted in five selected schools in Dimamo Circuit of the Capricorn District. What motivated the researchers to conduct the study in this area was that the Circuit was considered to be one of the underperforming Circuits in the District. This study contributes the new knowledge by identifying self-reflection as a viable tool to improve and fulfill functions of SMT. Furthermore, the study would assist members of SMT to better understand who they are as school managers and how they can be more effective. It was the goal of this study to assist SMT members to think deeply about their responsibilities and the decisions they make and how they impact their management. Generally, the study contributes towards quality management (including quality teaching and learning) in the schools and addresses the challenge of underperformance experienced by some schools, especially in the Capricorn District. Moreover, the study contributed another lens (the use of self-reflection as vital tool for SMT to fulfill their functions) that education specialists and departmental officials may use to address the problem of underperformance, both in the district, province and country at large. It was argued that it is important for members of SMT to understand self-reflection and its importance in the context of their profession.

This study discussed the concept of self-reflection in the context of school management. Various researchers have defined self-reflection and the work of reflective practitioners. According to Harris and Brown (2016), self-reflection is the integration of theory and practice, a critical process in refining one's artistry or craft in a specific discipline and bringing to the conscious level those practices that are implicit. Harris and Brown (2016) further describe the reflective practitioner (someone who practices self-reflection) as not just skillful or competent, but thoughtful,

wise and contemplative. Two types of reflection facilitate school managers, namely, reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action (Malatji and Wadesango 2014). Reflection-in-action occurs during the activity being reshaped while in progress. Reflection-on-action occurs either following an activity or when an activity is interrupted, that is, retrospective thinking about an experience.

According to Takano and Tanno (2015), reflection-on-action brings about an understanding of practice (management) and is a way SMTs may learn from their experience. Freddano and Siri (2016) identified three stages or levels of reflection, that is, conscious reflection, criticism, and action. In subsequent research, Atik (2015) presents four stages of reflection, namely, analyze, interpret information, prepare an evaluation report and prepare an action plan. The four-stage model focused on the behaviors, ideas, and feelings that comprise experience. Later, Peters (2016) created a four-step process called DATA, that is, describe, analyze, theorize and act. In the first step, the critical aspect of practice is described. The second step includes the identification of assumptions that supported practitioners' current approaches and underlying beliefs, rules, and motives governing schools and teaching and learning. In the third step, practitioners theorize about alternative ways to approach management of schools, taking theory developed from the previous step and creating a new theory. In the last step, the practitioner tests the new theory. Success of this process would occur only through additional thought and reflection.

From early research emerged models of reflective theory. The reflective cycle by Rodgers (2015) encompassed Dewey's conception of reflective thought. Rodgers' (2015) model illustrates reflection as a cyclical process comprising four phases of presence in experience (learning to see), description of experience (learning to describe and differentiate), analysis of experience (learning to think from multiple perspectives and form multiple explanations), and experimentation (learning to take intelligent action). According to Rodgers' model, practitioners move backwards and forwards through the reflective cycle, especially between description and analysis. Rodgers' model emphasizes that School Management Teams reflect because they want to improve their leadership experiences and

management skills. A number of researchers support the importance of self-reflection. As a result of engaging in a reflective process, individuals acquire knowledge and understanding (James 2015; Schön 2007), learn from their experiences (Kolb 2009), apply knowledge to practice while being coached by professionals in the discipline (Schön 2007), and explore assumptions they bring to the workplace (Du Plooy 2016). As reflective practitioners, School Management Teams gain a deeper understanding of their management approaches, consider and accept responsibility for the consequences of the decisions they make in the school.

Authors such as Harris and Brown (2016) discussed the practice of self-reflection on the basis of self-judgment. In addition to that, Renan (2016) argued the practice of self-reflection as a process that entails self-introspection. Based on the above-mentioned sources, it can be argued that the main aim of self-reflection was for personal development. Many studies were conducted on self-reflection but were limited to self-judgment. The present study discusses self-reflection beyond the scope of personal judgment, and came up with a model to improve their professional practice and that of others. Furthermore, the present study viewed self-reflection as an opportunity to improve from past mistakes to improve functions of SMT.

When discussing events School Management Teams have experienced, colleagues describe what has happened, and this benefits the manager being observed, and at the same time, they examine their own experiences and check, reframe, and broaden their own theories of practice. Reflection within one's own functions is the first step of the reflective process but should not be the final step. When SMTs discuss their experiences with others, the reflection process enhances their own individual practice (Gabriel 2015). The present study investigated the practice of self-reflection by School Management Teams from schools of Capricorn district in the Dimamo Circuit. However, there was no formalized template that guides the SMT on how to apply self-reflection in their practices. Therefore, it was worthwhile for the present study to come up with a model that would help SMT members reflect on their practice so that they can fulfil their functions as school managers.

Objective of the Study

The objective of this study was to explore the views of School Management Teams on self-reflection practices with the purpose of fulfilling SMTs' management functions.

METHODOLOGY

Research Approach

The research approach used in this study was the qualitative approach. The purpose of qualitative research is to develop an understanding of individuals and events in their natural state, taking into account the relevant context (Leedy 2001). Qualitative research is aimed at gaining a deep understanding of a specific organization or event rather than surface description of a large sample of a population. It aims to provide an explicit rendering of the structure, order, and broad patterns found among a group of participants. In qualitative research, interpretation of data was done by means of a set exterior in order to determine the amount of quality to the understanding of findings (Leedy 2001). Procedures are not strictly formalized, scope is more likely to be undefined, and a more philosophical mode is adopted (De Vos et al. 2013). The data was gathered and analyzed through qualitative methods, and small groups are normally investigated in qualitative research. In the context of this study, the participants consisted of lecturers and students in one university, and this was considered a small group.

Research Design

The research design used in this study is phenomenology. Creswell (2007) regards a phenomenological study as a study that describes the meaning of the lived experiences of a phenomenon or concept for several individuals. In the context of this study, experiences of the SMT members on the practice of self-reflection were discussed in order to get answers to the research questions. The phenomenological approach aims to describe what real life consists of, or more specifically, what concepts and structures of experience give form and meaning to it (Schram 2006). The researchers using phenomenology design strive to describe a phenomenon as accurately as possible, refraining from any pre-

given framework, but remaining true to the facts (Thomas 2016). The present study aimed to understand the role self-reflection on fulfillment of management functions. The product of the research is a careful description of conscious everyday experiences and social actions of subjects. Everyday experience in this study refers to actual practice of SMT's self-reflection and the extent of fulfilling their management functions. In order to accomplish this, the researchers should be able to turn things to meaning by making sense of the data that was provided. Researchers should also be able distance themselves from their judgments and pre-conceptions about the nature and essence of experiences and events in their everyday world (Schram 2016).

RESULTS

The results of this study were presented in themes later discussed in the discussion section. The themes outlined below emerged from the results.

Theme 1: Challenges that Hinder SMTs from Performing their Daily Functions

In order to achieve the objectives of this study, the study attempted to answer all the research questions. One of the sub-research questions of this study was based on the challenges that hinder SMT members from adequately performing their daily functions. Despite the fact that members of SMTs in South African schools are governed by one policy, their challenges differed from school to school (Table 1).

Table 1: Responses on challenges that hinder SMTs from performing their daily functions

<i>Sub-themes</i>	<i>Main issues raised</i>
Orientation of SMTs and job clarification	Management workshops and meetings; outline of management duties.

Orientation of SMTs and Job Clarification

The job orientation of a new staff member is one of the most important activities that assist employees to settle in quickly in their new jobs. In the context of this study, SMT members are oriented to their management duties and all operations within their work situation. However,

capacitating new staff does not end with orientation, but the following activities should be ongoing.

Management Workshops and Meetings

II1 mentioned that, *“The department of basic education does not organize enough workshops, and this affects the performance of our management functions.”*

Workshops are one way that the Department of Basic Education uses to capacitate teachers and SMT members to keep up with the current trends. Management workshops can be internal or external. In terms of internal workshops, the principal has the authority to arrange a workshop and to train his staff members. However, **II2** mentioned that even though they have the authority to arrange workshops for staff member, they did not have the necessary funds to run such workshops.

In addition **II3** mentioned that, *“We arranged workshops time and again, but members of the staff were not willing to attend them, and this affected our performance very severely.”*

Reflecting on the above response, it is important for the principal, as chairperson of SMTs, to ensure that all SMT members in their schools attend such workshops since they are meant to update them on their practice (school management). Furthermore, it is important for SMT members to emphasize the importance of capacitating workshops to teachers. Therefore, it would be useful for SMT members to make sure that all teachers attend workshops that are meant for development. As a result, such workshops should be compulsory to all teachers, not just optional. Meetings are also some of the professional communication vehicles used in different organizations. In the context of the school as an organization, SMT members should meet often to discuss the operational plan of their organization.

II4 said, *“In our school, we use meetings to report back to the SMT in cases where one of the team has represented them in certain activities. Furthermore, in our school, we regard the most useful meetings as those that promote quality of teaching and learning”.*

Reflecting on this quotation, one could argue that meetings are important in schools because they enable SMT members to discuss important issues that affect education and the qual-

ity of their management, in particular. Therefore, it becomes relevant for SMT members to meet regularly and also to report to the entire staff on members' issues that were agreed upon during the meetings.

Participants, such as **II5** were happy that these functions were clarified for them when they were appointed in their positions.

II5 further mentioned that: *"Yes, they were clarified to me and they are still reinforced through attendance of workshops and meetings, and also reading magazines and newspapers"*.

Reflecting on the quoted statement, it may be argued that the functions of SMTs should not be clarified only when the members of an SMT are appointed but should be reinforced time and again. In other words, SMT members should be reminded timeously about their management functions. **II2** was also in agreement that his duties were clear when he was appointed in the management position. He further emphasized that his duties were thoroughly clarified during his orientation, and a list of these was handed to him to serve as his reminder. It was important that immediately after the appointment of an SMT member, a formal meeting was set up whereby the circuit manager could clarify all the functions, and if possible, members of SMTs should have a printout that lists all their functions, as indicated in the PAM document.

Outline of Management Duties

Duties of school management teams in South Africa are clarified in the PAM document. This document contains a list of each responsibility of the SMT members, starting with the principal, the deputy-principal and the heads of department. It is important that all schools have a copy of the PAM document so that they can remind one another of their responsibilities. However, it was found that some of the schools operate without the PAM document, and as a result, they are not clear who is responsible for what. **II3, II4, II5 and II6** presented a different view when they agreed that their duties were clarified during their appointments. In contrast to the above-mentioned participants, **II7** presented a different view, that her duties and functions were not clarified for her when she was appointed in her position.

She said, *"No clarification was made through writing."*

It is clearly outlined in the ELRC document and SACE rules that govern or regulate the behavior and duties of different ranks in the teaching fraternity. Based on the above-quoted statement, newly appointed SMT members are not clear about their functions although they are referred to documents such as ELRC and SACE to find out about their function. For that reason, it may be argued that those SMT members who do not have access to ELRC and SACE documents are operating without knowing their functions. **II8** shared a different view from **II7**, as he mentioned that PAM was shown to him and lists his daily functions. In support of **II7**, **II9** was also concerned that her duties were not always very clear to her.

She mentioned, *"It was just a brief orientation, and the rest of my responsibilities I just learnt through consultation with other colleagues and the circuit manager through consultations"*. **II10** was quoted on her statement that said, *"Yes, I attended and am still attending workshops on SMT, leadership and management. IQMS workshops are conducted once every school year."*

IQMS is one way of encouraging teachers and SMT members to do peer evaluation and self-reflection. However, it became a problem, when it was done once a year because that means mistakes can only be rectified once the damage has already been done. Besides IQMS, it is also important for SMT members to consult with circuit managers to enlighten them further on their functions. It could well be argued that consultation is important for SMT members to find out exactly what their responsibilities and functions are.

Main Findings from Theme 1

Theme 1 was based on the challenges that hinder SMT members from performing their daily functions. The main findings were summarized under the headings of orientation of SMT and job clarification, which involves management of workshops and meetings, as well as an outline of the management duties, lifelong learner, which involves ongoing research, keeping up with the current trends and any new theories of school management, and peer evaluation, which involves the quality of IQMS, poor self-reflective practice, and poor whole-school evaluation. The challenges summarized

above are discussed and analyzed in the discussion section.

Theme 2: Performing Management Functions

The performing of management functions may sound like something very broad. However, each member of SMT should be in a position to know the kind of functions that they should fulfil in their positions. The following issues are raised when it comes to fulfillment of management functions.

Table 2: Responses to performing of management functions

<i>Sub-theme</i>	<i>Main issues raised</i>
<i>Operational Plan</i>	Attend activities as they are planned Recording and prioritising

Operational Plan

Any school is an organization that is expected to be organized and functional. Therefore, there is a need for each school to have an operational plan that is clear and implementable. Two issues came predominantly to the fore, when the participants were responding to the issues of an operational plan. These are outlined below (Table 2).

Attending Activities As They Are Planned

In a school, there are three phases of planning, namely, daily planning (the lesson plan), annual planning (the work schedule), and phase planning (learning programs). In the context of school management, SMT members are faced with different activities that demand their attention.

QV1 mentioned, *“In my management position, I plan for the entire year, and I list all my activities on the plan that I will follow throughout the whole year. However, there are some issues that may come up as an emergency, and for that reason, I can sacrifice some of the activities on the planned program.”*

In supporting the above-quoted statement, **QV2** mentioned that he normally writes issues down and prioritizes them every week. For that matter, planning is very important as he plans his work in advance in order to remove all the loopholes and imbalances in service delivery.

On the other hand, **QV3** fulfills her functions by following the policy of the school. She also mentioned that timetabling was very important while **QV4** mentioned that he has his weekly plan and he makes sure that he follows it. Therefore, planning becomes very vital in this regard. It came out in this study that SMT members should follow their activities as planned if they want to succeed in their management activities.

Recording and Prioritizing

Recording is one way of keeping all the important documents in a safe place and in a logical manner. **QV5** mentioned that her work involves a lot of recording and prioritizing. With the submissions of teachers' work, he records teachers who submitted their work for moderation. Furthermore, he records visitors who come to school, and when they submit leave forms for teachers at the circuit office, they also record such work. Documents such as logbooks are used to record all the visitors and the reason for visiting. **QV6** further mentioned that besides recording visitors, all the planned activities have to be recorded in the School Improvement Plan (SIP). The SIP consists of all activities that contribute to quality education in a school. Therefore, it takes reflective SMT members to prioritize such matters, according to the importance thereof, and the urgency thereof. All the submissions need to be noted and prioritized according to their due dates or submission dates.

Main Findings from Theme 2

Theme 2 was based on the performance of management in terms of their management functions. The main findings were summarized under the following headings of an operational plan, which involves attending all activities, as planned, recording and prioritizing, policy implementation, which involves the drafting of school policies, the formation of committees and policy review, and overall monitoring, which involves ensuring that different departments are functional, and the fulfillment of all daily activities. All these functions are discussed and analyzed in the discussion section.

Theme 3: Reflecting on SMT's Duties and Responsibilities

Another research question of this study was: What self-reflective practices do SMTs employ

to reflect on the manner in which they conduct their functions in schools? In addressing this research question, SMT members were asked how often they look back on their duties and the decisions they made in the past. When responding to this question, the following sub-themes emerged with main issues that later served as a guideline for further discussion.

Table 3: Responses on reflecting on SMT duties and responsibilities

<i>Sub-themes</i>	<i>Main issues raised</i>
<i>Striving to Improve</i>	Progress reports, reflecting on decisions and mistakes. Shape decisions based on previous experiences.

Striving to Improve

There are different measures and approaches that can be taken in schools for improvement. However, the quality of the model chosen depends on the quality of the school-management team. In the context of this study, the following issues relating to school improvement were raised (Table 3).

Progress Report

The reviewing of progress reports is one way that the school can judge the developments and the challenges they faced. Progress reporting is another way of self-reflection in which SMT members are able to report all their planned activities, what they have achieved and the challenges that they face in their schools. **QV1** mentioned that the progress report gives her the opportunity to scrutinize those areas where she did not perform well and to come up with some intervention strategies to close the gap.

QV2 further mentioned, “*On a monthly basis, we, as the school management team, would hold monthly meetings to check on the progress made in our syllabus covered and to check on the mistakes and decisions that have been made. It assists us in self-reflection and when making decisions and taking corrective measures*”.

Progress reporting is another type of self-reflection that can be rich since all the activities are recorded and reported in a very detailed manner to allow the members of SMTs to measure

the kind of progress they have made. However, the practice of self-reflection should be central, when conducting a progress report. There is a close relationship between self-reflection and progress reporting because they are both based on past experiences. However, the progress report does not put much emphasis on the previous experience, but rather focuses on future practices.

Reflecting on Decisions and Mistakes

It was discussed in Chapter 2 that one of the main purposes of self-reflection is for individual self-introspection and personal improvement. However, the participants responded differently on how they reflect on decisions and mistakes they make.

QV4 mentioned, “*On a daily basis, I reflect back on the kind of decisions I took and try to check how best that was done, and how best I can improve*”.

SMT members in this study apply their reflective practice by reflecting on the decisions they took in the past, and this helps them identify the mistakes they have made. One advantage of self-reflection is to ensure that the mistakes, which happened in the past, are not repeated. **QV2** responded that he often looks back in self-reflection to check on mistakes and imbalances so that these mistakes should not be repeated. He further mentioned that he looks back to correct his mistaken thoughts and actions and learns from them. In other words, reflection may also be practiced on the thoughts and decisions not yet implemented. SMT members should also think of any possible alternative options before implementing any decisions. The process of brainstorming and thinking of possible solutions comprises part of reflective practice.

Shaping Decisions Based on Previous Experiences

In school management, previous experience is very important because it assists SMT members to shape their current decision-making based on their past experiences. To support the importance of previous experience, **QV5** mentioned that daily reflection assists her to rectify the mistakes done in the past, and also to prepare for the future.

QV7 further mentioned, “*Before I took over as a school principal, I set up a meeting with the outgoing principal to try to understand how things were done in the past, and also to shape my approach, based on such experience*”.

Reflecting on the previous management of school should be important because it enables SMT members to be strategic and to know how to approach and take over the responsibilities in school leadership and management. Reflecting on the previous experience could also be done in a documentary analysis. The SMT members, for instance, may review documents about finance and try to understand how money was spent in the past, and hence getting the picture on how to address the current situation.

Main Findings from Theme 3

Theme 3 was based on reflecting on school-management teams’ duties and responsibilities. The main findings were summarized under the following headings of striving to improve on the progress report, reflecting on decisions and mistakes, shaping decisions, based on previous experience, whole-school improvement, which is based on comparing results, a strategic plan and a strategic objective, realistic goal-setting and collective decision-making, and report presentation based on quarterly and end-of-year reports, successful and unsuccessful stories. All these findings are discussed and analyzed in the discussion section.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study are discussed based on challenges that hinder SMTs from performing their daily functions, performing management functions, and reflecting on SMTs’ duties and responsibilities.

The Following Sub-themes were used to Guide the Discussion of the Results

- ♦ Unprofessional educators
- ♦ Poor parental involvement
- ♦ Poor communication among SMT members
- ♦ Poor infrastructure and a lack of resources
- ♦ Lack of commitment on the side of teachers and learners
- ♦ Non-support for acting SMT members

- ♦ Shortage of curriculum advisors to support the schools and to give them formal guidelines
- ♦ One-on-one meetings with educators
- ♦ Teachers’ accountability
- ♦ Praising educators for their good work
- ♦ Joint responsibility
- ♦ Training on management functions
- ♦ Revising decisions taken and the use of the reflective approach
- ♦ SMTs as a lifelong learner

Unprofessional Educators

The study revealed that teachers do not always conduct themselves professionally, and this affected the leadership proficiency of SMT members. Unprofessional teachers in this regard refer to those educators who do not behave themselves in a cooperative way. It was revealed that some teachers do not respect their work and are likely to come to school late, not go to their classes, and even leave school premises before the normal knock-off time. Therefore, it may be argued that for SMT members, it becomes a challenge to operate in a school where there are such teachers. Teachers know that their primary responsibility in a school is to teach learners. However, some unprofessional teachers choose to ignore this responsibility and expect the members of the SMT to remind them of what to do. It was discussed in the literature that the members of SMTs should carry out their duties in such a way that teaching and learning can take place in the school. However, if the teachers in a school behave in an unprofessional manner, the responsibility may be difficult for SMT members to fulfil. Dealing with unprofessional teachers is a difficult task for members of SMTs because of the excessive interference of labor unions in the management activities.

Furthermore, it was found that too much interference of unions in school matters causes teachers to relax and not find the necessary time to fulfil their duties. According to the Labor Relation Act 66 of 1995, as amended, each and every employee has the right to have a labor union of his or her choice. However, this right has to include their responsibilities.

Authors such as Bush (2016) argue that all schools should have policies like those of the South African School’s Act, the Labor Relations Act, and the Employment of Educators Act,

among others, to update teachers on their rights, as well as their responsibilities. The availability of such documents in a school would assist SMT members to read them to the staff members so that they understand their rights and responsibilities. Reflecting on teachers in this district, it became clear that teachers know their rights, but they do not always seem to know the responsibilities that go with the rights. Therefore, SMT members have the responsibility to make sure that while teachers enjoy their rights in schools, they must also fulfil their chief function, which is that of teaching the learners.

Poor Parental Involvement

With regard to parental involvement, the study has revealed that due to poor parental involvement, educators are unable to achieve their set goal, and ultimately, this affects the school management team. Educators and parents have a shared responsibility to educate the child. Moreover, SMT members have the responsibility to make sure that learners are taught at school and complete all their tasks and homework as required. For members of SMTs to fulfil this function, parents should also assist with the monitoring of the learners and make sure that they complete their homework, together with any additional tasks given. Managing parental involvement means to ensure that there is a smooth and open channel of communication between the school and parents. From the discussion above, it could be argued that communication between parents and the school is important since it promotes the education of the child. If parents are actively involved, they are able to assist with subjects such as art and culture and other related activities. In some instances, retired parents could even assist in offering afternoon and morning lessons.

In the context of this study, it transpired that there was a poor relationship between the school and the parents, and this makes the job of SMTs very difficult. Considering the context in which the study was conducted, it was revealed that a high percentage of illiterate parents might be one of the contributing factors to poor participation. However, SMT members also have a responsibility to make sure that parents are respected and their input is valued. Parents might participate more when they feel that their input is valued and respected. Therefore, SMT members

should find a way of including parents in school programs, other than just the SGB. According to PAM in DoE (1999), members of SMTs should meet with the parents and discuss with them the progress and the conduct of their children.

Poor Communication Among SMT Members

Regarding communication in schools, the study revealed that there is a poor level of communication among SMT members, and this affects their practice as school managers. Good communication practices start with school management. Poor communication and fights amongst the SMT members would delay the development of the school. SMT members, as the leadership of the school, should lead teachers and learners by example. It was discussed in the literature that even though SMT members are all in management positions, their responsibilities differ according to the position occupied. SMT functions and responsibilities are reviewed and discussed in the literature starting with the school principal, the deputy principal and the Heads of Departments. However, in the context of this study, it transpired that the members of SMTs in the Capricorn District do not know who is responsible for what, and this affects the communication among them because they end up shifting the blame and rejecting any responsibilities.

The main aim of SMT meetings is to discuss certain issues, and agree on the level of management before such matters are taken to the entire staff. However, in the context of this study, it appears that school principals expect their inputs to be taken seriously even when they do not have good reasons to convince the entire school management team. Reflecting on the above discussion, it may be argued that there is a need to orientate SMT members prior to their appointment in the management positions. During such orientation, the functions of each member should be clearly communicated to them and clarified. It was discussed in the literature that in order for members of SMTs to maintain good communication, they should cooperate with their colleagues in order to maintain a good teaching standard and progress among the learners, and additionally, to foster administrative efficiency in the Department of Basic Education and the school (PAM in DoE 1999). However, in the context of this study, there is clearly lack of cooper-

ation between SMT members because their responsibilities were not clearly defined when they were appointed to their positions, and this created confusion among them.

Poor Infrastructure and Lack of Resources

The study has revealed that due to the poor infrastructure and lack of resources in most schools in the Capricorn District, SMT members are unable to deliver good results in such conditions. Each school needs a good infrastructure and better resources in order to maintain good teaching and learning standards. The study has further revealed that it is difficult for SMTs to operate in schools because of overcrowded classrooms, lack of furniture and lack of funds to buy teaching and learning aids. The functions of SMTs include those of monitoring other teachers' work. However, at times, SMT members find themselves in a position where teachers are unable to be productive due to the poor infrastructure. In such instances, it is difficult for members of SMTs to manage the situations because they are beyond both the teacher and the SMTs' control. It was discussed in the literature that SMT members have to ensure that there is safety for both the learners and the teachers in the school. Because of the poor infrastructure, some schools were found without any security fence, and it was difficult for SMT members to ensure safety of the learners in such an environment.

With regard to resources, SMT members have the responsibility to make sure that resources are available in schools. The study found that due to lack of funds, it was difficult for members of SMT to fulfil this function, and this affected the quality of education in the district. Considering the context in which the study was conducted, Capricorn District is one of those districts, which have experienced the challenge of a lack of resources. Therefore, it became a challenge for SMT members to operate in such an environment. It was further reviewed in the literature that the Department of Basic Education (DBE 2012) expects the schools to use half of the money allocated for norms and standards on teaching and learning. However, the school may need some human resources to assist with school administrative work. For instance, during activities such as learner and teacher statistics (SA SAMS), the school might

need to hire someone to work as a data capturer to gather learners' and teachers' information. Due to paucity of funds, teachers were forced to leave the learners in the classroom and tackle administrative duties. Some resources that were found to be a challenge in this district comprised the lack of computers, no access to the Internet, a shortage of textbooks and storage. Reflecting on the discussion above, it may be argued that the Capricorn District performed poorly in the past years, simply because of the lack of resources in the schools.

Lack of Commitment on the Side of Teachers and Learners

When it comes to commitment, the study found that the lack of commitment on the side of teachers and learners made it difficult for SMT members to be productive in this district. Commitment was one of the important aspects that were revealed as being necessary for the success of teaching and learning. It becomes a challenge for members of SMTs to manage if teachers and learners are not fully committed to their work. According to PAM in DoE (1999), all educators should be at school during the school hours, except for special reasons and with the prior permission of the principal.

However, due to lack of commitment from the teachers, it was found that they come to school late, and leave early, and that is a serious challenge for SMT members to overcome in such situations. It was discussed in literature that the principal, as a chairperson of School Management Team, is entitled to carry out his/her duties in ways that ensure teaching and learning take place in the school (Harris and Brown 2016).

In the context of this study, it transpired that many of the teachers are not committed to their work. Consequently, it may be argued that it is, likewise, difficult for SMT members to fulfil their duties. SMT members also have the responsibility to make sure that learners are in class and that they are learning. It was also revealed that the members of SMTs found it difficult to fulfil such a responsibility because of lack of commitment on the side of the learners. Learners need to be motivated and need someone to explain to them the reason why they are learning and what was expected of them for successful teaching and learning. It was also discussed in literature

that one of the challenges experienced by SMTs was to work with under-qualified educators.

According to Gabriel (2015), some of the qualifications of teachers do not respond to the needs of the new education system. One of the roles of an educator is that of learning mediator. This requires a teacher to be sensitive to the diverse needs of the learners, to construct a conducive learning environment, to demonstrate sound knowledge learning areas or subjects, and to be an inspiration to their learners. By fulfilling this role, the teacher would be able to train learners to be responsible for their own learning and commit themselves to their work. However, in the context of this study, it was because of under-qualified teachers that they were unable to motivate the learners, and this made it difficult for SMT members to manage the schools effectively and achieve their goal. Lack of commitment on the side of teachers and learners resulted in poor teaching and learning in the district.

Furthermore, there was poor attendance of learners, and this resulted in poor results for the district.

Non-support for SMT Members in an Acting Capacity

The study found that the Department of Basic Education does not support SMT members who are there in an acting capacity, and this affects their performance as school managers. The issue of staff orientation and support for new staff in the management positions is very important. In the literature review, different management theories were discussed. According to the theory based on the situation, a good leader is regarded as someone who knows how to do things the right way (Malatji and Wadesango 2014). For new school managers to know how to do things correctly they need to be trained on how to operate in the management space, and they need to know exactly what their responsibilities and functions are. Furthermore, they also need to be supported on an ongoing basis.

In the context of this study, it was revealed that SMT members acting on a temporary capacity do not receive any workshop training and support from the Department of Basic Education since they are not permanently appointed in their positions. Despite the nature of such an appointment, both acting and permanent SMT members are doing the same job. Therefore, due

to the approach of the Department of Basic Education, the acting members of SMTs are unable to learn about their functions. They end up not knowing the operations in the management field due to exclusion from workshops and training sessions. These affected the quality of education in the district because some SMT members operate in an acting capacity for three to five years. Consequently, the school suffers, as it is struggling with poor management for such a period of time.

Shortage of Curriculum Advisors to Support the Schools

With regard to curriculum advisors, the study found that there is only a limited number of curriculum advisors operating in the district. Within the SMTs, there are different positions from school principals to Heads of Departments. With regard to the Heads of Departments (HODs), they are departmental and subject-specific. Therefore, for such members to be functional in their subjects or their departments, they need to be supported and advised by departmental officials (curriculum advisors) on how to operate in the field. Due to the shortage or the understaffing of curriculum advisors, schools do not get adequate support, and this affects all the members of an SMT in fulfilling their functions, since they are not sure what is expected of them (their functions).

One-on-one Meetings with Educators

The study revealed that having one-on-one meetings with educators assists them to improve their performance. This is true for both the teachers and the SMT members. However, it came out in this study that members of SMTs find it difficult to cooperate with a teacher who does not want to do the work, is always absent, comes to school late and leaves early. Having meetings with teachers to discuss what is expected of them helped in discussing and clarifying these issues.

It was discussed in literature that SMT members should have occasional meetings with teachers in order to discuss how they are going to work together throughout the year. This includes the submission dates for teachers' and learners' work, what to submit and how they should communicate. Furthermore, members of SMTs might also delegate certain responsibili-

ties to the staff members that are within their respective departments, and it is during such one-on-one meetings that they could explain the responsibilities assigned to teachers and how to go about fulfilling such responsibilities.

In the context of this study, SMT members called upon the teachers to have a meeting with them on their previous work and their future intentions. That assisted them to solve those problems that had already occurred (self-reflection) and to be able to focus on the future.

Teachers' Accountability

The study revealed two aspects that are relevant to teachers' accountability. Firstly, for members of SMTs who taught and encouraged their teachers to be responsible and accountable, they found their school management to be easier. On the other hand, for SMT members who did not encourage accountability from their teachers, it was found that management is very difficult. According to PAM in DoE (1999), the duties and responsibilities of teachers are individual and varied, depending on the approaches and needs of a particular school. However, teachers need to be accountable for whatever actions they take in their job situations.

In literature, Simkins (2016) argues that a real leader is someone who is committed to providing his all in the school opportunity to influence the decisions and to contribute to the daily activities in the school. Similar to this argument, Swanson (2013) emphasized the value of empowering educators by giving them more responsibilities on issues such as curriculum adoption, staff development and formulation of school policies, work evaluation, and calls for proper decision-making. These improvements are a manifestation of the commitment to the full development of each individual.

In the context of this study, teachers are always encouraged to practice self-reflection, and during such activities, integrity becomes a crucial issue. When teachers are always honest about themselves, the work of SMT members becomes easier, and both SMT members and teachers are better able to fulfil their functions. Therefore, the results of this study have confirmed the literature that teacher empowerment is one of the best ways to engage teachers and make them more accountable. However, in this study, the teachers were encouraged by the

members of SMTs to be responsible for their work and to account for their actions.

Praising Educators for their Good Work

The study revealed that one of the ways of encouraging hard work is through praise of good work by teachers. When teachers have done a good job, there should be some effort to appraise and acknowledge their work. When teachers were appraised for the work well done, they were likely to keep up the good performance and continue to do good work. It was stated in the literature that good members of SMTs encourage the spirit of working together, and support one another as colleagues (Bush 2016).

According to the Employment of Educator's Act of 1998, as amended, the principal has a duty to make sure that each and every educator in a school fulfills his and her duties and responsibilities, and these are teaching and learning. SMT members in the Capricorn District of Limpopo Province used praises to motivate those educators who have done well in their subjects, and this has assisted them to fulfil their functions, which are to promote quality teaching and learning in the school.

Joint Responsibility

With regard to joint responsibility, the study confirmed the statement that was once made by the president of South Africa, Jacob Zuma, that education has now become a societal issue. For education to be social issue, it can be argued that the responsibility should not only lie with the teachers and the SMT members but should be a joint one (the school and the community). One of the core businesses of schools is teaching and learning.

The School Management Team must become central in making schools functional. However, the responsibility to make sure that schools are functional should be shared by SMT members, the teachers and the parents. Through delegation, SMT members are able to assign some of their functions to other teachers and parents, and this helps them fulfil their functions. It was discussed in literature that SMT members have the responsibility to manage communication in such a way that there is smooth flow of information from the school to the different stakeholders.

In the context of this study, it came out clearly that encouraging parents and other stakehold-

ers to participate in the education of learners would, in a way, encourage shared responsibility between the SMT members and different stakeholders, and as a result, that would make the job of SMT easier to perform.

Training on Management Functions

The study found that there is a need for SMT members to be trained in the management functions, since they were not aware of some of their functions. In-service training and workshops are ways to keep the members of SMTs on track with the current management issues in the district. In the literature review, SMT's responsibilities were reviewed and discussed, starting with the school principal, the deputy principal, and then the heads of departments. Reflecting on the literature reviewed, it came out that members of SMTs in the Capricorn district were not clear about some of their functions, and this inevitably affected their management functions.

When SMT members were mentioning their management functions, most of the responsibilities were left out since they were not sure of their functions in detail. However, it was suggested that there is a need for the training of SMTs in their management functions, and how to go about fulfilling such functions. What came out in this study was that SMT members only knew the basic stuff about their management functions. It is the responsibility of the school principal to train and send SMT members to the capacitating workshops in order to assist them to improve in their practice. According to the DBE (2012), half of the amount allocated to the school should be used for staff development. Therefore, it is important for schools to develop their SMT members, especially in clarifying their functions more clearly.

Revising Decisions Taken and the Use of the Reflective Approach

The study revealed that revising the decisions already taken is one way of coming up with sound and informed decisions. Revising decisions already taken is one way of making sure that whatever mistakes were committed in the past, these would not be repeated. In the context of schools, it was through weekly, quarterly or annual management meetings that SMT members could reflect back on their decisions,

and be able to improve. What is important is for SMT members to know their management functions and to be able to reflect back to see whether all their functions were properly fulfilled. It was discussed in the literature that reflective managers willingly embrace their decision-making responsibilities, and they regularly reflect on the consequences of their actions. In other words, they are receptive to new knowledge, and they regularly learn from their reflected experiences (Malatji 2016). The benefits of being a reflective practitioner were confirmed in the results of this study. The results revealed that in order for SMT members to improve their practice, they should revise their decisions. This is a crucial part of the reflective practice.

SMT as a Lifelong Learner

With regard to SMT members as lifelong learners, the study revealed a need for members of SMTs to research the current school management related issues in order to improve their practice. This concurs with one of the roles of an educator, that is, scholar, researcher and lifelong learner. It was discussed in the literature that if members of SMT need to grow in their management functions, they would need to apply such roles in the context of school management. This means they should achieve ongoing personal growth by attending training courses on school management.

Furthermore, they should acquire academic, occupational and professional growth in the area of school management. For that matter, they should investigate the current literature on their practice and be able to update themselves on any new operations in their practice. Lastly, SMT members should conduct research that results in improvements in their field. In this regard, action research is regarded as being a relevant research approach whereby SMTs would be able to identify the problems in their school management and be prepared to undergo an action research cycle until they find solutions to their problems.

From the discussion above, it can be argued that SMT members should be lifelong learners in order to become reflective practitioners who would always be able to fulfil their management functions.

CONCLUSION

The study has sought to explore self-reflection practices employed by school management teams (SMT) in performing their school management functions. The study found that SMT members were not fully aware of all of their daily functions, and they only knew the basic functions that appeared to be common. This challenge was found to result in poor management and a lack of fulfillment in the management functions. It was further revealed that SMT members such as principals and deputy-principals confused their responsibilities due to the similarities of their functions. The study concluded that the lack of training and orientation of SMT members prior to their appointment in the management positions resulted in confusion on their side. Reflecting on the level of support by the Department of Basic Education, it was concluded that members of SMTs were not adequately trained in the management functions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Self-reflection as a Daily Practice

The study recommended that SMT members should consider self-reflection as part of their daily practice. It is also recommended that such practice should also be made compulsory to all SMT members.

Training of SMT Members

The study further recommended that SMT members be trained on how they should carry out their management functions. Such training should also be supported by ongoing workshops.

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