EXPLORING PERCEPTIONS OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS' MANAGEMENT TEAMS ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM: A CASE STUDY

by

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DECLARATION

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, whose unwavering support made it possible for me to reach this important milestone. My father, Aaron Mandla Lukhele, continuously supported me through his prayers as I undertook this demanding journey. I extend special gratitude to my mother, Emsie Gwabina Lukhele, whose steadfast faith and guidance reminded me that in every achievement, God must come first. Their encouragement was invaluable, inspiring me to pursue academic excellence and to contribute meaningfully to the legacy of the Lukhele clan.

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uLUKHELE,

uMdluli, uMhlanti wendl' enkhulu,

uMasikisiki inyoni leyasindvwa sisila sayo,

uMavovo eMvula,

uMdluli wendlovukati,

Nabonkhosi,

Wena lowatseng' emanga ngesitfole lesijoli ngembala

Esikhaleni sabhodwe,

Titfukutfuku tawela phasi takhotfwa ngemalangeni,

naboNgwane,

Qoma Zitha waNgwane,

Ngiyindodana yeNdidane eyaduma ezibilini zamadoda

Ngiyindodana yeNdlovukati u Shalos, isikhukhukazi esimatshweletshwele

Dluli!

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ABSTRACT

The importance of evaluating the performance of school-based academics has become a pressing issue, with stakeholders seeking to ensure that learners, educators and schools are meeting expected standards of the Quality Management System (QMS). School Management Teams (SMTs) vest the power to prioritise the effective implementation of the Quality Management System. However, implementing QMS has posed several challenges, particularly for secondary school managers. Therefore, the study explored secondary SMTs' perceptions of the effectiveness of the QMS in the uMkhanyakude District, KwaZulu-Natal Province, South Africa. The study was informed by the Transformational Leadership (TL) theory, which emphasises visionary leadership. Out of 168 secondary schools, sixteen participants, comprising principals, deputy principals, and departmental heads, were purposively selected using a non-probability sampling technique. Guided by the qualitative approach, and a multiple-case study design, a semi-structured telephone interview was conducted to gather data. It was supplemented by the secondary data sources. Braun and Clarke's six steps of thematic data analysis were used to arrange themes and sub-themes. The study's findings reveal that the SMTs understood what a QMS entails. Moreover, they agreed that a QMS was needed in schools for several reasons. Despite the preceding narrative, there were discrepancies in the effectiveness of QMS. This indicates that the effectiveness of QMS is ineffective in the selected secondary schools. As the Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC) outlines numerous performance standards for educators' appraisal, the results show that schools perceived QMS as central to one of these standards, namely lesson observation. To strengthen the system's effectiveness, the study provided recommendations to various stakeholders, including SMTs, circuit managers, the Provincial Department of Education, and labour unions. Among other recommendations are that the Provincial Department of Education should conduct QMS training and capacity building workshops for SMTs and circuit managers. The study's major findings imply the need for future research.

Keywords: Secondary school, School management team, Integrated quality management system, Quality management system, Total quality management, Effectiveness, Transformational leadership theory, Education labour relations council, School self-evaluation, Continuous professional development programme.

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACE	Advanced Certificate in Education
ATP	Annual Teaching Plan
B.Ed.	Bachelor of Education
B.Ed. Hons.	Bachelor of Education (Honours)
CEDU	College of Education
CMC	Circuit Management Cluster
CPDP	Continuous Professional Development Programme
DCES	Deputy Chief Education Specialist
ELRC	Education Labour Relations Council
ICT	Information, Communication and Technology
IQMS	Integrated Quality Management System
IQP	Integrated Quality Project
ISO	International Standard Organization
ISPFTED	Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development
MoET	Ministry of Education and Training
NSSCO	National Secondary School Certificate Ordinary
PCP	Performance Contract Policy
PGCE	Postgraduate Certificate in Education
QMS	Quality Management System
SAHRC	South African Human Rights Commission
SMT	School Management Team
SSE	School Self-Evaluation
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
TL	Transformational Leadership
TQM	Total Quality Management
UAE	United Arab Emirates
USA	United States of America

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CHAPTER 1

ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In an era of expected quality school performance and accountability, the Quality Management System (QMS) has remained a critical instrument to measure educator performance. However, in the South African context, the implementation of this instrument has raised questions about its effectiveness. Section 4(l) of the National Education Policy Act 27 of 1996 mandates schools to enhance the quality of education through the performance and training of educators and education managers (South Africa, 1996a: 8; www.gov.za). To sustain quality performance, Section 16 of the Employment of Educators Act 78 of 1998 stipulates that both educators and school managers (School Management Teams [SMTs]) need to be evaluated on work performance, in terms of their capacity to carry out their duties efficiently (South Africa, 1998). The quality performance of educators in schools rests primarily on the effectiveness of the QMS. Subsequently, SMTs are entrusted with safeguarding quality management in all public schools in South Africa.

The Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC) includes, amongst other things, the broad scope of the QMS. The QMS emanates from the collective agreement of the ELRC. The ELRC was established in line with other related pieces of legislation, including the Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995, the South African Schools Act 86 of 1996, and the Employment of Educators Act 76 of 1998. ELRC is a council that constitutes the State (employer) and the employees in respect of which the Employment of Educators Act 76 of 1996 applies (ELRC, 2020:2). The main purpose of the agreement in the ELRC was to provide a standardised framework for employee performance for educators (ELRC, 2020:2).

The ELRC (2020:9) establishes that the SMT, comprising the principal, deputy principal, and departmental heads, is responsible for planning and implementing QMS processes in schools. The QMS is intended to evaluate the level of performance of school-based educators (ELRC, 2020:7). This system is designed to evaluate educators' performance, monitor an institution's overall performance, promote

accountability, provide support for continued growth, and determine the kinds of needs that educators and schools have about support and development (Mamabolo, Malatji & Mphahlele, 2022:1). The capacity of the principal is very crucial in the successful implementation of the QMS teacher appraisal system in South Africa (Shongwe & Mutambara, 2023:267). Consequently, SMTs vest the power to prioritise the effective implementation of the QMS performance appraisal for their educators to achieve an acceptable level of school performance.

Drawing on the preceding narrative, the researcher aimed to explore the perceptions of secondary Schools' Management Teams (SMTs) regarding the effectiveness of the QMS in the uMkhanyakude District in the KwaZulu-Natal Province. Factors that contributed to the problem statement are discussed hereunder. They include the study's significance, research questions, aim, and objectives. The discussion of the theoretical framework is also detailed. It is followed by preliminary literature review. Furthermore, the research method and design were discussed. Data were analysed and interpreted. Ethical matters, as well as the study's delimitations and limitations, were also presented. The definition of key terms was also incorporated. Lastly, the programme of the study was presented.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The implementation of QMS has posed several challenges, particularly for SMTs. Bolberth (2021:3) argues that school principals in the Vhembe District lacked cooperation from educators, and time constraints prevented principals from complying with management plans. Similarly, in Kenya, Everlyne (2023:6) emphasises that top management is reluctant to commit time to training their staff in quality models in schools. Kavutai (2018:6) further states that schools have been implementing quality models without clear evidence on their effectiveness.

Since January 2021, when SMTs were required to adopt the QMS in South African schools (ELRC, 2020:3), there appears to have been sluggishness in the effectiveness of the system in secondary schools to date. Sambumbu (2023:4) is of the view that little improvement has been registered in improved efficiency, effectiveness, accountability, and education service delivery processes since the implementation of QMS. Sokopo (2025) reported in newspaper articles that the South African Human

Rights Commission (SAHRC) highlighted challenges with school infrastructure, lack of sanitation and unsafe buildings as burdens to quality education. Similarly, in the Sunday Independent, Staff Reporter (2025) noted that some schools in the country lacked school material such as textbooks thus compromising quality management in schools.

Prior to undertaking the study, the researcher, who is employed as an SMT member in a secondary school, piloted the implementation of a QMS and discussed it with a few educators. They revealed that factors contributing to the ineffectiveness of the QMS include, amongst other things, the reluctance of SMTs and educators towards the system's processes, time constraints, and discrepancies in the training of newly appointed educators.

Although QMS motivates performance, quality is still questioned, and management inefficiency is identified (Africano, Rodrigues & Santos, 2019:123). Consequently, this implies an existing gap that needs to be investigated and bridged, as the ineffectiveness of the QMS appears to undermine its intended purpose. Therefore, the preceding narrative establishes the study's problem statement. Thus, this study explores secondary SMTs' perceptions of the effectiveness of QMS in the uMkhanyakude District, KwaZulu-Natal.

1.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

A healthy and well-functioning school ensures that QMSs are in place. The SMTs are expected to put processes in place to ensure that needs identified through the QMS are responded to (ELRC, 2020:16). Furthermore, they (SMTs) are expected to provide development of educators as part of their mentoring and coaching or ensure that support is provided through the involvement of subject advisors and external experts. Diez, Villa, López and Iraurgi (2020:6) affirm that quality systems implemented in schools should shed light on the aspects to be evaluated to promote educational transformation that, in turn, will improve the teaching practices of learning professionals and organisations. Mamabolo et al. (2022:1) recommend that when the IQMS is implemented well, it enhances quality and accountability for educators. However, when SMTs are reluctant to ensure the effectiveness of the system, its integrity is compromised (Mamabolo et al., 2022:1).

The study is significant as it addresses unresolved discrepancies in the effectiveness of QMS. Through findings and recommendations that will be presented in the study, policy makers in the national and provincial Department of Education may use them (findings and recommendations) to acknowledge SMTs' perceptions and implement decisive measures. This will ensure the system's effectiveness, as it appears to deliver strong performance. Africano et al. (2019:123) concur that effective adoption of QMS will be a strategic decision that can help improve the overall performance of schools by maximising opportunities and minimising negative effects. There is also insufficient existing literature on the effectiveness of the system in schools, so that its intended purpose is achieved. Consequently, this gap is intended to be bridged by the study's main aim, which is presented below.

1.4 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1.4.1 Aim of the study

The study aimed to explore the perceptions of secondary Schools' Management Teams regarding the effectiveness of the QMS in the UMkhanyakude District.

1.4.2 Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study were to:

- Establish the role players responsible for the effectiveness of the Quality Management System in secondary schools.
- Explore the importance of an effective Quality Management System in secondary schools.
- Examine the extent to which the Quality Management System is effective in secondary schools.
- Propose interventions to strengthen the effectiveness of the Quality Management System in secondary schools.

1.5 Research questions

This section presents the study's main research question and sub-questions.

1.5.1 Main research question

How do secondary Schools' Management Team in the uMkhanyakude District perceive the effectiveness of the Quality Management System?

1.5.2 Sub-research questions

- Who are the role players responsible for the effectiveness of the Quality Management System in secondary schools?
- Why is the effectiveness of the Quality Management System important in secondary schools?
- To what extent is the Quality Management System effective in secondary schools?
- Which interventions are required to strengthen the effectiveness of the Quality Management System in secondary schools?

1.6 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

According to Varpio, Paradis, Uijtdenhaage and Young (2020:990), a theoretical framework reflects the researcher's approach to using theory in a proposed study. Pyo, Lee, Choi, Jang and Ock (2023:16) define a theoretical framework as the thoughts or attitudes a researcher holds about the phenomenon under investigation. It is a type of custom-made theory that focuses specifically on the research questions you want to answer (Hiebert, Cai, Morris & Hohensee, 2023:51).

The common characteristic of these definitions is that a theoretical framework encompasses the kind of theory a researcher will use in each study. Moreover, the researcher selects a theoretical framework that focuses on the phenomenon under study. In a qualitative study, theoretical frameworks are grounded in philosophical ideas that inform the selection of specific research methods (Pyo et al., 2023:16). It is indisputably clear that theories form the basis of the theoretical framework used in a qualitative study. Varpio et al. (2020:990) affirm that, to create a theoretical framework,

the researcher must define the concepts and theories that will provide the research with grounding. Therefore, a theoretical framework is a tool that guides a researcher in answering questions about a phenomenon under investigation.

Grounded on phenomenology, the researcher was interested in SMTs' interpretations, assertions and descriptions of their familiarities and acquaintances (Muzari et al., 2022:15). Luthfiandana et al. (2024:28) affirm that phenomenological researchers use in-depth interviews and reflection to explain and understand the core of human experience in a specific situation.

Various theoretical frameworks are used in research, including Transformational Leadership Theory (TL), Contingency Theory, Critical Theory and Institutional Theory, to mention a few. Subsequently, to explore SMTs' perceptions of the effectiveness of QMS, TL theory, as conceptualised by Burns (1978:1), guided the study. Drawing from this theory, the effectiveness of QMS in secondary schools is believed to yield good outcomes when there is effective employer-employee engagement. Mbindvo, O'Connor and Nandedkar (2021:174) argue that TL theory has been proven to bring fundamental changes to the work environment by addressing followers' needs for development and achievement. Outcomes such as extra effort, employee or work engagement, and trust in the management are features of the TL theory (Deng, Gulseren, Isola, Grocutt & Turner, 2023:632).

1.7 PRELIMINARY LITERATURE REVIEW

This section reviews the literature on secondary SMTs' perceptions of the effectiveness of the QMS. The focus was on addressing the main aim of exploring secondary SMTs' perceptions of the effectiveness of QMS. Four objectives addressed the main aim. Firstly, the role players responsible for the effectiveness of QMS were established. Secondly, the importance of QMS effectiveness was explored. Thirdly, the extent to which QMS is effective in schools was examined. Finally, interventions required to strengthen the effectiveness of QMS in secondary schools were proposed.

1.7.1 Role players on the effectiveness of the Quality Management System in secondary schools

Role players are a critical component in ensuring the effectiveness of QMS in secondary schools. Yusuf, Masruhim and Sjamsir (2019:92), who conducted a study in Samarinda, Indonesia, state that secondary school principals play a role in providing positive support for improving the performance of the Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS). In their study, they further note that senior educators, junior educators, and students' parents are involved in implementing IQMS. Contrary to the IQMS implemented in Indonesia, Total Quality Management (TQM) practices are implemented in Jordanian schools. Sweis, Abualsondos, Magableh, Alamayreh, Sukkari and Alawneh (2020:114) affirm that school managers and teachers pay attention to TQM practices that have a direct impact on school academic performance in Amman, Jordan. The principal, education administrators, and stakeholders have realised the importance of effective quality management for teachers and the cultivation of competitive students in secondary schools in Malaysia (Qingya, Azar & Ahmad, 2023:166).

Mincu (2022:234) argues that school leadership, consisting of the principal, is the spearhead of quality models in Dutch schools. Principals are innovative and serve as examples of transformational leaders in strengthening quality development. Through learnt methods from principals, teachers follow suit. Vermeulen, Kreijns and Evers (2022:492) reiterate that teachers' behaviour is influenced by the architecture of their schools and by the principal's directions. Therefore, for quality education to be more effective in the Netherlands, an appropriate balance of teachers' autonomy is important to ensure quality and equity across all levels of school leadership.

However, Mincu (2022:238) argues that teachers cannot, by themselves, directly engage in systematic school changes, but the principal considers the school architecture to facilitate decision-making. Therefore, in the chain of quality development models, the teachers cannot be blamed for the ineffectiveness of quality development. The effectiveness of quality education also relies on the principal serving as the spearhead in encouraging professional development among teachers

(Vermeulen et al., 2022:495). That is, professional development serves as a key ingredient for school leaders to ensure teacher quality. Teachers' engagement in professional development positively impacts the effectiveness of quality development models in Dutch secondary schools.

According to O'Brien, O'Hara, McNamara and O'Hara (2023:63), the school leadership responsible for quality education in the Republic of Ireland includes, among others, the principals, counsellors, and teachers. However, other education personnel and parents are also stakeholders who promote and practice quality development programmes. The principal is a major supporter and driver of the initiative to establish and channel quality education in schools (O'Brien et al., 2023:63). Furthermore, the principal vests the educational authority with the responsibility to serve as an inspirational leader of ethical behaviour in matters of School Self-evaluation (SSE) in the country. Banks, Forlin and Chambers (2023:398) argue that important factors in the effectiveness of SSE include not only the principal but also mainstream support structures, such as special education teachers and special needs assistants. These role players demonstrate that quality education does not occur only in traditional public schools but also in full-service and special needs schools (Banks et al., 2023:398).

Responsibility for the effectiveness of QMS in Austria lies at the regional and school levels. Firstly, three central actors, namely the school leadership, teacher teams and individual teachers, play a vital role in realising specified measures and achievement of the targeted outcomes of QMS (Li, Schlüter, Hautz, Bell & Marhuenda, 2023:4). Secondly, the regional school inspector supports the implementation of QMS in schools. This is done through continuous control and review of target-setting meetings with school leadership (Li et al., 2023:4).

Khurelbaatar (2020:123) states that education leaders in Mongolian secondary schools focus on the quality of education and the groups that make it. In essence, quality education sees teachers driving efficiency, effectiveness and equity in the teaching and learning process. Moreover, stakeholders such as government officials and parents support school leaders in fostering learners' educational achievement, especially in academic performance. Dembereldorj, Gompil and Davaadorj (2023:3)

emphasise that school leaders in Mongolia are more focused on educational quality, which is embedded in values, needs, and societal expectations.

According to Nguyen, Kanjug, Lowatcharin, Manakul, Poonpon, Sarakorn, Somabut, Srisawasdi, Traiyarach and Tuamsuk (2023:3), the effectiveness of QMS in Thai schools rests on three key objects: organisations, people, and internet communities. Organisations include schools and educational policymakers. The people responsible for implementing and evaluating the system include learners, teachers, researchers, teacher trainers, and content developers. Lastly, the internet community comprises internet organisations. The integration of all these objects has a common interest in the country to facilitate and support quality education. Despite the involvement of the three objects, school principals, as local managers, are at the forefront of managing the effectiveness of QMS in their respective schools. Both private and public schools in the country underscore the principal's authority in shaping quality development models (Pholphirul, Rukumnuaykit & Teimtad, 2023:4). Additionally, principals influence secondary school learners, teachers, and stakeholders to position themselves for sustainable, high-quality learning.

Babatunde and Victor (2018:183) assert that the head teachers at schools in Ondo State, Nigeria, are administrators entrusted with managerial roles to ensure the QMS goal. Similarly, the Kwara State of Nigeria sees the education quality management as optimally implemented by principals who provide moral disciplinary leadership, good administration, and curriculum implementation (Kadir, 2019:60). However, Chikuvadze, Natani and Mudzamiri (2024:38) argue that secondary schools' top management in Zimbabwe need to be committed on the effectiveness of clinical supervision as a tool for improving quality management of instruction in teaching and learning.

The principal plays a crucial role in shaping the educational landscape and overall effectiveness of the QMS in the public schools of Anambra State, Côte d'Ivoire (Fasemore & Ileuma, 2025:643). They are the overseers of school performances aligned with quality duties, namely administration, instructional leadership, and community engagement. Principals cannot instil teachers' commitment to QMS without the collaboration of other teachers in management positions. Therefore,

factors that influence the effectiveness of principals in driving quality education include the commitment of the management team, teachers and learners (Fasemore & Ileuma, 2025:643). Deniz (2025:87) argues that Ivorian teachers, principals, and local government professionals encourage teachers to bring essential cultural knowledge and contextual understanding to develop a comprehensive and effective QMS in Abidjan.

Ibrahem (2023:81) reveals that in Libya, quality education requires not only school management committing to implementing improvements, but also that experienced teaching staff, technicians and support staff be involved in the process. Although the school principal plays a crucial role in ensuring that educational goals are achieved, the teaching staff follows directives from the school management for quality development. Brydan and Alsanousi (2023:256) advise that, despite principals taking a lead in quality management and coordinating the process, all staff members, including teachers and administrators, should be held accountable for quality improvement in the school. Staff should fully understand and take ownership of the quality assurance programmes, which are coordinated to maintain and enhance their effectiveness in achieving quality outcomes.

Secondary schools in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) put principals at the centre of QMSs (Huguette & Kite, 2021:145). However, as in Libya, school principals do not work in isolation to ensure QMSs are in place in their respective schools. Support comes from various role players, such as qualified teachers, school inspectors, school directors, government and religious officials, donor organisations, parents, and teacher unions.

With QMS serving as the instrument of quality assurance in schools, all actors come together around a common agenda of expanding access and equity, improving learning quality and governance, and reinforcing accountability for all individuals involved in the process (Huguette & Kite, 2021:145). Congolese schools have the potential to improve performance on key performance standards, as teacher qualification is at the heart of the quality of education (Ndericimpaye, 2023:246). However, the success of QMS could be hindered by ineffective supervision of teachers

and learners, teacher discouragement and resignation due to non-existent salaries, a lack of teaching materials, equipment and laboratories, and overcrowded classes.

In the Kingdom of Eswatini, school principals are responsible for setting the overall vision and direction for their schools they lead, developing and maintaining a school culture conducive to learning, motivating teachers, evaluating the performance of teachers, and ensuring the management of school resources (Tshabalala & Faremi, 2024:9). Apart from these roles, the principal in the country collaborates with all stakeholders, including academic and non-academic staff, parents and wider school communities in building sustained quality education. In school management in the country, the principal is obligated to provide valuable feedback to the mentioned stakeholders following classroom observations. Phebeni (2025:132) reiterates that school principals, deputy principals, parents and education officers are important stakeholders who collaborate and engage in quality education and school improvement.

A study conducted in the Gauteng Province by Kganyago (2018:103) found that effective and efficient management of the QMS involves SMTs ensuring that all initiatives contribute to improving performance in Soweto schools. In the Eastern Cape Province, school principals in Mthatha districts were part of the team and structure to manage the QMS (Tachie & Mancotywa, 2021:1). However, Simelane and Mutambara (2022:280) argue that in Mpumalanga, the effective implementation of the QMS relies on the quality of leadership provided by principals of schools and district officials being hands-on in the implementation phase. The implementation of QMS is a role that school principals should take on to improve and enhance the performance of Eastern Cape public schools (Sambumbu, 2023:2).

1.7.2 The need for the effectiveness of the Quality Management System in secondary schools

The effectiveness of QMS is an integral process that relies on stakeholder involvement to ensure school functionality. Total QMS is reliant on the attainment of educators since no education system is qualitatively higher than the quality commitment of educators in Indonesia (Khurniawan, Sailah, Muljono, Indriyanto & Maarif, 2020:45). Girmanová, Šolc, Blaško and Petrík (2022:561) state that each high school in Slovakia needs a functional and comprehensive QMS, which is a necessary prerequisite to equip learners with knowledge, skills and competences that they need. Teacher quality management in Malaysian high schools is one of the most important factors influencing student performance (Qingyan, Sorayvaei & Ahmad, 2023:157). The education QMS helps administrators and managers emphasise the important areas of their own activities related to development strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities (Qingyan et al., 2023:157).

In the Netherlands, Mincu (2022:237) asserts that secondary schools that adopt quality development models enable teachers to exercise autonomy in using their capacities and strengths to deliver quality teaching in their classrooms. That is, they capitalise on their valuable attributes to strengthen the existing programmes that aim to deliver quality teaching and learning. Through effective quality development models, their effectiveness improves not only learner achievement but also strengthens the climate of the entire school. Moreover, the success of these models enhances school leaders' managerial tasks and helps them regularly communicate the school's vision to educators (Mincu, 2022:239).

In the same vein, Vermeulen et al. (2022:495) argue that in Dutch schools, effective quality management assists leaders in realising and shaping the school culture by influencing other educators to be more focused on organisational goals. This is achieved through collective reflection, tolerance of diverse opinions, and learning from colleagues and organisations. Teachers can learn from their leaders' transformational practices, thereby developing and sharing new quality methods that advance their schools. Veletić, Price and Olsen (2022:529) emphasise that the effectiveness of QMS in schools is evident in its climate, which is shaped by educators, parents and learners

who are ethical and goal-oriented. Consequently, a positive school climate is often cultivated by the principal, who is at the centre of ensuring QMSs.

SSE forms an integral part of ensuring a valid and reliable quality education in the Republic of Ireland secondary schools (O'Brien et al., 2023:62). It aims to specifically ensure quality by improving the teaching-learning process and increasing the overall school performance. SSE also ensures that quality education is improved through evidence-based decision-making and accountability of role players in the process. This strategy allows schools to assess their performance in a specific area (O'Brien et al., 2023:62). This implies that school managers who adopt the SSE programme can identify strengths and areas for improvement. School managers can develop and implement action plans to address challenges that hinder the development of high-quality systems.

There are several benefits that QMS could be credited with in Austrian schools. Li et al. (2023:2) assert that QMS helps school principals facilitate procedures for quality teaching and learning. That is, both the teaching and learning processes and organisational management are guided by recognising the school ethos, values, and vision, which are grounded in collaborative efforts. Therefore, strong emphasis is placed on evaluating teachers on the quality and effectiveness of the schools' processes and teachers' actions through regular, joint internal and external evaluations.

Higher quality education is not only socially beneficial to learners but also provides everyone in the school with an opportunity to excel in their everyday tasks (Khurelbaatar, 2020:123). Dembereldorj et al. (2023:3) state that two programmes ensure the quality management of schools, namely the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) in secondary schools in Mongolia.

As in Austria, several quality indicators have led schools in Mongolia to progress. Firstly, the programmes measure students' achievement through assigned institutional outcomes (Dembereldorj et al., 2023:3). This includes measuring school components, such as pedagogical quality in teaching, and achievement outcomes, such as tests and exams. Secondly, the schools are evaluated based on learners' socio-economic

backgrounds and attitudes towards curriculum engagement. Thirdly, the programmes also incorporate the schools' infrastructure and atmosphere. Lastly, teachers are evaluated on their professional training, attitudes toward teaching, and workplace cooperation. Despite the challenges that Mongolian schools face in instilling a culture of quality education, school managers and administrators perceive that educational quality should relate to efficiency, effectiveness, equity and teachers playing a crucial role in providing educational excellence (Dembereldorj et al., 2023:3).

Quality education in Thailand has long been acknowledged as a predictor of instructional quality, which in turn leads to better school performance (Pholphirul et al., 2023:2). Additionally, the effectiveness of QMS is important for several reasons in the country. An effective QMS builds and develops the knowledge, abilities, and ethical behaviour of all employees in a school. Teachers who are well-versed in QMS processes tend to be better prepared in subject knowledge, classroom management, and overcoming everyday problems. The effectiveness of QMS relies on teacher experience, education level, professional knowledge, and teaching effectiveness (Pholphirul et al., 2023:2). Similarly, Nguyen et al. (2023:3) emphasise that an effective QMS yields significant benefits by boosting learners' competencies, improving teachers' management, and advancing overall school targets. Other benefits include the proper application of digital technologies in the learning environment, which strengthens collaboration among all relevant stakeholders to access robust knowledge.

Kadir (2019:66) argues that QMS in Nigeria enhances teacher effectiveness in solving behavioural problems, in creating an environment that acknowledges learner involvement, and in devising clear assessment strategies for learners. However, using QMS in Angolan schools offers greater benefits, including improved school image, quality procedures, increased awareness of quality, clarification of responsibilities, and improved efficiency (African et al., 2019:125). Kamau (2020:16) is of the view that empowering teachers through QMS in Kenyan schools contributes significantly to overall workplace performance, particularly in the Ruiry Sub-County. In a study conducted in Namibia, Shikalepo (2020:64) reports that QMS improves school

performance by taking into account physical facilities, surrounding infrastructure, and teaching and learning resources.

Principals in Côte d'Ivoire believe that the effectiveness of QMS could assist them in achieving their performance through job descriptions and administrative responsibilities (Fasemore & Ileuma, 2025:643). Moreover, they (principals) will be able to maintain and keep records, manage budgets and teachers, plan co-curricular activities, and effectively identify school needs. Together with other members of the school structures, the principal supervises and monitors instructional or curricular activities, including lesson observations, examination activities, and infrastructure maintenance. Subsequently, in Anambra State, feedback from the evaluation of teachers and learners indicates that improvements in infrastructure and the availability of teaching and learning aids are of paramount importance for strengthening quality education (Fasemore & Ileuma, 2025:643). Therefore, a coordinated QMS enables school leaders and teachers to position themselves in terms of professional competence and institutional value (Deniz, 2025:87).

Systems that influence quality assurance in Libya are important for several reasons. Quality assurance programmes can assist teachers in assessing outcomes and evaluating school activities effectively (Ibrahem, 2023:82). Additionally, QMS helps specify opportunities and threats, thereby improving competitiveness and outcomes. Brydan and Alsanousi (2023:358) outline key merits of an effective system that ensures quality assurance. Firstly, Libyan schools with an effective system have regular, up-to-date reporting of quality results and achievements. Secondly, a school that adopts quality systems supports a balanced hierarchical profile of management and an ongoing trend of good academic performance. Finally, the institution’s mission and vision are achieved through accurate quality learning outcomes and professional skills. Aid, Rouaski, and Moulfi (2024:46) argue that schools that commit to TQM are more likely to improve in five criteria of quality education: quality management, professional training, quality of teaching staff, quality of trainee affairs, and quality of facilities and services.

Similar to Libyan schools, an effective QMS in the DRC is believed to help school managers understand and articulate the school’s mission, vision, and learning principles (Huguette & Kite, 2021:149). School leaders, particularly principals, can

provide leadership that is centred on supporting learners, curriculum development, and the creation of a culture of learning. Moreover, principals focus on quality performance by facilitating professional development training sessions and providing feedback to teachers who need developmental support. Ndericimpaye (2023:246) reiterates that quality educational practices help schools to realise the socio-cultural and professional needs of Congolese learners and teachers.

It is vital to have an effective QMS in the Kingdom of Eswatini for several reasons. The school principal can shape the quality of education by adopting a distributed leadership model, sharing instructional leadership with deputy principals, departmental heads, and lead teachers (Tshabalala & Faremi, 2024:8). This kind of leadership enables school leaders to be familiar with successful quality models aimed at achieving high performance.

Despite principals being boundary spanners of school development (Lukhele, Lebeloane & Mmusi-Phetoe, 2025:24), they develop a sense of collaboration with staff members so that the goals of the schools are achieved to quality standards (Tshabalala & Faremi, 2024:9). Furthermore, principals use their skills to identify individual staff needs, designated school targets, differentiated learning opportunities and a sustainable culture of academic improvement. With all teachers equipped with quality leadership skills, learners have the opportunity to be empowered so that their learning flourishes and they reach their full academic potential. Phebeni (2025:125) asserts that schools practising an effective QMS foster strong collaboration among staff members, including principals, teachers, and parents. Schools can draw up School Improvement Plans (SIPs) without challenges, as evaluations inform these of teachers' performance in their respective subjects.

Steyn (2019:10) argues that in the Western Cape Province, school principals play a predominant role in the effective implementation of QMS. This includes teacher evaluation, gathering information on teacher practice, and offering support for teacher professional learning to enhance quality school performance. Tachie and Mancotywa (2021:5) broadly advise that if all relevant people in the Mthatha districts correctly and

effectively implement QMS, this could improve teaching and learning practices, the academic performance of learners, and the effectiveness of school management and governance practices. Shongwe and Mutambara (2022:266) clarify that the principal's capacity is crucial to the effective implementation of QMS in the Gert Sibande Districts (Mpumalanga Province), as it creates a conducive environment in which learners, educators, and non-teaching staff can perform well and realise their full potential.

1.7.3 The extent to which the Quality Management System is effective in secondary schools

This section delves into the extent to which QMS is effective in secondary schools. According to Díez, Iraurgi and Villa (2018:1), some schools in the Basque region of Spain took longer to realise the benefits of QMS. That is, the teaching staff delayed realising that the existence of QMS makes them competitive professionals in the workplace. However, some schools in the country were excluded from implementing the system due to procedural reasons (Diez et al., 2018:6). Mahmood, Ismail and Omar-Fauzee (2020:10) argue that if schools adopted TQMS properly, there would be no differences in academic achievement in Malaysian schools. However, Seis et al. (2020:113) report a statistically significant effect of TQMS practices on the academic performance of Jordanian schools. Teacher commitment, Training and education, and teamwork were all strengths in the effective implementation of the system.

It is also worth noting that, in their study, Firdausi, Trisnamansyah, Warta, and Tejawian (2022:711) found that the QMS at State Vocational High Schools in Indonesia was effective. The school leadership had a comprehensive programme, action, and follow-up plan, which significantly improved school performance. According to Mincu (2022:240), the effectiveness of quality development models varies in the Dutch secondary schools. Although some schools rarely adhere to quality processes, the school's role players cannot be blamed for a lack of cooperation. Mincu (2022:240) supports the idea that for school head teachers to act innovatively and be motivated to promote quality education, the full support of national-level teams is required. Some schools lack change and success because resources and knowledge are not adequately cascaded effectively to the school level.

Despite teachers' readiness to adapt to new transformational ways of improving education, school leadership is deterred by a lack of support from the national government. Mincu (2022:240) argues that schools are organisations, not collections of individuals, so the effectiveness of leadership cannot be compromised either way. Subsequently, the struggling quality development models could be corrected by developing and refining a collaborative strategy to support school leaders at the forefront of school management (Mincu, 2022:240). Contrary to schools that experience the ineffectiveness of quality development models, there is an appreciation that some Dutch secondary schools value the merits of quality education. In those schools, leadership is more fuelled by the commitment of both the principals and teachers (Vermeulen et al., 2022:498).

In their study, O'Brien et al. (2023:62) assert that many schools had never been involved in SSE. However, some schools demonstrated the capacity to carry out collaborative SSE, involving teaching and non-teaching staff, parents, learners, and curriculum coordinators. Parents' voices contributed to the quality of SSE, and teachers had autonomy to account for their performance (O'Brien et al., 2023:62). The sampled schools in the Republic of Ireland demonstrated the capacity to compile a School Improvement Plan (SIP) including targets and action plans for improvement. This implies that teachers who engage in SSE in the country have little fear of consequences arising from internal evaluations. Banks et al. (2023:398) argue that the inconsistency in the quality of education in the country cannot be overlooked. This is justified because no learner should be left behind in accessing quality education that yields positive outcomes.

The role of QMS in the teaching and learning process in Austrian secondary schools tends to be a neglected intervention for improving performance. As Li et al. (2023:6) note, the emphasis on QMS losing its focus and significance poses a risk that the intended results will not be attained. This is triggered by top-down orders from the Ministry of Education, without a coordinated plan for how the system should operate in schools. In their argument, Li et al. (2023:6) posit that it is not the decentralisation of understanding QMS, but rather the decentralisation of responsibility, in which school managers should account for predefined outcomes and operational plans. School

managers are expected to be accountable for the school's performance standards and targets, yet there is no clear analysis of the QMS policy documents.

Pölzl-Stefanec (2021:2192) argues that professional development, as a key performance standard of QMS, is in its infancy in Austria. Therefore, this qualifies QMS as being ineffective. Despite teachers' interest in online professional development because of its advantages (Pölzl-Stefanec, 2021:2192), their leaders are unsure about clear guidelines for effectively running the system. In Mongolia, the effectiveness of QMS varies between urban and rural secondary schools. Khurelbaatar (2020:122) states that rural schools are disadvantaged by a lack of teaching materials and by underdeveloped buildings. These challenges have negatively impacted the quality of education in the country. For example, Khurelbaatar (2020:122) enumerates three other challenges affecting quality education: increased workload, constant curriculum reform, and a lack of teacher training. The increased workload led one teacher to teach many subjects, thereby compromising the quality of education. The constantly changing curriculum required the repurchase of textbooks and other teaching materials, which put schools under financial strain. The lack of teacher training had, in the long term, restricted their access to professional development opportunities.

Apart from the challenges faced in rural schools in Mongolia, urban schools receive full attention from government funding. This could be described as 'inequality of quality education' between the urban and rural schools of the country (Dembereldorj et al., 2023:5). In Ulaanbaatar, the capital city of Mongolia, schools have oversupply of teachers, greater parents' participation and government funding in addition to student school fees (Dembereldorj et al., 2023:5). However, the challenges of lack of quality education continue to be skewed on the side of rural areas. Lack of skilled teachers, ever-changing curriculum, lack of parent involvement, and lack of teachers' professional development are dire in the country's rural secondary schools (Dembereldorj et al., 2023:5). As in Austria, these challenges are exacerbated by the centralised guidance of government authorities in Mongolia.

The quantity and quality of teachers have a great influence on the effectiveness of QMS in Thailand. However, as in Mongolia and Austria, there is a discrepancy regarding the effectiveness of the system in Thailand. According to Pholphirul et al. (2023:5), the shortage of quality teachers is severe in underprivileged schools located in remote rural areas of the country. This is caused by capable teachers being moved to administrative duties, lower salaries, the unavailability of teaching and learning resources, and bureaucratic affiliation (Pholphirul et al., 2023:5). Thus, teachers choose to migrate to urban schools because they offer equal distribution of teacher resources, higher salaries, and other compensation. The dire situation in the country paralyses the effectiveness of the QMS, owing to the uneven distribution of teachers and other resources between rural and urban areas. Nguyen et al. (2023:3) concur that the imbalance in quality education between urban and rural schools in Thailand limits the effectiveness of QMS and its intended outcomes.

Africano et al. (2019:122) state that, out of 50 Angolan schools surveyed, only 20% have effective QMS implementation. The QMS practices in the schools improved the quality of teaching, student satisfaction, and teacher competencies. Shikalepo (2020:62) argues that the government intervened by offering financial incentives and housing to Namibian rural schoolteachers to enhance the effectiveness of QMS. Therefore, the assertion that monetary motivation is key to improving school performance raises the question of whether there would be evidence of effective quality management in schools without monetary motivation. Stella (2022:64) asserts that about 41% of participants in Ghanaian senior high schools demonstrated a high level of understanding of QMS. Consequently, the culture of quality has been institutionalised in the schools, where staff were well motivated and high academic performance was achieved.

According to Fasemore and Ileuma (2025:654), principals' performance in Côte d'Ivoire secondary schools varied on different indicators of QMS. Findings revealed that principals' performance was effective in administrative duties, instructional leadership, management of school facilities and involvement in professional development programmes. However, their involvement in community engagement and in classroom teacher evaluation was ineffective. Being well equipped to handle a

variety of administrative and instructional duties, the principals of Côte d'Ivoire were able to transfer quality skills and strategies to their teachers and learners (Fasemore & Ileuma, 2025:654). Likewise, teachers are led by their principals to voluntarily participate in training courses and to pursue professional growth autonomously. In a study conducted by Deniz (2025:98), participants agreed that QMS activities have facilitated their professional growth, expanded their teaching roles, and fostered collegial relationships, rather than focusing solely on salary increases. As advocated by Fasemore and Ileuma (2025:654) and Deniz (2025:98), QMS processes in Côte d'Ivoire secondary schools have strengthened the execution of school policies, promoted equitable practices, and addressed institutional challenges.

In most Libyan schools, the operation of QMS has been described as ‘system failure’ (Ibrahem, 2023:81). This means that the system has not been effective in delivering what it was intended to deliver. It has not defined performance operationally. Moreover, control and improvement have not been realised on the side of school managers. There has also been a heavy burden of meeting deadlines and reporting on the progress of the evaluation. Lastly, the data collected from educators was insufficient, irrelevant, and inefficient in accordance with the quality assurance programme guidelines. Brydan and Alsanousi (2023:347) emphasise that the gap in the control and evaluation of teachers was coupled with a lack of feedback to teachers who were successfully assessed. Thus, professional skills in the subject matter were hardly evident among teachers employed in the schools.

As in Libya, Huguette and Kite (2021:150) assert that secondary schools in the DRC implement an effective QMS across school administrative structures. The poor control of administrative and instructional activities is attributed to several factors. One of the challenges is principals' lack of accountability to teachers, parents, and learners regarding QMS issues. There is also concern about transparency in evaluating safety and security matters at the school. Congested classrooms, lack of teaching materials, unreliable teacher compensation, poor working conditions, and the deterioration of the teaching profession are all challenges that slow the effectiveness of QMS in the DRC. Besides, Huguette and Kite (2021:150) stress that poor school and teacher

management still put the effectiveness of QMS in a dire situation. In the same vein, Ndericimpaye (2023:245) noted that factors contributing to the failure of the system include overcrowded classrooms, a high rate of unqualified teachers, poor school supervision, low salaries, and teachers' reluctance to engage in professional development.

It is interesting to note that quality education remains a yardstick for the success of both teachers' and learners' performances in Eswatini schools. In their study, Tshabalala and Faremi (2024:12) reveal that school principals use their leadership skills to involve parents in deliberations about their children's progress. This creates a space for parents to provide concrete input so their children succeed academically and socially. In addition, most of the principals are principled and committed to maintaining a safe and learning environment. Principals, deputy principals and departmental heads play a role in instilling discipline in schools. Furthermore, the school management structure ensures that teachers have access to adequate resources and can enrol in professional development opportunities (Tshabalala & Faremi, 2024:12). Undoubtedly, these commitments have successfully enhanced teacher effectiveness, resulting in a highly recognised positive impact on teachers' and learners' performance.

Similarly, Phebeni (2025:132) notes that most principals in the Kingdom of Eswatini exhibit collaborative leadership, which qualifies them to exercise accountability, foster shared vision, innovate, and build professional trust among teachers, learners, and parents. Under the helm of quality leadership, principals have been more effective in implementing Subject Improvement Plans and improving learning outcomes. Moreover, their role in enforcing stakeholder collaboration has strengthened collective ownership of school goals and vision, thereby ensuring a continuous quality achievement in overall school results.

Tachie and Mancotywa (2021:1) reveal that although school principals were part of the team structure for implementing QMS in Mthatha districts, some did not drive the process, resulting in schools finding it difficult to manage the QMS effectively. Similarly, principals of schools in Mpumalanga perceived QMS as an added burden

on already overloaded teachers and managers (Simelane & Mutambara, 2022:284). As a result, the effective implementation of QMS in the province was challenged by demanding timeframes for completing Annual Teaching Plans (ATPs), monthly tests, quarterly exams, extra-classes programmes, meetings and relentless paperwork demands from circuits. Moreover, some school leaders lacked knowledge of QMS despite holding managerial positions. In their study, Mamabolo et al. (2022:1) found that schools in Gauteng reported no proper implementation of QMS. As in Namibian schools, teachers conducted the QMS for monetary rewards rather than to achieve quality assurance.

1.7.4 Interventions to strengthen the effectiveness of the Quality Management System in secondary schools

This section proposes strategies for strengthening the effectiveness of QMS, based on interventions attempted by various secondary schools. Mahmood et al. (2020:10) establish that the successful implementation of TQMS in Pakistan is prioritised on five key elements: commitment of top management, continuous improvement, training and education, employee focus, and employee involvement. According to Håkansson and Adolfsson (2021:301), Swedish secondary schools have a strategic framework for quality management based on a professional development initiative for school leaders. This was facilitated through training held in Ontario, Canada. Consequently, school leaders effectively implemented QMS through training modules aligned with a common direction grounded in data and evidence: leadership, learning, and quality improvement. In Slovakian secondary schools, QMS was effective because leaders prioritised teacher duties and complied with legislative documentation processes (Girmanová et al., 2022:472). Moreover, Slovakian leaders ensured employee satisfaction by introducing feedback mechanisms and fostering strong employment relationships.

To strengthen the effectiveness of quality development models in the Netherlands, Mincu (2022:240) proposes that school leadership is a crucial element in determining

and shaping a school's direction. That is, through engagement in collective decision-making, effective influence, and commitment to dynamic models, a low-performing school can be transformed. Vermeulen et al. (2022:547) maintain that school principals should be able to identify discrepancies in the ineffectiveness of QMS by stimulating efforts to improve communication and collaboration among staff members. The interaction between the principal and employees could, in turn, improve school climate. Furthermore, the principal, as an important role player in the effectiveness of quality education, must be approachable, socially oriented, supportive, and trustworthy toward teachers to maintain conducive school leadership and a good school climate.

According to O'Brien et al. (2023:62), SSE in the Republic of Ireland could be an effective programme if communication and involvement of key stakeholders are considered. Firstly, the principal should work to communicate and update parents and teachers on the school's core values, raising awareness of quality education. Secondly, the principal should share the school plan with the school management, teachers, and parents to ensure the importance of quality education is well communicated. Thirdly, the sustainable provision of resources and professional development should not be overlooked. Subsequently, the principal should liaise with government structures to ensure they invest in high-quality resources and support teachers' professional development. Besides stakeholder involvement in school functioning, Banks et al. (2023:400) state that teacher motivation and re-examining the guidelines of SSE should be a stepping stone towards quality-driven leadership. This could develop teachers' interest in being practically involved in the SSE and in realising its purpose in developing the whole school.

In Austria, Pölzl-Stefanec et al. (2021:2204) state that targeted training courses for QMS that focus on teachers' professional development could strengthen the effectiveness of QMS. This could incorporate introductory workshops and tutorials aimed at equipping teachers with skills on how the system works and highlighting how the system could develop their schools in the long run. Li et al. (2023:5) propose that for QMS to work effectively, there must be strong alliances, teamwork, and trust

among national, provincial, and local governments, as well as the school. That is, the government should develop a mutual trust and collaboration by involving principals, administrators, and teachers in the implementation of the system. At a school level, the principal and the other school managers should establish a working group responsible for designing an annual plan for the evaluation of the quality, impact, effectiveness, and efficiency of the whole QMS (Li et al., 2023:5). Moreover, the inspection and evaluation of the school in terms of teaching and learning processes, teaching practice, guidance for SMTs and compliance of administrators should be centred on quality performance.

Khurelbaatar (2020:125) acknowledges that it is important to re-examine whether the model of quality education fits the culture, customs, and development of Mongolian schools. That is, any quality development model should be a joint effort of teachers and parents, evaluating the significance of the education reform to their children. In addition, the government of Mongolia should develop an equitable and inclusive quality education model across all schools in the rural areas. This will minimise the discrepancy in educational quality between urban and rural schools.

In a broader view, Dembereldorj et al. (2023:16) suggest several ways to strengthen the effectiveness of QMS in Mongolia. They include policymakers who should pay more attention to providing better schooling conditions, such as improving the school environment and building necessary educational facilities. Moreover, focus should also be on facilitating parental involvement in school activities and curriculum development, accommodating the differentiated abilities of learners and teachers, providing quality textbooks, and fostering teacher accessibility to learners and parents. Training of teachers on the context of quality mechanisms aimed at uplifting positive school performance should be part of the intervention (Dembereldorj et al., 2023:16).

Teacher recruitment needs careful consideration in Thai secondary schools (Pholphirul et al., 2023:24). When hiring teachers, the starting point should be equipping them with relevant skills to deliver high-quality teaching during classroom observation. Furthermore, a guideline for teacher personnel management should be tailored to schools facing resource shortages. Pholphirul et al. (2023:24) argue that improving teachers' salaries could motivate increased adherence to quality standards

and greater engagement in QMS activities. These incentives could draw teachers to a more organised position of delivering desired educational outcomes.

Nguyen et al. (2023:11) outline various ways schools can adopt to strengthen QMS. Firstly, learning systems and platforms to boost teaching and learning motivation and effectiveness for learners should be streamlined in accordance with the school's vision. Secondly, teachers' competencies should be evaluated during the recruitment phase to address any loopholes as early as possible. Lastly, teachers and learners should be clear about the content of QMS and how its integration in the classroom could benefit them in their future.

In a study conducted in Kenya, Kavutai (2018:37) found that effective TQM has depended on communication between top management and employees in secondary schools in Makueni County. Furthermore, quality implementation in the schools was demonstrated through senior management devising strategic action plans, employee empowerment and leadership granting greater discretion and autonomy to employees, thereby allowing the school to benefit from their knowledge and skills. However, Namibian rural schools relied on different measures to ensure the effectiveness of QMS. Improved working environments, well equipped with classroom and accommodation facilities, well-resourced libraries and laboratories and increased financial incentive were critical measures to ensure quality achievement in the schools (Shikalepo, 2020:67). Public secondary schools in Ifakara, Tanzania display TQM elements attributed by good leadership, teachers' involvement in decision making, quality planning, staff training and collaboration among teachers (Kakingo & Lekule, 2021:164).

Ivorian schools have proposed interventions to strengthen the effectiveness of QMS nationwide. Fasemore and Ileuma (2025:654) state that for principals to improve their instructional leadership, they should consistently engage in classroom visits and observations, assess the scheme of works, and evaluate teachers' lesson plans. Moreover, more time should be allocated to involve and encourage the community by organising meetings to deliberate on quality models, aimed at improving the school. In essence, the government should also intervene to monitor and coordinate all QMS

activities and ensure that principals are well compensated through bonuses, allowances, and insurances (Fasemore & Ileuma, 2025:654).

In terms of teachers' interventions, Deniz (2025:98) reports that teachers in Côte d'Ivoire created informal mentoring programmes, shared working strategies, and provided emotional support for newly appointed teachers navigating cultural adaptation challenges. Teachers also demonstrated leadership capabilities by creating innovative initiatives and solutions to institutional problems. Ibrahem (2023:83) provides several mechanisms to reinforce quality assurance programmes in Libyan secondary schools. Firstly, top management should capitalise on the teaching process by introducing new courses and technologies to enhance the quality of curriculum delivery. Secondly, there should be collaboration with learners to refresh their knowledge and ensure quality lessons. Thirdly, teachers should be regularly trained to improve the technical skills required for their tasks. Providing adequate teaching aids should be a priority for delivering quality lessons in the classroom.

Likewise, Ibrahem (2023:83) concurs with Deniz (2025:98), who argues that motivation and rewards for Libyan teachers play an important role in improving the quality of education in schools. Brydan and Alsanousi (2023:366) opine that there should be an independent education professional body to evaluate the effectiveness and implementation of quality assurance in public schools to secure the required strategic development. That is, strengthening an independent, holistic approach to evaluating teachers, learners, parents, and other relevant stakeholders in public institutions. According to Aid, Rouaski and Moulfi (2024:54), it is important to restructure school top management to intensify their commitment, thereby ensuring the implementation and success of the quality assurance programmes. Additionally, school managers should thoroughly draft and prepare an integrated strategy for the quality assurance programme to ensure that its objectives align with future sustainable achievements. Through regular teacher evaluations, school managers should use feedback to close existing gaps in school functionality and expand opportunities for good practices (Aid et al., 2024:54).

Huguette and Kite (2021:146) outline several strategies that the Congolese government should adopt to strengthen QMS in secondary schools. The following interventions have been suggested because they were tried by some schools that saw progress in QMS performance.

- Strengthening adequate procurement of quality textbooks that are in line with the demanding curriculum, especially in rural areas.
- Standardise school-level resource management procedures.
- Encouraging the training of qualified teachers, inspectors, and school directors so that they partake in QMS advocacy, policy implementation, and evaluation processes.
- Mapping out major areas that need a robust intervention in terms of teaching, learning, and assessment activities.
- Top management structures for elaborating on feedback and follow-up plans regarding the performance of both teachers and learners.
- Collaboration on the discussion of recommendations during classroom observations so that improvements can be made.
- Outlining the content and development schedule of a code of conduct for Congolese teachers.
- Reviewing the composition and functioning of parents, associations, and committees on their roles in supporting quality education.
- Organising training sessions for the parents and unions involved in QMS processes.

Ndericimpaye (2023:249) states that secondary schools in the DRC should ensure the proper recruitment of competent teachers to avoid compromising the quality of education. This follows the fact that teachers working in the Congolese schools are not sufficiently equipped and qualified to meet the contextual needs of their learners, especially in terms of quality education.

In the Kingdom of Eswatini, it is recommended that school principals should have a knowledge-sharing platform on leadership so that good practices and strategies of developing and improving overall school performance are shared with schools that

need such interventions (Tshabalala & Faremi, 2024:12). Principals who have successfully adapted to quality education did so by setting high expectations for teachers and learners' achievements. This was attributed to adequate resources and suitable staff development programmes. Similar to Congolese schools, Phebeni (2025:136) outlines the following interventions that assisted in implementing an effective QMS in the Kingdom of Eswatini.

- The government of Eswatini, through the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET), has invested more in school resources to strengthen the schools' monitoring and evaluation framework.
- Established network of independent professionals that work closely with school leaders in implementing policies for ongoing quality monitoring to ensure high professional standards.
- Regular school visits by education officers in assessing classroom practices, engaging school leaders, and reinforcing compliance with performance standards.
- An introduced, tailored professional development programme for school leaders to enhance their skills in school improvement management.
- Workshops on communication, team-building and inclusive school culture.
- Formalised collaborative leadership practices and policies through regular engagements of school leaders with teachers, learners and parents.
- Incentivising working teams that prioritise school improvement initiatives.

Seemingly, most schools in Mpumalanga Province faced challenges in adopting effective QMS strategies, leading some educators to conceptualise it as a fault-finding administrative exercise. This is advocated by Steyn (2019:101), who points out that principals and deputy principals perceived QMS as biased and non-critical, and that it does not achieve its intended purpose. In addition, the system created conflict among colleagues, placing managers in the role of facilitating resolution.

Mamabolo et al. (2022:5) state that Gauteng schools tried five strategic elements to implement QMS. That is, educators' monitoring, support and development; proper implementation of QMS; regular assessment and feedback; advocacy and training;

and QMS management planning. However, there has been varying success in delivering QMS, as educators perceived its implementation as a hindrance rather than a benefit (Mamabolo et al., 2022:5). Similarly, QMS was not adequately implemented in schools in Mpumalanga. Shongwe and Mutambara (2023:276) argue that the effective implementation of QMS was hampered by inadequate resources to provide technical support through frequent workshops for school managers. Furthermore, the system was dented by organisational politics, a lack of leadership, and poor managerial skills.

1.8 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Erciyes (2020:185) defines research methodology as the strategy or plan of action that underlies the choice and use of particular methods. Similarly, Al-Ababneh (2020:77) states that methodology is a strategy, plan of action, process or design lying behind the choice and use of certain methods and the combination of these methods to achieve the desired results. It is a process used to gather information and data to inform research decisions (Muzari et al., 2022:16). From the preceding assertions, it can be inferred that research methodology is a roadmap that researchers plan and design to collect data and achieve a desired outcome. Elements of research methodology include the qualitative approach, research paradigm, and research design, which are discussed hereunder.

1.8.1 Qualitative research

The qualitative research approach was deemed relevant for the intended study. Nassaji (2020:427) defines qualitative research as a kind of inquiry that is realistic and concerned with non-numerical data. It is contextualised and interpretive, emphasising the process or patterns of development rather than the research outcome. Similarly, Cropley (2022:38) views qualitative research as an approach that describes and analyses the world as it is experienced, interpreted and understood by people in their everyday lives.

The strengths of qualitative research are that it studies people in their own definitions of the world and the meanings they give to a phenomenon, focuses on subjective experiences of individuals, and is sensitive to the contexts in which people interact with each other (Mouton, 2022:175; Dzogovic & Bajrami, 2023:158). Dzogovic and Bajrami (2023:158) add that the purpose of qualitative research is to describe and interpret experiences, gather knowledge, and gain understanding without assumptions. It starts from intuitive knowledge and aims at a deeper understanding of the researched phenomenon. Based on the preceding discussion, the researcher aimed to explore secondary SMTs' perceptions of the effectiveness of the QMS in the UMkhanyakude District.

1.8.2 Research paradigm

Erciyes (2020:181) defines a research paradigm as a method of sharing between scientific community members. It is the philosophical stance of a researcher on how an inquiry is designed. Similarly, Khatri (2020:1435) states that a paradigm is a comprehensive belief system, world view or framework that directs research and practice in a field. Leavy (2023:12) views a research paradigm as a foundational perspective that carries a set of assumptions that guide the research process. Based on the preceding definitions, it can be deduced that a research paradigm is a scientific assumption that guides a researcher in undertaking an educational inquiry.

Erciyes (2020:181) articulates that research paradigms are differentiated through their ontology, epistemology, and methodology. However, Khatri (2020:1435) emphasises that the research paradigm comprises four elements: ontology, epistemology, methodology, and axiology. Ontology is a philosophical belief system about the nature of the social world, whereas epistemology is a philosophical belief system on how research proceeds and what counts as knowledge (Erciyes, 2020:181; Al-Ababneh, 2020:82). Concisely, Khatri (2020:1436) describes the four elements of the research paradigm. Ontology is described as the nature of reality, and epistemology as the nature of knowledge and the relationship between the knower and that which would be known.

Methodology is the appropriate approach to systematic inquiry, while axiology refers to the nature of ethics (Khatri, 2020:1436). Ugwu, Ekere and Onoh (2021:118) further define ontology as the study of the nature of existence or reality. It helps researchers to understand the reality by analysing themes to make sense of the meaning embedded in research data. Al-Ababneh (2020:77) asserts that epistemology is inherent in the theoretical perspective, serving to explore the world and make sense of it. It refers to how researchers come to know a phenomenon under study and to the truth or reality of that phenomenon (Ugwu et al., 2021:118). Methodology represents the strategy and plan of action for an investigation (Al-Ababneh, 2020:77). It relates to research approaches, designs, methods, and procedures used in a well-planned research effort to obtain results (Ugwu et al., 2021:118).

Researchers can use different paradigms in their educational inquiries. They include, amongst others, Positivism, Post-Positivism, Critical theory, and Constructivism or Interpretivism. Erciyes (2020:182) notes that positivism assumes the investigator and the investigated object are totally independent of each other. That is, the investigator avoids affecting the investigation or being affected by it. Oriented through ontology, positivists assume that reality is objectively given and quantifiably measured using properties which are independent of the investigator and the instruments (Muzata & Kumatonge, 2021:17). Erciyes (2020:182) argue that due to insufficient human intellectual mechanism and the fundamentally inflexible nature of phenomena, post-positivism is associated with humans unable to grasp reality but understand it imperfectly and probabilistically**.** Post-positivism provides researchers with an opportunity to identify and assess the causes that influence outcomes, as in experiments (Muzata & Kumatonge, 2021:18).

The ontology of critical theory reveals historical realism, in which reality is shaped by social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender factors (Erciyes, 2020:184). Constructivism seeks to understand how humans interpret or construct something in social, linguistic and historical context (Erciyes, 2020:184). Constructivists and interpretivists are somewhat similar to critical theorists in their ontologies and epistemologies, as they both feature researchers' experiences, views and

backgrounds. Moreover, both paradigms imply that the researcher interprets what they have seen or experienced so that the whole truth can be seen (Muzata & Kumatonge, 2021:19).

Since the study is deemed qualitative, features of the constructivist and interpretivist paradigms were relevant to the inquiry. Consequently, both the constructivism and interpretivism paradigms were contextualised for the study. The proposed study used qualitative methods, including semi-structured interviews, for data collection. Muzata and Kumatonge (2021:19) argue that in interpretivism, qualitative methods include open-ended interviews and document analysis. As the study used semi-structured interviews, participants shared their perceptions of the research topic, which helped the researcher draw sound conclusions.

Constructivism creates and develops findings in the investigation process (Erciyes, 2020:185). Constructivists aim to rely much on the participants' views of the case under study and interpret the meanings that the participants attach to the world around them (Muzata & Kumatonge, 2021:19). In interpretivism and constructivism, the researcher valued people's subjective interpretation and understanding of their experiences and circumstances (Al-Ababneh, 2020:80; Leavy, 2023:13). Consequently, the two paradigms were relevant for the study because SMTs gave their perceptions based on their experiences and circumstances, on the effectiveness of QMS in secondary schools.

1.8.3 Research design

This empirical study employed a multiple case study design. Since the case study is qualitative in nature (Mouton, 2022:142), it aimed to provide an in-depth description of a small number of cases. Case studies investigate a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context (Tomaszewski, Zarestky & Gonzalenz, 2020:1). They (case studies) allow the researcher to get a deeper understanding into selected cases for investigation (Mutongoza, 2021:150) and the researcher aim to investigate between the phenomenon and its context (Martinsou & Huemann, 2021:1). Schoch

(2022:245) states that a case study is appropriate if the context is relevant to the phenomenon such as investigating a gap in a high school. Since the qualitative study employed a phenomenological theoretical framework, the phenomenon under investigation is the gap in the effectiveness of QMS in secondary schools in the UMkhanyakude District. The case study design was therefore used because, during data collection, participants (SMTs) were able to interpret and describe their assertions (Muzari et al., 2022:15) in line with the study's objectives, and, by doing so, it was anticipated that their developmental needs would be met.

1.8.4 Population and sampling

This section discusses the study's population and sampling. Firstly, each one of them is defined and then contextualised for the study.

1.8.4.1 Population

Population is defined as a set or group of all the units on which the results of the research are to be applied (Shukla, 2020:1). It is a group of individuals restricted to a geographical region or certain institutions (hospitals, schools, health centres, etc.), with common characteristics (Willie, 2022:521). Similarly, Ahmad, Alias and Rasak (2023:20) maintain that a population is a group of individuals, objects, or events that share a common characteristic and are the focus of the study. Consequently, the population from which sampling was done consists of members of the SMTs from the 168 total secondary schools in the uMkhanyakude District. That is, secondary school principals, deputy principals, and departmental heads were targeted for the study, as they share a similar role in managing educators (Lukhele & Lebeloane, 2024:52). The targeted population was anticipated to meet the study's needs.

1.8.4.2 Sampling

Sampling refers to the process of selecting a statistically representative sample of individuals from the population of interest (Majid, 2018:3). It is a process whereby a

subset of the population is selected for study purposes (Ahmad et al., 2023:21). There are two basic types of sampling methods, namely probability sampling and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling, also known as random selection, refers to the randomisation implying that the targeted population sample has a known, equal, fair and non-zero chance of being selected (Shukla, 2020:1). In contrast, a non-probability sampling (non-random selection) is applied where the choice of being chosen is unknown to the participants (Shukla, 2020:1). The non-probability method is utilised within qualitative or exploratory research because the researcher aims to explore an idea in its richness and depth (Pace, 2021:9).

Therefore, the non-probability sampling method was used purposively to explore secondary SMTs' perceptions of the effectiveness of the QMS in the uMkhanyakude District. Since the district has four Circuit Management Clusters (CMCs), four SMT members from each CMC were included in the sample. That is, 16 SMT members with at least three years of experience in a management position were included in the sample. To explore SMT members' perceptions of the effectiveness of QMS, 16 schools were selected from the four CMCs that constitute the district. Therefore, the sample size is approximately 10% of the total of 168 secondary schools.

1.8.5 Data gathering instrument

Data gathering is the process of collecting, evaluating, and analysing precise understandings for research by means of typical genuine methods (Mazhar, Anjum, Anwar & Khan, 2021:6). It is the process of collecting data aiming to gain participants' perceptions regarding the research topic (Taherdoost, 2021:10). Data gathering is the process of collecting data based on the research topic which includes primary and secondary data (Taherdoost, 2021: 12; Muzari et al., 2022:16). Primary data is the first-hand information which an individual cannot change whereas secondary data is data gathered by someone else for another reason and can be used for other purposes (Taherdoost, 2021:12). Examples of primary data in qualitative research includes interviews, observations, focus group interviews and questionnaires (Taherdoost, 2021:12). Moreover, document analysis, books, journals, published articles and government records are examples of secondary data.

Consequently, the study employed both primary and secondary data gathering methods to ensure the credibility of findings. That is, methodological triangulation was used during data gathering. Triangulation is a strategy for establishing credibility that involves combining different methods (Megheirkouni & Moir, 2023:855). Secondary data sources analysed to support the primary data gathering instrument include government policy papers, scholarly articles, books and other publications related to QMS.

The telephone semi-structured interview was a tool for primary data gathering. The interview lasted 25-30 minutes. The qualitative telephone interview was a suitable method due to its flexibility between the interviewer and the interviewee. In their study, Lukhele and Lebeloane (2024:124) assert that the telephone interview is a preferred method that enables interviewees to respond at any convenient time, unlike physical contact, which would require interviewing only during the day. The interview schedule consisted of open-ended questions generated from the four sub-research questions. Probing was done to help the researcher explore answers relevant to the research questions. Robinson (2023:1) reveals that probing provides access to an additional level of detail and depth through verbal prompts that clarify, elaborate, illustrate, or explain a prior answer to an interview question the participant has already given.

Although questions were asked in English, participants were asked twice to ensure credibility, and they were allowed to respond in their preferred language. The participants' answers were transcribed from an audio recording application, which enabled the credibility of the responses during the analysis and interpretation phase. The flexibility of the qualitative telephone interview was pertinent to this study because it aimed to explore SMTs' perceptions of the effectiveness of the QMS in the UMkhanyakude District.

1.9 DATA ANALYSIS

Mezmir (2020:15) defines qualitative data analysis as the organisation and interpretation of linguistic or visual material to make statements about implicit and explicit dimensions and structures of meaning-making in the material and what is

presented in it. There are different kinds of data analysis applied in research. They include, amongst others, content analysis, thematic analysis, open coding, axial coding, narrative analysis, phenomenological analysis, and discourse analysis (Humble & Mozelius, 2022:89). Since the proposed study will employ the qualitative approach, thematic data analysis will be applied. Thematic data analysis is a qualitative research method that researchers use to systematically arrange and analyse complex data sets (Dawadi, 2020:62). In a similar view, thematic data analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting themes within data (Finlay, 2021:103; Braun & Clarke, 2022:1; Naeem, Ozuem, Howell & Ranfagni, 2023:2).

Thematic data analysis was deemed suitable for the study due to its stepwise approach, which aligns with the qualitative approach. Applying the steps of thematic data analysis assisted the researcher in identifying, organising and reporting themes linked to SMTs' experiences regarding the effectiveness of QMS in secondary schools. Thematic data analysis is an indispensable resource for researchers seeking to explore and understand the rich and complex experiences of their participants (Braun & Clarke, 2022:4). Braun and Clarke's six steps of thematic data analysis are briefly described below.

Firstly, the researcher became familiar with the data. This is a crucial step that involves transcription, immersion and taking notes on initial ideas (Humble & Mozelius, 2022:89). Dawadi (2020:64) states that researchers determine the types of themes that might emerge from the data. The second step is generating initial codes. The researcher organised the data in a meaningful way through collating codes and data extracts (Finlay, 2021:107). The third step involved searching for themes. In this step, the researcher collated codes into preliminary themes (Humble & Mozelius, 2022:91). That is, the researcher was selective in grouping the categories of meaning together. The researcher then reviewed the themes in the fourth step. Themes were checked and linked to codes (Humble & Mozelius, 2022:91), and those that were not central to the research objectives were discarded. The fifth step is defining and naming themes. In this step, the researcher concisely refined, crafted and wrote an informative analysis of each theme to tell a story (Finlay, 2021:107). The writing phase is the sixth and final

step, during which the researcher writes a wider report based on the evidence from the findings linked to the research objectives.

1.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

It is crucial for the researcher to consider ethical issues to ensure the safety of human participants in the study. An ethical conduct is a prerequisite for building trust with research participants, which in turn assist the researcher to obtain honest responses (Kang & Hwang, 2021:7). Ethics is all about doing good and avoiding harm (Aluwihare-Samaranayake, 2022:65). Ethics imply that conducting research with human beings requires protection for them because data collection methods, such as interviews, can create harm (Taquette & Borges da Matta Souza, 2022:1). The researcher considered applying for ethical clearance from the Unisa College of Education (CEDU) research committee to get approval for data collection. However, Taquette and Borges da Matta Souza (2022:2) argue that the ethics of research is not limited to complying with norms, directives, or approval from the ethics committee, as many researchers seem to believe. Consequently, the researcher noted the following ethical matters: informed consent, anonymity, and confidentiality.

1.10.1 Informed consent

According to Xu, Baysari, Stocker, Leow, Day and Carland (2020:1), informed consent is a cornerstone of research ethics aimed at informing participants that they join research voluntarily and understanding what the study entails. Kang and Hwang (2021:7) argue that informed consent entails that the researcher warrants to participants that they enter the study willingly or voluntarily with complete information about the research. The researcher discloses information such as the purpose of the study, research approach, risks, anticipated benefits for the study and a statement offering to answer questions (Badampudi, Fotrousi, Cartaxo & Usman, 2022:3). Consequently, the participants (SMT members) were approached so that the study's purpose and the process of data collection were explained. Participants were given the agreement forms stating that their participation in the study was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time at no cost.

1.10.2 Anonymity

Anonymity in qualitative research involves not collecting data that can identify or trace an individual (Badampudi et al., 2022:3). It refers to the practice of data collection without the acquisition of any personally identifying information (Kang & Hwang, 2023:2). Although it may be difficult not to be exposed to the identities of participants, the principle of anonymity seems to be safe to protect the participants' identities. Czarnota-Bojarska (2021:63) affirms that safeguarding participants' anonymity is essential for ethical purposes but also poses a methodological challenge for researchers. To ensure anonymity, participants were informed that pseudonyms would be used instead of their names. Although the researcher ensured anonymity, confidentiality was strictly maintained. The ethical principle of confidentiality is described and contextualised for the study hereunder.

1.10.3 Confidentiality

Czarnota-Bojarska (2021:63) states that ensuring the confidentiality of personal data is necessary to obtain honest responses to research questions. In qualitative research, confidentiality must be respected. Occasional harm must be repaired (Taquette & Borges da Matta Souza, 2022:1). Confidentiality involves the elimination or alteration of any personally identifying information submitted by participants and included in the data (Kang & Hwang, 2023:2). It serves to protect the raw data. Only publishing the aggregated results that can be traced to an individual (Badampudi et al., 2022:3). For this study, confidentiality was maintained by informing SMT members that their identity would strictly not be revealed and that their interview responses would only be for data analysis.

1.11 DELIMITATIONS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Delimitations and limitations of the research are defined respectively in this section. Firstly, each one of them is defined and then contextualised for the study.

1.11.1 Delimitations

Miles (2019:7) defines delimitations as the factors that prevent researchers from claiming that their findings are true for all people in all time and places. They are characteristics that limit the boundaries of the study, including the research questions adopted by the researcher (Nankoo, 2021:11). Malakar (2022:54) notes that delimitations are boundaries of the study created by the researcher that can be controlled. Therefore, the delimitation of the proposed study was that the purposive sampling method could potentially misrepresent the generalisability of results. Since the sample comprises 16 SMT members from secondary schools, it cannot provide a true reflection of the whole geographical area, as primary schools and other stakeholders in the implementation of QMS were excluded from the study. Furthermore, as the study was central to the effectiveness of QMS in secondary schools, other quality assurance frameworks were excluded. The study was also confined specifically to the perceptions of SMT members who had more than three years of experience in the management positions in secondary schools. Therefore, the views of post level 1 educators, learners, support staff, and parents were excluded. Lastly, only purposively selected secondary schools in the uMkhanyakude district, KwaZulu-Natal, during the 2025/2026 academic year were included in the study.

1.11.2 Limitations

Research limitations are defined as constraints on the researcher’s study arising from the research methodology and design (Miles, 2019:2). They are issues beyond the control of researchers, but that affect the research methodology in some ways (Akanle, Ademuson & Shittu, 2020:109). Limitations are abstract boundaries beyond the researcher's control (Malakar, 2022:53). Consequently, a limitation in the proposed study could be the use of the telephone. Participants may experience communication breakdowns, as most areas lack network coverage. This could limit participants' willingness to give earnest responses due to ongoing communication breakdowns.

1.12 DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS

This section defines the key concepts of the study.

1.12.1 School

A school refers to a pre-primary, primary or secondary school (South Africa, 1998a). According to the South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996, a school means a public or independent school that enrols learners in one or more grades from Grade 0 to Grade 12 (South Africa, 1996b). A school is any educational institution at which education and training, including pre-primary education, are provided and which is maintained, managed, and controlled or subsidised by a provincial education department, excluding a university and Technikon (South Africa, 1998). It is a place that provides learners with technical skills, a sense of civic responsibility, personal development, and mental and physical health, as well as cultural awareness (Toramen & Korkmaz, 2023:1). Drawing from the above, a school is hereby defined as a state-subsidised institution in which the core function of teaching, learning and assessment take place under the guidance of the educator.

1.12.2 School Management Team (SMT)

The SMT consists of the principal, deputy principal, and departmental heads who are responsible for managing the planning and implementation of QMS processes (ELRC, 2020:9). These individuals account for all activities that occur in and around the school premises (Schlebusch & Schlebusch, 2022:24). The SMT can also include the head of school, deputy head, school accountant, academic master, and discipline Master (Michael & Mhando, 2024:400). This study conceptualises SMT as a team of senior, experienced educators who ensure quality management, control and accountability for all activities related to administration and school departments.

1.12.3 Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS)

According to the ELRC (Collective agreement No.8 of 2003), the IQMS, which is informed by the Employment of Educators Act, No. 76 of 1998, consists of three programmes, namely Developmental Appraisal, Performance Measurement, and

Whole School Evaluation, which were aimed at enhancing and monitoring the performance of the education system. It is a national policy in South Africa aimed at increasing productivity among educators in the education system (Tachie & Mancotywa, 2021:1). Nankoo (2021:11) views IQMS as a system that aims to ensure quality public education for all and to constantly improve the quality of teaching and learning through effective accountability. Therefore, a working definition of IQMS is that it is a phased-out systematic approach consisting combined programmes that were intended to improve school performance holistically.

1.12.4 Quality Management System (QMS)

The QMS came into effect through the streamlining and rebranding of the IQMS (ELRC, 2020:7). The QMS is therefore a performance management system for school-based educators, designed to evaluate individual performance to achieve high levels of school performance. QMS is a quality assurance tool designed to foster increased loyalty and professional development among school-based educators in South African public schools (Girmanová, Šolc, Blaško & Petrík, 2022:460). It is an appraisal tool designed to help educators in South African public schools identify their shortcomings, engage in personal development, and improve the culture of teaching and learning (Makoelle, Mestry & Du Plessis, 2023:180). In the context of this study, QMS is understood as a quality assurance instrument intended to measure educators' performance, systematically identify the challenges they face, and empower them through constructive enrichment and feedback.

1.12.5 Total Quality Management (TQM)

Total Quality Management is a system aimed at improving the activities of an organisation holistically, for better results (Habtoor , Ali & Ali, 2022:27). It refers to directing all academic, administrative and financial activities at all institutions to meet the needs of the target population (Al-Zoubi, Qablan, Issa, Bataineh & Al Kaabi, 2023:1). Owusu-Kyei, Kong, Akomeah and Afriyie (2023:253) view TQM as a systematic method for fostering organization wide involvement in the planning and execution of processes. Drawing from the above, TQM can be defined as a holistic

way of integrating systems for the purpose of planning, operating and evaluating activities to achieve better results in an organization.

1.12.6 Effectiveness

Burches and Burches (2020:3) define effectiveness as the extent to which planned outcomes, goals, or objectives are achieved as a result of an activity, intervention or initiative intended to achieve the desired effect, under ordinary circumstances. It is doing the right thing to adequately achieve an intended purpose or result (Patel, 2021:34). Wald (2021:57) defines effectiveness as a term that is used to refer to the performance of an intervention in achieving a specific outcome. Accordingly, effectiveness is defined as the extent to which actions are taken by individuals or institutions to achieve an intended outcome.

1.12.7 Transformational leadership theory (TL)

As the TL theory was originally developed by Burns in the late 1970s, Savitri and Sudarsyah (2021:309) define it as a model which attempted to call upon the moral values of followers in an effort to raise their awareness of ethical issues and to mobilize their energy and resources to reform institutions. Thompson, Buch and Glasø (2021:275) view TL theory as a construct used to describe how leaders influence and inspire followers to commit to demanding objectives and perform beyond expectations. This theory sees transformational leaders as visionaries who engage with followers' higher-level needs and inspire them to deliver extraordinary outcomes in an organization (Eaton, Bridgman & Cummings, 2024:125). This study conceptualises TL theory as a framework of ideas, aspirations and inspirations that leaders use to influence followers to adopt practices perceived as being 'right' and 'acceptable' for organizational success.

1.12.8 Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC)

Skosana (2019:43) defines ELRC as a council which carries an agreement to provide a standardised framework for employee performance for educators. Huysamen (2019:2) states that the ELRC is a legislative body which is characterised by a broad

scope of labour laws premised on the standard performance of educators. It is a council that constitutes the State (employer) and the employees in respect of which the Employment of Educators Act 76 of 1996 applies (ELRC, 2020:2). Drawing from the above, the ELRC is defined as a statutory labour-related body that provides operational guidelines for educators' performance in accordance with other related legislative frameworks.

1.12.9 School self-evaluation (SSE)

School self-evaluation is a tool used to investigate how successfully in-school activities such as teaching and leadership are performed by schools (Brown, McNamara, Cinkir, Fadar, Figueiredo, Vanhoof, O'Hara, Skerritt, O'Brien, Kurum, Ramalho & Rocha, 2021:161). It is an internal, collaborative, cyclical, evidence-based review and improvement process that assists schools to identify actions that aim to improve outcomes for learners and overall school performance (O'Brien, McNamara, O'Hara, Brown & Skerritt, 2024:703). SSE is a crucial process in which educational institutions critically observe their processes, locate areas for development and setting strategies to increase the performance of learners (Wasir, Zafar & Ullah, 2024:2218). Therefore, a working definition of SSE is that it is a steering school performance programme that reviews all operations to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and strengths.

1.12.10 Continuous professional development programme (CPDP)

CPDP is defined as a training responsibility that education professionals take to maintain and enhance their performance and improve education outcomes (Drude, Maheu & Hilty, 2019:2). Saleem, Gul and Dogar (2021:55) assert that CPDP is a continuous process of training and follows up with all the educational personnel to change the classroom behavior of educators. It is a programme which gears towards a common goal of a systematic and on-going process of broadening one's professional skills and competence in order to keep abreast with the new trends and innovations in the workplace (Ebong, Ogwo, & Nwachukwu, 2022:5). In the context of this study, CPDP is a programme aimed at equipping and extending educators' professional skills and knowledge to ensure competence in the workplace.

1.13 CHAPTER DIVISION

The orientation of the study was provided in Chapter 1. Chapter 2 presents the theoretical framework. Chapter 3 reviews the relevant literature. Chapter 4 outlines the research methodology. Chapter 5 presents and interprets the data. Finally, Chapter 6 provides a summary of the findings, along with the study's conclusions and recommendations.

1.14 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presented the orientation of the study. It incorporated the problem statement and the significance of the study, as well as the formulation of the research questions and objectives. The theoretical framework was identified and contextualised for the study, and a preliminary review of relevant literature was provided. In addition, the chapter discussed the research methodology, data analysis procedures, and ethical considerations. The limitations and delimitations of the study, together with the definitions of key terms, were also presented. Chapter 2 subsequently presents the study’s theoretical framework in detail.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The study's orientation was outlined in Chapter 1. This chapter presents the study's theoretical framework. It begins by defining the concept of a theoretical framework and outlining its significance. The chapter then introduces Transformational Leadership (TL) theory, followed by a detailed discussion of its key components and characteristics. Thereafter, the rationale for adopting TL theory is provided. The theory is subsequently contextualised within the study, and the chapter concludes with a summary.

2.2 DEFINITION OF THE CONCEPT OF THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

According to Kivunja (2018:46), a theoretical framework is a structure that summarises concepts and theories devised from previously tested, peer-reviewed research. The researchers synthesise these theories to have a theoretical background for data analysis, interpretation, and meaning contained in the research data (Kivunja, 2018:46). Nhan (2020:1) posits that a theoretical framework is the use of a theory in a study that provides the deepest values of the researcher and conveys an articulated view for how the study will generate new knowledge. It reflects the work the researcher participates in, to use a theory in a study (Ukwoma & Ngulube, 2021:3). It is indisputably clear that theories form the basis of the theoretical framework used in a qualitative study. Therefore, a theoretical framework is a tool that guides a researcher in answering questions about a phenomenon under investigation.

2.3 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Before identifying the relevant theoretical framework for the study, it is prudent to highlight its significance, especially for this qualitative inquiry. Luft, Jeong, Idsardi and Gardener (2022:5) underscore that a theoretical framework helps explain a research phenomenon through a particular lens, while challenging and broadening existing

knowledge within its limitations. Furthermore, a theoretical framework shapes the nature of the questions asked and guides the method by which data are gathered and analysed. It goes broad and informs the discussion of results, allowing the researcher's subjectivities, such as social experience and viewpoint, to be considered. Omodan (2022:275) reiterates that a theoretical framework provides the lens through which researchers make sense of observations, and experiences, perceive and interpret their data, and explicitly frame conclusions about the investigated phenomenon.

Therefore, researchers must state the kind of theoretical framework that informs their study because all the research questions are being asked from the researcher's implicit or explicit assumptions of a phenomenon under study (Luft et al., 2022:5). The selected framework underpins the research and determines what is included or excluded from the analysis (Omodan, 2022:276). Hiebert, Cai, Morris and Hohensee (2023:55) describe four main purposes of theoretical frameworks. Firstly, theoretical frameworks ensure that predictions are accurate. Secondly, they help in crafting appropriate methods. Thirdly, they interpret the findings and, finally, contribute to the accumulation of the knowledge base in education.

Supporting Your Predictions

A refined theoretical framework provides a rationale that is well aligned with the researcher's predictions (Hiebert et al., 2023:55). That is, it provides concepts and definitions that help researchers think their predictions are the best possible. This is done by measuring all the variables that make up the predictions, ensuring accurate predictions. Similarly, Salawu, Bolatitio and Masibo (2023:4) state that the researcher uses a theoretical framework to make accurate predictions based on underlying assumptions, assertions, concepts and models. These will be used to answer the research questions, address identified problems, and fill gaps in data collection and analysis.

Crafting Appropriate Methods

Theoretical frameworks give a logic against which a researcher could check every aspect of the methods to be used (Hiebert et al., 2023:55). Furthermore, they should convey the methods that are appropriate and align with the researcher's predictions. If the methods are not appropriate, then the framework should be reviewed along with the predictions. Omodan (2022:275) argues that researchers must choose the theory that best resonates with the adopted method and is suited to their research problem.

Guiding Interpretations of the Data

A focus on aligning theoretical frameworks with the gathered data produces the richest interpretation of the study's findings (Hiebert et al., 2023:55). Furthermore, an appropriately chosen theoretical framework prevents researchers from making common mistakes such as claiming that results say more than they really do. Therefore, with this notion, it is easy for researchers to overgeneralise and make claims that go beyond the actual evidence. Omodan (2022:275) argues that researchers who are vigilant in their choice of theoretical frameworks usually interpret their data without significant deviations from the study's predictions.

Showing the Contribution of Your Study

Hiebert et al. (2023:55) accentuate that a theoretical framework contributes to research studies in two ways. Firstly, by showing how a study extends what is known. This occurs when a clearly written framework shows readers how a study will build on what is already known to expand it further. In the same vein, Majeed, Mukhtar and Ehsan (2023:149) argues that researchers refine theories across disciplines to understand and predict phenomena or to extend existing knowledge. Secondly, it sets the parameters for the researcher's contribution. A theoretical framework achieves this by providing an initial explanation for why researchers expect to find certain results.

2.4 TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP (TL) THEORY

This part discusses the TL theory, which was deemed relevant for the study. It begins with the definition of TL theory and its components. The characteristics of the TL theory are also outlined.

2.4.1 Definition of the Transformational Leadership (TL) theory

As the TL theory was originally developed by Burns in the late 1970s (Eaton et al., 2024:125), many authors build their definitions from this assertion. Accordingly, Tanjung, Rahman, Budawi, Suryana, Sumari, Mufid, Purwanto and Warto (2020:540) opine that the TL theory is based on transformative leaders creating admiration, loyalty, respect, and trust among followers and leaders, so that they are willing to volunteer to achieve the goals, objectives, and vision of the organisation. Similarly, Hambali and Idris (2020:574) define TL as a theory that identifies leadership that focuses on changing values, beliefs, attitudes, behaviour, emotions, and followers' needs to better transform the organisation.

The TL theory seeks to mobilise followers' moral values to raise their awareness of ethical issues and to mobilise their energy and resources to improve institutions (Savitri & Sudarsyah, 2021:309). Moreover, Eaton et al. (2024:126) define the TL theory as a view that regards leaders as heroic, inspirational figures whose visions of the future inspire and galvanise followers, leading to greater commitment to the organisation and ultimately higher performance.

The above definitions highlight the inspiration leaders provide, enabling their followers to achieve the organisation’s values, objectives, and vision to greater heights. Consequently, the definition of the theory of TL by Burns, further elaborated by Bass in 1985 (Reza, 2019:119), will be used for the study. Thus, according to Burns, TL theory is a theory that regards transformational leaders as being leaders who support and encourage followers to raise the level of their morals, motivation, beliefs, perceptions, and association with the performance of the organisation (Reza, 2019:120; Qalati, Zafar, Fan, Limon & Khaskheli, 2022:2).

It is therefore imperative to describe the components and characteristics of the TL theory. This is outlined below.

2.4.2 Components of the Transformational Leadership (TL) theory

Since the TL theory was first introduced by Burns (1978:1), its components have been discussed by various authors. According to Burn's TL theory, TL comprises four components (Reza, 2019:121). They are expediently addressed as the '4Is', namely: idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration (Reza, 2019:121; Singh, 2019:884; Tanjung et al., 2020:540; Hambali & Idris, 2020:575; Mbindyo et al., 2021:174; Savitri & Sudarsyah, 2021:311). The four components of the TL theory are discussed hereunder.

2.4.2.1 Idealised influence

According to Reza (2019:121), leaders with idealised influence serve as role models for their followers. They can do it because they themselves are ethical, principled, and proficient. The followers trust and respect their leader and are eager to imitate them confidently (Singh, 2019:884; Prestiadi, Gunawan & Sumarsono, 2020:122). The moral and trustworthy relationship between the leader and the followers tends to be established (Islam, Furuoka & Idris, 2020:2). Qalati et al. (2022:2) state that in this component of the TL theory, an atmosphere is created in which followers feel esteemed and trusted and follow their leaders. Leaders demonstrate the dimension of idealised influence in any organisation by taking risks with their followers, celebrating their successes with them, and maintaining consistency in their ethical behaviour (Mbindyo et al., 2021:175; Deng, Gulseren, Isola, Grocutt & Turner, 2022:630).

Ahmed (2022:27) uses 'idealised influence' interchangeably with 'charisma.' In this regard, charismatic leaders inspire their followers by being visionary, respectful, trustworthy, and confident, and by discussing values and beliefs. Charismatic leaders connect symbolically with their followers and persuade them that their vision is about a positive future for the organisation (Bakker, Hetland, Oslen & Espevik, 2023:701). Eaton et al. (2024:126) argue that idealised influence is related to charisma and outline

how leaders conduct themselves to influence followers to become like them. Similarly, transformational leaders boost employee performance by disseminating collective goals and values, demonstrating confidence, and they (leaders) are seen as role models to their followers (Alzoraiki, Ahmad, Ateeq, Naji, Almaamari & Beshr, 2023:3).

2.4.2.2 Inspirational motivation

Inspirational motivation refers to leaders' ability to motivate followers to achieve the organisation's goals and exceed expectations (Reza, 2019:121; Singh, 2019:884). Thus, the level of confidence among employees is improved through motivation (Islam et al., 2020:2). Mbindyo et al. (2021:176) affirm that in an organisation, followers gain confidence through the leader's inspirational commitment and dedication towards realising higher employee engagement and effectiveness, which are centred on achieving good results. The inspiring leader communicates positively about the future (Deng et al., 2022:630), articulates a strong vision and expresses confidence that goals will be attained (Ahmed, 2022:28). Qalati et al. (2022:2) accentuate that this dimension of the TL theory not only enables the leader to develop and express a vision but can also prepare challenging goals for employees. Leaders are optimistic and fervent in inspiring followers to be firm in their belief that they will succeed in the organisation (Bakker et al., 2023:701). The vision, goals, and morals the leader articulates to subordinates and the institution are inspiring (Eaton et al., 2024:126).

2.4.2.3 Intellectual stimulation

Intellectual stimulation of the TL theory assists followers by providing answers to their problems and obstacles (Islam et al., 2020:2). It empowers followers to be creative thinkers in solving problems in unique ways using viable, practical means (Mbindyo et al., 2021:176). Thompson et al. (2021:275) assert that leaders assist and challenge followers to voice out assumptions, reformulate problems and emphasise creative thinking. Similarly, Ahmed (2022:30) avows that the intellectual stimulation leader examines the relevance of assumptions, pursues diverse perspectives, identifies problems from all angles, and devises new solutions. However, Qalati et al. (2022:2) argue that these leaders not only reassess current assumptions but also evaluate the organisation's customs and beliefs to endorse new ideas and methods for completing

organisational tasks. Leaders who adopt this dimension of the TL theory significantly change the way followers think about problems that may deter the organisation's goals (Bakker et al., 2023:701).

Through QMSs, the component of intellectual stimulation considers the monitoring and evaluation of educators' assumptions regarding organisational work (Almonawer, Althonayan, Alainati, Al-Hammad, Haque & Senathirajah, 2023:55). To attain positive outputs of the organisation, Riwayadi (2024:134) edifies that employees should conform to the requirements of the International Standard Organization (ISO) on QMSs. Consequently, transformational leaders influence and stimulate the intellectual capacity of educators on various phases of QMS, namely: (1) planning and implementing its robust changes; (2) reporting and improving on its performance; and (3) monitoring and reviewing its effectiveness. Once all ISO processes are effectively adhered to, the organisation's QMS will ensure continuity and sustainability (Riwayadi, 2024:134).

2.4.2.4 Individual consideration

Individualised consideration refers to a situation in which a leader listens to and considers the plights of followers collectively and individually (Prestiadi et al., 2020:123). The leader does that by focusing on development and supporting followers through consultation, coaching, and mentoring them (Deng et al., 2022:630; Qalati et al., 2022:2; Islam et al., 2020:2). In this regard, transformational leaders need to be active listeners, empathetic of others' concerns, acknowledge needs and feelings, and aim to see followers grow (Mbindyo et al., 2021:177).

Thompson et al. (2021:275) assert that if leaders delegate to their followers and strengthen two-way communication, individual growth and independence will be realised among employees. Interestingly, Ahmed (2022:30) edifies that transformational leaders treat followers as unique individuals, accommodate their needs and assist them in strengthening their abilities. Bakker et al. (2023:701) argue that such leaders are highly attuned to individual needs and acknowledge that each follower is unique. Eaton et al. (2024:126) further emphasise that the skill of the transformational leader is characterised by appealing to each follower's individuality,

treating them as unique and valuable. Alzoraiki et al. (2024:3) argue that transformational leaders monitor their followers through coaching, advising, and assigning tasks, thereby fostering growth and development.

2.4.3 Characteristics of the Transformational Leadership (TL) theory

The TL theory is characterised by organisational leaders who are visionary, committed, charismatic, emphatic, influence employee engagement, and value performance (Poturaki, Mekić, Hadžiahmetović & Budur, 2020:120). Hambali and Idris (2020:574) argue that, besides leaders having charisma and being strategic in achieving organisational goals, the TL theory features leaders who focus on changing followers' values, emotions, beliefs, attitudes, behaviour, and needs. Therefore, by being considerate in achieving the institution's goals, the TL theory allows leaders to be less hesitant in encouraging change among employees and within the organisation. The organisation's future will depend on leaders' strategic roles as change innovators. Prestiadi et al. (2020:122) point out that the characteristics of the TL theory expect transformational leaders to focus on group ideas, be proactive and innovative, shape character, and cultivate organisational culture and climate. The integration of these qualities of transformational leaders indisputably strengthens the relationship between leaders and followers in an organisation. Thus, the employees' performance yields positive results for the organisation.

Chua and Ayoko (2021:526) describe four characteristics of the TL theory in achieving the organisational goals. Firstly, transformational leaders are said to autonomously pursue the organisational goals through teamwork. Secondly, followers are given the freedom to efficiently advance new methods to accomplish their tasks. Similar to Bakker et al. (2023:701), the third characteristic enables leaders to broaden followers' responsibilities and encourage them to take on challenges in the work setting. Lastly, the TL theory helps followers internalise their tasks and become involved in them.

However, Alessa (2021:2) posits that the characteristics of the TL theory found in transformational leaders include the acknowledgement of future needs, the handling of long-term challenges, the holistic evaluation of internal and external factors of the organisation, and the uplifting of follower awareness of the significance of specific

goals. Moreover, TL is branded by motivation towards followers, so that employees value the organisation's needs rather than their personal interests. Similarly, Savitri and Sudarsyah (2021:309) stress that the TL theory encompasses leadership that focuses on persuading followers to prioritise the interests of their institution over personal interests, to activate their higher needs, and to be aware of the value of task results.

Qalati et al. (2022:2) state that TL qualities include an effective bond between the leader and followers, in which the organisation's values and performance are achieved. Bakker et al. (2023:701) argue that the TL theory is characterised by transformational leaders who motivate subordinates to proactively generate their own job problems and job resources, which are determinants of work engagement. In this regard, followers recognise workplace challenges and can use resources to address organisational problems. Furthermore, transformational leaders, through their personal strengths, influence followers to optimise their work design and approach, thereby engaging them in the performance of the institution (Bakker et al., 2023:701). The key qualities of the TL theory include inspiring vision, individual consideration, and intelligent motivation (Kilang, Malbas, Nengasca, Longakit, Celin, Pasigui & Valenzona, 2024:104).

2.5 RATIONALE FOR USING THE TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP (TL) THEORY IN THE STUDY

The use of the TL theory is justified for the study because, when its specific features are linked to the research questions, they will help identify relevant answers to the research phenomenon. Thus, in the previous chapter, the working definition of the TL theory was that it is a theoretical tool that guides a researcher in answering questions about a phenomenon that could be investigated. Hiebert et al. (2023:51) affirm that the TL theory is a type of custom-made theory that focuses specifically on the research questions you want to answer.

The primary aim of the study was to explore secondary SMTs' perceptions of the effectiveness of the QMS in the UMkhanyakude District. Since this aim was achieved through four objectives, the TL theory guided the researcher in selecting a relevant

methodology, analysing data, and synthesising SMTs' perceptions of the effectiveness of the QMS. Muzari et al. (2022:15) concur that phenomenological researchers are interested in participants' interpretations, assertions and descriptions of their familiarity and acquaintances. Given the applicability of the TL theory, which has resulted in positive outcomes in organisations (Mbindyo et al., 2021:179), it is perceived as an effective tool for SMTs to implement the QMS effectively.

While drawing on the preceding utterances, it is crucial to clearly outline the rationale for using the TL theory in the study. The TL theory is justified for the study due to its four features borrowed from Poturaki et al. (2020:120), namely visionary leadership, employee commitment, the influence of employee engagement, and value performance.

Firstly, the effectiveness of QMS depends primarily on SMTs being visionary leaders in their schools. Visionary education leaders are key role players in realising quality education (Fathih, Supriyanto & Nur, 2021:517). There must be a strong link between visionary leadership and the effectiveness of quality education (Gökbulut & Turan, 2021:589). Yulius (2022:2) asserts that visionary leaders are very smart in realising the merits of quality education. These leaders inspire educators through motivation, helping the school continue to grow. Visionary leaders who value the purpose of QMS are characterised by a willingness to accept risks, share information with educators and transform members through creativity (Hambali, Hayati, Mariati, Lumbantobing & Ashlan, 2023:73). Interestingly, Wahab and Naseer ud din (2024:60) argue that those transformational leaders who are goal-driven in the implementation of QMS cultivate a supportive, inclusive and empowering environment for their followers.

Secondly, educators in schools should be committed to implementing QMS to achieve the school's vision. Murray and Holmes (2021:3) argue that employees with strong affective commitment behave in their employers' best interests. Shu (2022:2) views educator commitment as emulating educators' feelings of loyalty and attachment to the organisation's management system. In their study, Hussein, Ibrahim and Ismael (2022:47) argue that higher or lower levels of commitment have been identified as a key factor in an organisation's quality performance. Consequently, when employees increase their commitment to QMSs, there is a likelihood of greater work performance.

Yulius (2022:2) states that employees' commitment to the implementation of quality education is characterised by a strong belief in accepting the school's values and goals.

As educators are expected to execute a high sense of responsibility in the workplace (Hambali et al., 2023:73), transformational leaders need to display aspirations, values and strategic direction towards a QMS (Wahab & Naseer ud din, 2024:60). Transformational leaders drive the organisation and can challenge mission and inspire followers to achieve visions (Riwayadi, 2024:131).

Thirdly, the effectiveness of QMS in schools is believed to yield good results when the SMTs influence educators' engagement. Aboramadan, Hamid, Kundi and El Hamalawi (2022:114) reveal that employees who are highly engaged in their work demonstrate high energy and interest and are fully focused on the organisation's ethics. Employee engagement is an indicator of inherent motivation to achieve the outcomes of QMSs (Shu, 2022:3). In this way, educators are self-determined to demonstrate the vitality and efficiency to complete tasks assigned by the SMTs. Jiatong, Wang, Alam, Murad, Gul and Gill (2022:3) further opine that transformational leaders stimulate educator engagement by providing a clear vision that helps all employees connect their efforts to the organisation's management systems. Inviting ideas of employees and motivating them assist leaders to increase the efficiency of the organisation's quality performance (Susanto, Syailendra & Suryawan, 2023:61). Riwayadi (2024:127) argue that although TL may adopt quality management policies to engage educators, they (educators) cannot follow quality procedures if there is no element of motivation.

Finally, transformational leaders in schools should influence followers to value performance. This will help educators to realise their efforts in making the school succeed through quality education. Employees need to be motivated, and value their optimal performance and production to maintain the quality standards of the organisation (Zhenjing, Chupradit, Ku, Nassani & Haffar, 2022:3). Jiatong et al. (2022:4) state that motivating educators on the best delivery of quality education positively affects the performance of the school. When transformational leaders value

their followers' performance, employee retention is more likely, thereby enhancing the efficacy of QMS in schools (Al Shaher & Zreik, 2022:171).

Schools that commit adequate time and resources to valuing educators' performance are in a strong position to successfully implement a well-designed management system (Vuong & Nguyen, 2022:2). Obieze (2023:271) strongly agrees that the most effective tool for motivating and increasing educators' performance is recognition. In the school environment, when SMTs value educators' performance, the school is likely to be steered in the right direction in adopting QMSs.

2.6 CONTEXTUALISING THE TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP (TL) THEORY IN THE STUDY

The '4Is' of the TL theory, namely idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration, are fundamental components to be contextualised for the study. They are ultimately linked to the main research aim. It is therefore argued that schools that effectively implement QMS are characterised by a sustained relationship between leaders and followers, thereby creating a conducive environment for good performance. Kamau (2020:16) is of the view that when transformational leaders empower educators through QMS, schools will show significant positive outcomes. Mbindvo (2021:174) concurs that the TL theory has been proven to bring fundamental changes to the work environment by addressing followers' needs for development and achievement.

Setiyaningtiyas and Hartutik (2022:680) assert that the strategic implementation of QMS in schools helps transformational education leaders determine the school's value system, procedures, and rules. Furthermore, school leaders who develop a quality culture of the system (QMS) tend to become more effective in adaptability, flexibility, and performance. Meng (2022:1) supports leaders who value the purpose of QMS work more effectively in rapidly changing environments and can respond to complex challenges.

Transformational leaders that recognise QMS in schools are more committed and voluntarily engage with their followers to enable a transforming work environment

(Almonawer et al., 2023:55). Since TL has been identified as a strategic management style (Cheng, Liu & Zhou, 2023:3), it plays a key role in fostering collaboration and communication among leaders and followers for the smooth functioning and effectiveness of QMS in schools (Alzoraiki et al., 2023:4). Transformational leaders can effectively attend to follower needs and overcome human resistance to change, hence effectiveness of quality education (Ca & Le, 2024:160).

Subsequently, based on the sketch (Figure 2.6), the components of the TL theory are explicitly described and contextualised for the study.

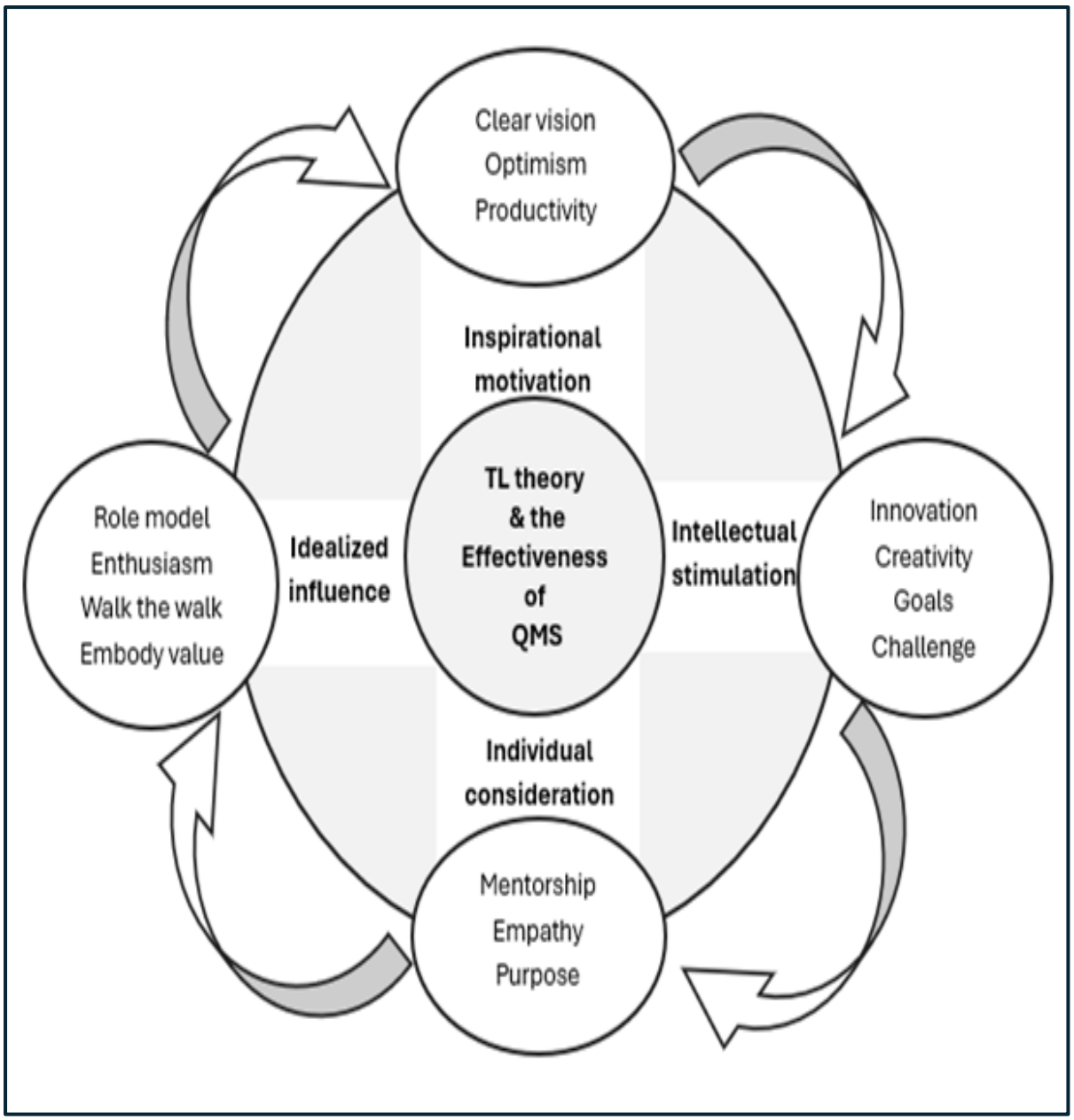


Figure 2.6: The relationship between the components of the TL theory and the effectiveness of QMS

Source: Adapted from https://www.simplypsychology.org/what-is-transformational-leadership.html

2.6.1 The relationship between idealised influence and the effectiveness of QMS

The TL theory emphasises that idealised influence encourages the leader to deliver a clear vision and mission for their organisation and, in turn, followers exhibit attributes of respect and trust (Reza, 2019:121). In this study, SMT members are expected to

play a vital role in influencing educators to adopt, implement, evaluate, and align the QMS mandate with the school's vision and mission. As evident in Figure 2.6, idealised influence characterises leaders as role models, enthusiastic, and those who pave the way, symbolising the value of leadership. Achieving effective QMSs requires school leaders (SMTs) to influence followers and clearly define organisational goals to them (Tanjung et al., 2020:540). The idealised influence of the TL theory should be inherited by transformational leaders who aim at improving professional practice, motivating educators and instilling a sense of accountability in teachers (Tachie & Mancotywa, 2021:1). Therefore, SMTs, as charismatic and visionary leaders (Ahmed, 2022:27), should persuade their educators so that they realise that accountability is part of the positive future of the school.

Mamabolo et al. (2022:1) state that the level of respect and trust between the SMT and the educators improves the effectiveness of QMS in schools. The idealised influence of the TL theory emphasises the measurement of school-based educators in line with their performance, thereby highlighting the leader-follower relationship to achieve the school's vision. Schools that adopt the idealised influence of the TL theory create an opportunity for SMTs to be perceived as role models by their educators. Consequently, idealised influence helps leaders guide and empower their educators to understand the school vision and mission (Setiyaningtiyas & Hartutik, 2022:682).

If transformational leaders develop followers' capabilities and skills, admiration and a sense of responsibility develop among educators because they treat their leaders as role models (Setiyaningtiyas & Hartutik, 2022:682). Alzoraiki et al. (2023:3) attest that in an organisation, the transformational leader is looked upon as a role model, thus, instilled confidence and zeal among followers. Followers trust and imitate their school leaders if they (leaders) transmit directions and establish specific responsibilities (Almonawer et al., 2023:54). Therefore, the established trust enables educators to deliver the outcomes of the QMS. Mayastinasari and Suseno (2023:3) attest that followers voluntarily work beyond their prescribed duties when there is trust, loyalty, and high respect in the organisation.

Mlangeni (2023:73) emphasises that QMS is designed to evaluate the educators' performance levels to achieve school performance, thereby boosting their efficiency

and effectiveness. Therefore, the capacity of the SMT is very crucial in influencing employees to perform well and realise their full potential (Shongwe & Mutambara, 2023:267). That is, they (SMTs) must first create a conducive environment in which educators feel respected and can work independently toward the school's vision. Educators will, in turn, take a pattern to imitate their leaders when they lead with vision. SMTs play a role in promoting and sustaining QMSs by empowering educators and fostering professional capacity building (Sliwka, Klopsch, Beigel & Tung, 2024:115). Similarly, Cao and Le (2024:158) state that schools that implement QMS and implement change are more likely to strengthen trust in TL.

2.6.2 The relationship between inspirational motivation and the effectiveness of QMS

Transformational leaders should behave in ways that inspire their followers (Reza, 2019:121), and through different forms of motivation, the outcomes of the QMS will be effectively achieved. As demonstrated in Figure 2.6, transformational leaders who inspire have a clear vision, are optimistic and are very productive in their work. School leaders should demonstrate their ability to inspire staff and motivate them to voluntarily achieve high performance beyond standards, without coercion (Tanjung et al., 2020:539). The leadership quality of the TL theory increases the level of motivation of the followers and creates a bond between the leader and the follower (Islam et al., 2020:2). Once SMTs appropriately infuse the inspirational motivation of the TL theory, followers (educators) will feel confident that they will succeed in reaching their optimal goals (Bakker et al., 2023:701). Incorporating inspirational motivation among followers, leaders, and educators can yield intrinsic motivation, praise, commitment, and energy, thereby improving educational quality, realising goals, and advancing the organisation's success (Mbindyo et al., 2021:176).

TL exerts positive effects on followers through motivational mechanisms (Bader, Gielnik & Bledow, 2022:360), thereby recognising the efficacy of quality education in

schools. It also emphasises the role of the leader who motivates followers to perform their tasks beyond expectations (Wijaya, Khoir & Zaini, 2022:51).

Inspirational motivation of the TL theory assists leaders to influence followers through motivational practices (Howell, Bullington, Gregory, Williams & Nuckols, 2022:54). Since a transformational leader inspires and motivates all employees by creating a friendly work environment (Meng, 2022:2), the effectiveness of QMS requires transformational leaders who are willing to motivate their followers to strive willingly and ardently for higher performance beyond normal expectations (Setiyaningtiyas & Hartutik, 2022:681). Almonawer et al. (2023:55) argue that members of the SMT who are interested in improving quality education do so not only by focusing on how educators teach, but also by promoting and encouraging capacity building, staff commitment, and motivation.

According to Rachmad, Mokan, Badriyyah, Gusliana and Tawil (2023:7046), one of the realisations of quality management is the effectiveness of school leaders and the followers in raising each other to a higher level of morality and motivation. Such a relationship is characterised by honesty, fairness, and responsibility, which motivate followers to work in accordance with ethical values. Ismaya, Darmawan, Tahroni and Kholis (2023:255) argue that strengthening inspirational motivation in TL involves creating a conducive environment, including study rooms, teachers' rooms, and other infrastructure. Furthermore, a cooperative, mutually supportive attitude will increase teacher motivation. Therefore, members of the SMT should apply discipline constructively in the form of efficiency and effectiveness (Ismaya et al., 2023:255), thereby motivating educators' work performance. As transformational leaders, SMTs should use inspirational motivation to influence their educators in explaining their visions about the effectiveness of the QMS in a school (Alzoraiki et al., 2024:4).

2.6.3 The relationship between intellectual stimulation and the effectiveness of QMS

The key dimension of the TL theory that enables school educators to be independent and creative problem-solvers is intellectual stimulation. In this regard, members of the SMT specifically challenge, empower, and guide educators to address challenges, and they (SMTs) work to stimulate educators' ideas to autonomously solve problems in the institution. Reza (2019:121) opines that intellectual stimulation enables leaders to foster creativity and innovation among employees. Figure 2.6 demonstrates that leaders who are innovative, creative, goal-oriented, and able to solve problems have the potential to lead their schools without major problems. Moreover, employees' minds are stimulated to explore new approaches to problem-solving. That is, their creative thinking is not criticised just because it doesn't align with that of their leaders, but they are empowered to improve their abilities. Brown, Brown and Nandedkar (2019:12) assert that this component of the TL theory motivates followers to go the extra mile with their capabilities to achieve exceptional performance.

Poturak et al. (2020:121) state that the dimension of intellectual stimulation encourages intelligence in the workplace, thereby establishing opportunities for promotion. There is a relationship between intellectual stimulation and inspirational motivation in the school environment. When educators demonstrate a high level of intelligence in the workplace, there are strong opportunities for personal development and promotion, thereby motivating them. Poturak et al. (2020:121) maintain that transformational leaders stimulate their followers' abilities by challenging them to find answers to organisational problems related to QMS implementation. Chua and Ayoka (2021) affirm that, given that intellectual stimulation in the TL theory enhances quality management in schools, educators' intellectual capacity enables them to autonomously pursue the institution's goals.

Mbindyo et al. (2021:177) argue that intellectually stimulating behaviour within the TL theory is established to develop quality education through meaning-making, skill identification, critical thinking, scaffolding of knowledge, and the attainment of

transferable skills. Consequently, educators become critical thinkers who can discover workable strategies to address challenges affecting the school.

Therefore, the effectiveness of QMS will be characterised by SMTs being earnest and committed to fostering educators' intelligence in fulfilling the institution's needs. Setiyaningtiyas and Hartutik (2022:685) reveal that leaders who believe in intellectual stimulation are likely to see their followers reinforced with knowledge, skills and the ability to autonomously overcome problems. Given that intellectual stimulation is based on creativity, innovative ideas, and strategic thinking (Howell et al., 2022:54), SMTs stimulate educators' active exploration of new quality-teaching systems and thereby seek new solutions to advance challenges (Meng, 2023:3).

Ismaya et al. (2023:255) argue that intellectual stimulation requires followers to be innovative in solving educational problems. Through the commitment of the SMTs to fostering intellectual stimulation among educators, they (leaders) should also be constructive, creative, integrative, coherent, objective, exemplary, disciplined and pragmatic in the implementation of QMS. Since followers' ideas are valuable to the success of organisational processes, leaders cannot neglect them. This implies that collaboration between the leader and followers could significantly help the school deliver quality education. Susanto et al. (2023:60) affirm that the elements that determine educators' effective performance in QMS include the quality of their work, as measured by educators' opinions, skills, and abilities. While stimulating intelligence among educators, the leaders should be vigilant in influencing them to carry out tasks without coercion so that they (educators) voluntarily perform according to the organisational standards (Rachmad et al., 2023:7046).

Transformational leaders who foster innovation and creativity promote the development of new ideas, approaches, and opportunities for followers to try new things (Almonawer et al., 2023:58). Therefore, educators' creativity will ease the complexity of QMS implementation in schools. If leaders provoke followers to challenge existing assumptions and to address problems with greater creativity in their work, then there will be employee satisfaction (Cheng et al., 2023:3). TL stimulates creativity among followers. Leaders give feedback on employees' performance, thereby influencing job satisfaction (Muharam, 2023:49). Therefore, the effectiveness

of QMS targets TL through defined goals, stimulation and support, and the symbolisation of participatory structures (Sliwka et al., 2024:108).

2.6.4 The relationship between individual consideration and the effectiveness of QMS

According to Reza (2019:121), individual consideration recognises differences among employees in their strengths and weaknesses. As evidenced in Figure 2.6, leaders who value individual consideration value mentorship, consider empathy, and have a sense of purpose in their leadership. Transformational leaders treat each follower as a unique individual, which is likely to increase the likelihood of understanding their needs. Brown et al. (2019:12) argue that such leaders protect the well-being of all individuals in the workplace and ensure that they are fairly treated for their actions. Singh (2019:884) states that followers develop a sense of trust in their leaders and take them as role models.

Individual consideration is therefore another important component that SMTs should take into cognisance when dealing with QMSs. Since educators differ in their strengths and capabilities (Reza, 2019:121), leaders should be active listeners (Mbindyo et al., 2021:177) for their concerns, and this is likely to effectively take the institution forward. To effectively facilitate QMS in schools, leaders (SMTs) should listen to educators' needs and concerns as well as recognise their interests and abilities (Savitri & Sudarsyah, 2021:308). With guidance, coaching, and regular communication, educators are likely to feel they are part of the transformation process and, in turn, support their leaders. Two-way communication is important for fostering follower growth (Thompson et al., 2021:275).

Employee performance is optimised by effective communication in the organisational environment (Wijaya et al., 2022:51). In this way, school leaders strive to create opportunities for followers to convey their ideas related to the school's vision and mission. Ismaya et al. (2023:254) note that transformational leaders foster two-way communication, enabling a favourable, professional interaction between them and followers. This is done to make followers feel a sense of belonging in the organisation and to enable them to contribute their ideas without fear. Thus, the effort of achieving the outcomes of an effective QMS will be easily recognised.

Susanto et al. (2023:60) argue that a transformational leader must consider individualism among employees as a basis for correcting weaknesses to increase employee productivity. Rachmad et al. (2023:7046) opine that individual consideration requires leaders to be aware of their followers' feelings and to show empathy when they encounter challenges. A leader who adopts individual consideration is a coach and advisor who paves the way in addressing employees' needs, achievements, and personal development (Alzoraiki et al., 2023:4). Moreover, employees are respected. Their unique individuality is seen as reinforcing their strengths in quality education.

Schools that feature individual consideration in their leadership treat educators as unique individuals, provide opportunities for personal growth and their individual needs and concerns are recognised (Cheng et al., 2023:3). The recognition of educator uniqueness, teamwork, cultivated sense of ownership and participation in decision-making result to higher quality performance in a school (Almonawer et al., 2023:57). Schools that encourage fair treatment of educators, established trust, and respect their contribution (Cao et al., 2024:161), are likely to have their operating systems nurtured with quality education (Howell et al., 2024:104). Therefore, educators' performance is influenced by leaders who value individual consideration in accordance with managerial strategies.

2.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presented the study's theoretical framework. Firstly, the theoretical framework was defined, and its significance explained. Secondly, since the study was grounded in phenomenological research, the TL theory was deemed relevant and therefore introduced. The components and characteristics of the TL theory were also detailed. The rationale for using the TL theory was also presented.

The crux of the chapter was to contextualise the TL theory in the study. Subsequently, the components of the TL theory were contextualised to the study's main aim. The components of the TL theory that were contextualised for the study were idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual

consideration. Various sources of literature were consulted to provide insight into the relationship between the TL theory and the research phenomenon.

Therefore, a conclusion is drawn from the preceding discussion. The TL theory, developed by Burns in the 1970s (Eaton et al., 2024:125), is perceived as a strategic tool that guides SMTs toward a QMS. SMTs can achieve the purpose and effectiveness of a QMS when they embody the features of the TL theory, namely visionary leadership, employee commitment, the influence of employee engagement, and the valuing of performance. Furthermore, the relationship between SMTs and educators should be centred on morals, motivation, beliefs, and perceptions. This will not only enhance the effectiveness of the QMS but also sustainably improve organisational performance. The next chapter (Chapter 3) reviews the literature on the effectiveness of QMS.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 2 presented the theoretical framework that informed the study. This chapter reviews the literature on the study's topic. Peñalvo (2022:1) defines literature review as a systematic way for identifying, evaluating, and interpreting the work of researchers and experts in a chosen field of study. It reviews recent or current literature, which can cater for a wide range of topics in a selected field of study. It helps researchers to identify knowledge gaps from other work that has already been done by other academics (Luft, Jeong, Idsardi & Gardner, 2022:2). Chigbu, Atiku and Du Plessis (2023:2) endorse the preceding assertion by indicating that literature review involves reference to researched and published work with the aim of (in)directly using it or part thereof to achieve specific research objectives.

Consequently, the working definition of a literature review is that it is a systematic method of gathering and synthesising scholarly information from different authors' perspectives to answer research questions, which guide an intended study. This study's literature review focused on addressing the research questions by exploring SMTs' perspectives on the effectiveness of QMS from a global perspective, in Africa and in South Africa, except for the KwaZulu-Natal Province, where the study was conducted. A conclusion was drawn thereafter.

3.2 ROLE PLAYERS ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

The effectiveness of QMS requires insight from key role players. Therefore, this section establishes the role players on the effectiveness of QMS in secondary schools. Yusuf, Masruhim and Sjamsir (2019:92), who conducted a study in Samarinda, Indonesia, state that secondary school principals play a role in providing positive support to improve the performance of the IQMS. In their study, they further note that senior educators, junior educators, and students' parents are involved in implementing

IQMS. Contrary to the IQMS implemented in Indonesia, TQM practices are implemented in Jordanian schools (Sweis, Abualsondos, Magableh, Alamayreh, Sukkari & Alawneh, 2020:114). They further state that school managers and teachers focus on TQM practices that directly affect the academic performance of secondary schools in Amman, Jordan.

Similarly, the implementation and effectiveness of TQM in Qatar secondary schools rest primarily on the responsibility of the school principals, assistant principals, other management staff with similar responsibilities, as well as teachers (Al-Saffar & Obeidat, 2020:79). However, in Kosovo, the cooperation of school management (principals and senior teachers) is inadequate for the implementation of quality education systems to students in secondary school level (Duraku & Hoxha, 2020:30). Only teachers collaborate at their best abilities to put quality teaching and learning systems in place regardless of the lack of support from the school management. In their study, Díez, Villa, López and Iraurgi (2020:4) found that 14% of management teams and 86% of teachers implemented two management systems in secondary schools in the Basque Country, Spain. The effectiveness of the QMS and the Integrated Quality Project (IQP) was permanently monitored by school leaders to provide feedback and guidance to teachers on quality education delivery and professional development matters (Díez et al., 2020:4).

According to Santos, Sá, Félix, Barreto, Carvalho, Doiro, Zgodavová and Stefanovi (2021:3), school principals, senior teachers, administrators and junior teachers value the use of TQM by utilising quality tools and artificial intelligence for improving teacher performance in Portugal's North-West region. However, as a means to achieve quality education in Polish secondary schools, Tomczyk and Walker (2021:6853) assert that parents, school principals and teachers were attracted to e-learning, especially during the COVID-19 period. Approximately 25% of parents and 30% of teachers participated in increasing the efficiency of QMS to improve digital competencies of both teachers and students in the teaching and learning space.

Ortan, Simut and Simut (2021:8), who conducted a study in the North-west region of Romania, argue that school principals, master instructors, educators, secondary teachers, and assistant teachers bear the onus to increase student well-being and the

quality of teaching programmes through the effective use of QMSs. This state of transition benefits both teachers and students in matters of discipline, cooperation, and the utilisation of materials, thereby increasing job satisfaction. Goldhaber, Khuan and Allysa (2021:53) argue that secondary school principals, teachers, and students in the United States of America (USA) adopt the integration of QMS with Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) to deliver quality education. This integration is considered empowering and transformative, as it equips principals and teachers with innovative skills, moving from traditional teaching methods to digital quality education systems (Goldhaber et al., 2021:53).

Al-Mamary (2022:4) reports that in Saudi Arabia, teachers and principals play a role in facilitating QMSs designed to impact student quality of education. The school managers support teachers in understanding the outcomes of innovative education systems, thus benefiting students in secondary schools. In the context of Italian secondary schools, Biondi and Russo (2022:424) note that school principals sought to modernise the use of QMSs to improve teacher performance. They tested the performance and QMSs that aim at identifying achievement targets, evaluating teachers and informing them (principals) when to take necessary actions to avoid deterioration of performance. However, to date, there is no evidence of the tangible usefulness of QMS to school principals and public administrators in the country (Biondi & Russo, 2022:424).

The school principal, education administrators, and stakeholders have realised the importance of effective quality management in teachers and the cultivation of competitive students in secondary schools in Malaysia (Qingya, Azar & Ahmad, 2023: 166). Similarly, in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), school principals and senior teachers use quality management models to monitor and evaluate teachers' work, providing feedback to cultivate students' strengths and improve the quality of institutional outcomes (Chaudhry, Sarwary, El Refae & Chabchoub, 2023:9).

Babatunde and Victor (2018:183) assert that head teachers, who are also administrators, are entrusted with managerial roles in executing the QMS goal at schools in Ondo State, Nigeria. Similarly, the Kwara State of Nigeria sees the education quality management as optimally implemented by school principals who provide moral disciplinary leadership, good administration, and curriculum

implementation (Kadir, 2019:60). Osegbue and Ohamobi (2025:17) accentuate that in the Anambra state of Nigeria, the school principal and other top management members are expected to make effective administrative duties to guarantee quality education in secondary schools. That is, they (principals) should make informed decisions on matters of quality curriculum planning and implementation, goal setting, and the coordination of human and material resources. Uhuka and Wodi (2025:65) argue that principals, board chairpersons, directors, and teachers need training to ensure effective quality education in Nigerian secondary schools.

Mensah (2020:9) proclaims that school teachers and managers are key drivers for ensuring that continuous quality education systems are in place in developing countries. Therefore, Shikalepo (2020:63) attests that rural secondary schools in the Omusati region of Namibia must explore additional measures to support principals, education officials, long-serving teachers, and teachers to improve the quality of education. Despite the education sector's efforts to make education accessible to all citizens in the country, there remains a challenge in developing quality management skills among school principals. Kayumbu (2020:1) notes that one element of QMS in Namibia is the Continuous Professional Development Programme (CPDP). At the secondary school level, CPDP committees include school principals, mentor teachers, departmental heads, and novice and experienced teachers. Therefore, in the Oshana Education Region of the country, these role players are perceived as spearheads of effective QMS implementation through professional development (Kayumbu, 2020:14).

In Zimbabwe, the SSE framework serves as an instrument for improving the quality of education in public secondary schools (Garira, 2020:4). Consequently, school administrators (school head teachers), teachers and Education Officials are expected to drive the framework. However, in her study, Garira (2024:4) found that 36 teachers, 18 school administrators, and three education officials reported that no QMSs are in place in the public secondary schools of Harare and Masvingo. These role players opined that there was an urgent need for a standardised instrument as they are expected to develop their own to measure their performance. Garira (2020:4) further emphasises that the inefficiency of the SSE is exacerbated by teachers perceiving it as meaningless, as they are not involved in the evaluation of quality education except in their classrooms. However, Chikuvadze, Natani and Mudzamiri (2024:38) argue that

SMTs in Zimbabwe must be committed to the effectiveness of clinical supervision as a tool for improving quality management of instruction in teaching and learning.

Mefi (2020:2) reveals that the Lesotho MOET adopted and implemented the Performance Contract Policy (PCP) to ensure that school management systems focus on accountability aimed at improving the quality of education in Lesotho secondary schools. This policy was necessary for school principals, teachers and retired teachers to improve education outcomes in the country, as the overall performance of secondary schools was very poor.

In Algerian secondary schools, TQM is believed to yield good results when teachers and top management in schools collaborate in improving quality educational goals (Yahiaoui, Chergui, Aissaoui, Brika, Lamari, Musa & Almezher, 2022:3). Furthermore, TQM is built on teachers trying to execute their professional standards in meeting the quality demands of any educational institution. Mohamed (2022:45) states that the implementation of QMSs in secondary schools in Somalia is the responsibility of the Education Ministry, which comprises central staff, regional education officers, district education officers, school principals, and teachers. Consequently, the quality of education is assessed by the achievement of learning outcomes and by teachers' commitment.

However, in areas such as Mogadishu and Jubbaland, the education provision is of low quality due to a high number of unqualified and untrained teachers, inadequate infrastructure, multiple curricula and weak service delivery (Mohamed, 2022:45). Taking into consideration that these factors are primary elements of quality education in schools, their challenge in Somalia contributes to poor effectiveness of QMSs. Warsame (2023:233) reiterates that assessment reforms are also an integral element of the QMS, which education officers, regional staff, district officers, and school principals should adopt in Somalia. Quality assessment reforms are said to be effective instruments for monitoring the performance of a school system (Warsame, 2023:233). According to Donkoh, Lee, Ahoto, Donkor, Twerefoo, Akotey and Ntim (2023:2), school headteachers and teachers are leaders of quality educational management in Ghanaian secondary schools. However, factors such as poor educational management and a technological gap impede teachers' ability to deliver education in the country.

Kganyago (2018:103) states that SMTs vest the power to ensure that QMS in Soweto secondary schools is effective and efficient. They (SMTs) undertake evaluation activities of educators, aiming to improve the quality of school performance in the Gauteng province. Botha (2019:11) opines that Gauteng school principals, educators and other members of the SMT have the responsibility to improve their skills and professional competence in providing quality education. This challenges the SMT to take heed in managing the quality of education delivered by educators, so that they can improve their professional confidence, subject knowledge, teaching skills, and classroom management (Botha, 2019:11).

School principals, as overseers and managers of quality teaching and learning, must be empowered to lead and manage Gauteng secondary schools effectively (Naidoo, 2019:3). Lorraine (2023:10) emphasises that if school principals in this province are supported to effectively implement QMS, the operations and processes to produce optimal outputs will succeed. Clarke (2024:17) argues that if all SMTs require regular educator training to elevate the quality of education, secondary schools in Tshwane could consistently achieve the full potential of QMS.

In their study, Dhanpat and Naicker (2024:357) found that some secondary schools in one district of the Gauteng Province required induction and capacity-building for school principals to effectively provide the district with a list of school development needs. There was a need for greater communication between school principals and district officials in deliberations on issues related to the effective implementation of QMS (Dhanpat & Naicker, 2024:357).

Thaba-Nkadimene (2020:3) states that educators in 80% of underperforming schools in the Limpopo Province provide learners with low-quality education, which provides evidence that the operations and processes for managing quality education are not adequately in place. Similarly, as SMTs are expected to manage quality teaching and learning in the Vhembe District, supervising educators to achieve the desired QMS outcomes may not be as effective as desired (Muedi, Kutame, Ngidi & Uleanya, 2021:140). As a result, departmental heads are not adequately equipped through training and induction programmes to further support educators on the ground (Muedi et al., 2021:140). As advocated by the ELRC (2021:9), Budeli (2020:56) affirms that district officials, school principals, deputy principals, and departmental heads are

responsible for ensuring that the QMS processes are implemented successfully in the Vhembe District, Limpopo. However, the effectiveness of the QMS was hampered by significant drawbacks, including a lack of training and support for educators during the implementation phase (Budeli, 2021:56).

According to Mamabolo, Malatjie and Mphahlele (2022:1), the supervisors of QMS in Warmbad circuit in the Limpopo province are the SMTs, namely the school principals, deputy principals, circuit managers and district officials. In their findings, Mamabolo et al. (2022:1) concluded that educators conducted QMS processes for monetary value rather than for quality assurance. This therefore provides evidence that educators do not have continuous training for the effectiveness of QMS. Based on their findings, Bessong and Ogina (2022:7) reveal that although educators were aware they were agents of change in Limpopo secondary schools, they proposed that their professional development opportunities be informally assessed by colleagues rather than undergo QMS processes. They (educators) believed that if they were well-trained by the SMTs and geared towards ensuring effective teaching and learning, the outcomes of quality education could be significantly realised rather than being part of the burden that comes with QMS (Bessong & Ogina, 2022:7).

SMTs in the Mpumalanga province are responsible for ensuring quality management of education through the development of educators in matters of quality teaching and learning (Jiyane, 2020:3). However, Simelane and Mutambara (2022:280) argue that in this province, the effective implementation of the QMS relies on the quality of leadership provided by principals of schools and district officials being hands-on in the implementation phase. In their study, Shongwe and Mutambara (2023:267) found that principals in the Gert Sibande District face major challenges in implementing QMS in secondary schools. Principals, as school managers, struggle to provide conducive environments where learners, educators and non-teaching staff can adequately achieve outcomes and realise their full potential (Shongwe & Mutambara, 2023:267).

In the Metropole South District, Western Cape Province, Steyn (2020:103) notes that teachers are not the only role players in ensuring quality education in schools; the Department of Basic Education, district officials, school principals, and departmental heads are also the drivers of QMS. However, these role players understand that the

monitoring of educators' professional growth and the provision of constructive feedback rest on the SMT as a collective; there seems to be a challenge in understanding the aim of QMS (Steyn, 2020:103). Mullins (2024:115) states that the QMS in the province mandates appraisal and lesson observations by immediate supervisors, resource persons and experienced members of the SMT. Despite the management system adding more administrative tasks, SMTs end up doing them merely for compliance (Mullins, 2024:115).

In the Eastern Cape Province, school principals at Mthatha districts were part of the team and structure to manage the QMS (Tachie & Mancotywa, 2021:1). In a study carried by Sambumbu (2023:2), it is revealed that the implementation of QMS is a role that principals of schools, deputy principals and departmental heads should take in the improvement and performances of the Eastern Cape public schools.

This section probed various role players responsible for the effective implementation of QMS in secondary schools across the world, in Africa, and in South African provinces, excluding KwaZulu-Natal, where the study was conducted. The principals, as spearheads of quality education (Kayumbu, 2020:14), have been identified as key role players in the successful implementation of QMS worldwide. Although they (principals) cannot afford to achieve the QMS outcomes as standalone managers, deputy principals and departmental heads have also been seen as innovators and supporters of this kind of change. Moreover, the literature showed that support from various national departments of Education and district officials also plays a crucial role in the effective implementation of QMS.

3.3 THE NEED FOR THE EFFECTIVENESS OF QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

This section examines why the effectiveness of QMS is important in secondary schools. Total QMS is reliant on the attainment of educators since no education system is qualitatively higher than the quality commitment of educators in Indonesia (Khurniawan, Sailah, Muljono, Indriyanto & Maarif, 2020:45). Duraku and Hoxha (2020:20) assert that if Kosovo schools fundamentally adopt the processes of QMS,

educational leaders, teachers and learners are likely to advance on goal setting, self-regulating abilities and esteemed professionalism. There will also be equal prospects for development, training and maximised quality of education reforms.

A diagnostic study conducted in Mexico and Spain by Rodríguez-Abitia, Martínez-Pérez, Ramirez-Montoya and López-Caudana (2020:12) reveals that the QMS is considered necessary to train teachers to acquire transformational knowledge and skills in the delivery of sustainable teaching. Furthermore, the system allows teachers to be more flexible in adapting to changing contexts, thus ensuring sustained quality and inclusive education. In Qatar, secondary schools that implement TQM help in the professional and practical performance of teachers as they are supported through various training programmes (Al-Saffar & Obeidat, 2020:86). Moreover, seminars and workshops held for the efficiency of TQM provide an opportunity for continuous communication that strengthens the expertise, skills, and competencies of teachers. TQM also motivates teachers to fulfil their duties at the highest level of efficiency during the annual performance evaluation (Al-Saffar & Obeidat, 2020:86).

Contrary to TQM in Qatar, the QMS implemented in the Basque Country, Spain, is different. Accordingly, secondary schools that allow teachers to be involved in QMS have an opportunity to do things in a right way, learn new skills and improve their teaching to be more effective (Díez et al., 2020:2). Beside the direct positive effect on learners' performance, the processes of QMS in the Spanish schools create and maintain school operational conditions, guarantee team building, strengthen school capacity for change and integrate educators' professional development (Díez et al., 2020:2).

According to Mohammadi, Mohibbi, and Hedayati (2021:5181), the quality of teaching in Afghanistan is considered an aspect of service quality. This is achieved through the integration of necessary teaching resources and methods, thereby enabling learners to receive quality education. Therefore, QMSs in secondary schools help strengthen the relationship between teachers and learners by engaging in daily discussions, providing learning feedback, supporting areas of weakness, and promoting mentoring of daily curriculum activities.

In Indonesia, principals of Islamic schools realise the potential benefits of effective QMSs (Asnawan, 2021:57). Firstly, the IQMS practised in secondary schools benefits principals by promoting proper administrative thinking, behaviour, and attitude. Secondly, the principal gains managerial competence and educational leadership. Thirdly, the principal can foster harmonious cooperation with teachers and help them reflect on matters related to the formal curriculum. Lastly, IQMS in the country aims to foster good relations between teachers and the entire community. Additionally, Jaria and Ngadimun (2021:179) emphasise that secondary school principals in the Banjarmasin Site of Indonesia ensure that TQM implementation in schools includes the preparation of the vision, mission, and goals of the school. Furthermore, the school quality service development team, the head of quality management, and the principal ensure effective stakeholder cooperation in implementing TQM.

Santos et al. (2021:3), who conducted a study in Portuguese secondary schools, also found that TQM was effective. In response to their questionnaires, principals, senior teachers, and administrators agreed that TQM encourages them to empower other junior teachers. Furthermore, the staff are keen to commit themselves to lifelong learning, generate developmental ideas, demonstrate a willingness to change, predict the organisation's future, and think holistically. Most of the staff members develop integrative thinking, and they become visionary when they understand the nature of QMSs (Santos et al., 2021:3). Tomczyk and Walker (2021:6847) argue that e-learning as a component of quality education in Polish secondary schools proves to yield valuable results in educating future generations about the digital competence of teachers. Through ongoing e-learning training for current teachers, the quality of education in the country has improved.

Girmanová, Šolc, Blaško and Petrík (2022:468) state that each high school in Slovakia needs a functional and comprehensive QMS, which is a necessary prerequisite for equipping learners with the knowledge, skills, and competences they need. Learners also understand current and future needs. Despite the system's requirement to meet learners' needs, quality assurance aims to ensure that teachers are motivated for professional growth, engaged in continuous planning, and evaluated in their daily tasks (Girmanová et al., 2022:468).

Håkansson and Adolfsson (2022:301) assert that Swedish principals are responsible for ensuring that QMS processes are fully implemented at the secondary school level. The system is said to improve schools through teacher and learner participation. Teachers are monitored and evaluated for different curriculum goals and visions, direction, leadership, classroom procedures and school culture (Håkansson & Adolfsson, 2022:301). Positive performance expectations of QMS in Saudi Arabia have a positive impact on school functionality and student learning performance (Al-Mamary, 2022:8). The management system's simplicity, clarity and understanding make quality teaching and learning more cost-effective and efficient. However, Italian secondary schools perceive QMSs as improving learners' academic performance and enhancing the administrative and teachers' pedagogical potential (Biondi & Russo, 2022:433). Furthermore, an organised teaching staff enhances the quality of teaching, increases commitment to the school's goals, and implements a quality assurance system.

Loeung and Safruddin (2022:1) reveal that QMS in Cambodian schools helps facilitate and lead school activities to meet learners' needs and improve effectiveness and efficiency on an ongoing basis. It also establishes mechanisms for continuous improvement and performance across the school's dimensions. The effectiveness of QMS ensures quality procedures, directions, knowledge management and quality employee evaluation (Loeung & Safruddin, 2022:1).

In Malaysian high schools, QMS is one of the most important factors influencing student performance (Qingyan & Azar Ahmadand, 2023:157). The education QMS helps administrators and managers emphasise the important areas of their own activities, focusing on development strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities (Qingyan et al., 2023:157). School management is responsible for quality management practices, school culture and student performance in the Punjab province of Pakistan (Parveen, Phuc, Alghamdi, Kumar, Aslam, Shafiq & Saleem, 2024:1). Thus, the primary need of the QMS in the province is to monitor educational programme, satisfy and cultivate the working staff, restore the school's mission and improve the school climate.

Kadir (2019:66) argues that QMS in Nigeria enhances teachers' effectiveness in addressing behavioural challenges, creates an environment that acknowledges learner involvement, and devises clear assessment strategies for learners. Its relevance in secondary schools in Lagos State helps teachers address challenges and ensure that quality education meets the required standards (Ademola, Okebukola, Oladejo, Onowugbeda, Gbeleyi & Agbanimu, 2021:263). QMS also puts curriculum content and quality systems in place to develop positive quality outcomes that are in line with learners' knowledge, abilities and skills (Cavus, Mohammed & Yakubi, 2021:3). Although the system maintains the effectiveness and efficiency of collaborative work and skills development (Ezeaku, Onu, Agu, Edikpa, Nwafor, Ozioko & Ugwuanyi, 2021:160), it further aims to equip teachers with opportunities to reflect on their professionalism, improve teaching approaches and enhance learners' academic performance in Lagos (Ajani, 2022:35).

To guarantee quality education, Nigerian high school principals and top management prioritise quality management techniques. That is, they set objectives, analyse circumstances, create action plans, implement them and evaluate results to develop human capacity (Osegbue & Ohamobi, 2025:17). Since QMS is an ultimate pillar for a school's achievement, Anunobi, Uhuka and Wodi (2025:62) assert that in the Rivers State, it ensures monitoring, assessment and evaluation of all facets of education and communicating the outcome to all people concerned with an aim of improving the education system.

According to Kakingo (2021:158), secondary schools in Ifakara Town Council, Tanzania, perceive TQM as effective in improving classroom teaching, supporting teachers' continuous development, and promoting teamwork among school departments. Furthermore, it provides direction for effective leadership and management and encourages the attainment of high-quality outputs in schools. The success of these schools depends on the effective management of their resources, including human resources, which in turn, improve the overall performance of the school (Amos, Ephrahem & Bhoke-Africanus, 2021:196). Similarly, Elias and Mwila (2022:18) opine that in the Iringa District, a committed school management enables both educators and learners to achieve the desired competencies outlined in QMSs. Educators also benefit from the TQM mandate in the Arusha region, where high-quality

professional training opportunities are unlocked to enhance important skills (Makiya, Mnyanyi & Ngirwa, 2022:50).

In Lesotho secondary schools, the QMS, through the performance contract, hold teachers accountable and responsible for the management of the institution, learner performance and output, which defines the quality standards of the school (Mefi, 2020:1). The quality academic performance of a school is therefore achieved through the vigilance of educators on the concerns that have been identified during the evaluation process. Mefi (2020:1) further argues that the performance contract not only improves the efficiency and effectiveness of school management but also helps determine training needs, areas that need improvement, and why those improvements are needed. Purwanto, Putri, Ahmad, Asbari, Bernarto, Santoso and Sihite (2020:14054) share a similar perspective. They state that the ISO 9001:2015 QMS provides employees with an opportunity to apply quality standards more effectively and aim to improve the value of the organisation.

Since QMS values the triumph of educational goals (Sepiriti, 2021:71), the Lesotho MoET aims to support quality education systems that will deliver pertinent and inclusive quality education for all Basotho effectively, proficiently and equitably (Rakolobe, 2022:1). In the same vein, Khumalo and Mosia (2023:36) affirm that inclusive QMS in Lesotho schools promotes quality and equitable education for all learners.

The use of QMS in Angolan schools has significant benefits, including improved school image, quality procedures, quality awareness, clearer responsibilities, and greater efficiency (Africano et al., 2019:125). Kamau (2020:16) is of the view that empowering teachers through QMS in Kenyan schools makes a significant contribution to overall workplace performance, particularly in Ruiry sub-county. In a study conducted in Namibia, Shikalepo (2020:64) reports that QMS improves a school's performance by considering physical facilities, surrounding infrastructure, and teaching and learning resources. Likewise, in the Oshana region of the country, the system supports schools by providing human resources, enabling educators to benefit from training, thereby increasing output and reducing the need for constant supervision (Kutsiwike, Chirimbana & Lahya, 2022:78).

Steyn (2019:10) argues that in the Western Cape Province, school principals play a predominant role in the effective implementation of QMS. This includes teacher evaluation, collecting information on teacher training and offering support for teacher professional learning, with the holistic purpose of improving school performance. QMS implementation is also vital, as teachers invest in quality education and are kept abreast of ever-changing learner needs (Steyn, 2019:10).

Naidoo (2019:3) shares a similar view, stating that QMS in Gauteng schools enable principals and members of the SMT to become acquainted with the necessary professional skills, values, and attitudes to cope with a dynamic, ever-changing educational setting. Interestingly, Botha (2019:8) upholds that in the Ekurhuleni District, QMS is intended to develop educators' skills, attitudes and should, in essence, develop the quality of teaching and ultimately, the performance of the learners. School managers can reflect and facilitate communication among all stakeholders, thereby addressing essential gaps in quality management practices, teaching, and learning (Naidoo, 2019:3).

Steyn (2019:9) reports that secondary schools in the Western Cape perceive QMS as a tool for reflective activity, teacher accountability, and constructive feedback to educators on how to advance and nurture their education proficiency. QMS seeks to improve school performance by evaluating educators' performance in line with their roles and responsibilities, ensuring accountability to their superiors (Mullins, 2024:18).

Thaba-Nkadimene (2020:3) argues that although it is challenging to adequately measure teacher performance, effective, high-quality systems provide important aspects of QMS, namely planning, effective classroom teaching, accountability, and professional responsibility. In the Limpopo province, Bolberth (2021:51) states that secondary school principals, deputy principals, departmental heads and teachers need to engage in QMS training sessions. This will continually broaden their knowledge and skills, ensuring learners receive quality education and that the welfare of the education system is maintained at the highest level. Mamabolo et al. (2022:7) argue that QMS not only enhances the quality of teaching delivery in Warmbad secondary schools but also provides direction, encourages coordination among

education professionals, obliges managers to predict the future, and ensures that cohesion and stability are maintained.

The SMT, as a support structure of quality management, has continually trained and appraised educators in the Vhembe District to increase their professional competence and performance in the teaching space (Bessong & Ogina, 2022:7). Tshivhula (2023:20) further accentuates that the critical elements of a quality management structure includes the staff being committed to the vision, mission, objectives, feedback, review and evaluation of QMS. In a nutshell, the SMT provides educators with expectations, charts their progress based on their achievements, and guides them in improving their assigned tasks.

Tachie and Mancotywa (2021:5) advise that if QMS is correctly and effectively implemented by all relevant stakeholders in the Mthatha Districts (Eastern Cape province), it could improve teaching and learning practices, the academic performance of learners, and school management and governance practices. As advocated by Shongwe and Mutambara (2022:284), secondary schools that adopt QMS in Mpumalanga are likely to see their educators able to identify their professional development needs, prioritise quality teaching and learning and earn Continuing Professional Teacher Development (CPTD) points. Shongwe and Mutambara (2023:266) further add that the principal's capacity is crucial to the effective implementation of QMS in Gert Sibande Districts, as it creates a conducive environment where learners, educators, and non-teaching staff can perform well and realise their full potential.

This part reviewed the literature on the need for QMS effectiveness in secondary schools. Despite the negative attitudes demonstrated by some professionals towards the system, several schools recognise the need for QMS to be effective in a global perspective. Undoubtedly, the system aims to improve the overall quality of education in schools; its effectiveness extends to developing and reinforcing teachers' professional growth in the education landscape.

3.4 THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM IS EFFECTIVE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

This section examines the extent to which QMS is effective in secondary schools. According to Díez, Iraurgi and Villa (2018:1), some secondary schools in the Basque region of Spain took longer to achieve the benefits of QMS. That is, the teaching staff delayed realising that the existence of QMS makes them competitive professionals in the workplace. However, some schools in the country were excluded from the implementation of the system due to some procedural reasons (Diez et al., 2018:6). Comighud and Arevalo (2021:1) argue that if quality systems and structures to support and motivate teachers are ineffective, teachers are likely to lose focus on their professional obligation and dedication. Therefore, in the Basque secondary schools, reward structures and teacher support have taken the least value among other elements of the QMS (Díez et al., 2020:6).

The advancement of quality teaching and learning appeared to be realised only if schools establish proper professional development and reward structures to motivate teachers (Díez et al., 2020:6). This supports the view that QMS has not been effective enough for its intended purpose in Spain. Apart from the deficiency in quality teaching and learning in the country, there is also a lack of appropriate monitoring and evaluation of the system. Gomendio (2021:175) confirms that the inflexibility of the QMS is also characterised by a lack of uniformity in evaluations based on national or regional standards to meet schools' needs. The system is considered blind, stagnant, and rigid, as it has a low rate of grade progression, high school dropouts, and significant differences across regions (Gomendio, 2021:175).

The findings of Arnaiz-Sánchez, de Haro, Alcaraz and Mirete (2020:2) are interesting, as they suggest that teachers’ commitment to improving the quality of teaching and learning in the city of Murcia has enhanced learners’ academic performance and the tasks assigned to teachers. Although the potential of QMS seems to shed light on the effectiveness of teachers’ roles in Murcia city, there remains a challenge to schools located in marginal neighbourhoods. That is, they (schools) are characterised by socio-economic challenges such as unemployment and poverty, which lead to very low-quality academic performance (Arnaiz-Sánchez et al., 2020:2).

Mahmood, Ismail and Omar-Fauzee (2020:10) argue that if all Malaysian schools adopted TQMS properly, there would be no existence of differences in academic achievement. It can be deduced that secondary schools that effectively implemented proper QMSs in the country achieved significant improvements in teaching and learning and a positive learner performance. Given that enhancing teacher quality is a realistic and effective method for academic achievement (Qingyan et al., 2023:166), a noticeable discrepancy in teachers' competence, inadequate training, and teachers' attitudes all contributed to the ineffectiveness of school management systems (Idris, Govindasamy & Nachiappan, 2023:823). In the same vein, Sulistiana and Imron (2024:481) state that quality education, especially in rural secondary schools in Malaysia, is hindered by inadequate access to educational resources, a lack of support for teachers' training, and education costs. Due to the high costs in urban areas across the country, disadvantaged families are forced to withdraw their learners from school or choose lower-quality schools (Sulistiana & Imron, 2024:481).

However, Seis et al. (2020:113) report a statistically significant effect of TQMS practices on the academic performance of Jordanian schools. Teacher commitment, training, education, and teamwork were all strengths in the effective implementation of the system. Although QMS seems to be experiencing some glitches in most secondary schools in Indonesia, its effectiveness is evident. Asnawan (2021:63) reveals that teamwork in coordinating programmes to improve the quality of teaching and learning is carried out by empowering teachers through training. Teachers and everyone in the QMS are continuously supported through a continuous quality improvement process. It is also interesting that, in their study, Firdausi, Trisnamansyah, Warta and Tejawian (2022:711) found that the QMS at State Vocational High Schools in Indonesia was effective. The school leadership had a comprehensive programme, action, and follow-up plan, which significantly improved school performance.

Setyaningsih, Handayani, Solissa, Sapulete and Fathurohman (2023:1959) agree that secondary schools in the country place the school principal and the SMT at the forefront of QMS effectiveness. Quality education is improved through the roles of school managers as administrators, supervisors, leaders, innovators, and motivators (Setyaningsih et al., 2023:1959). In essence, the processes of planning, organising,

implementing, controlling, and evaluating shape the direction of schools to achieve optimal results. However, Sulistiana and Imron (2024:480) reiterate that the lack of teacher training in rural secondary schools in Indonesia contributes to the low quality of teaching and learning, thereby hampering learners' academic achievement. Therefore, the discrepancy in training between urban and rural areas forces teachers to rely on less effective teaching approaches, resulting in low-quality education (Sulistiana & Imron, 2024:480).

According to Cunha, Tintoré, Cabral and Alves (2020:2), TQM in Portuguese schools has had a positive influence on teachers' working conditions, their commitment to their tasks, and learners' quality of results. Inevitably, empowering teachers with knowledge and quality skills to meet the standards of TQM prepares schools for the attainment of quality performance (Santos et al., 2021:15). In the Pinhal Interior Sul, secondary schools were guaranteed quality education, which was characterised by adequate empowerment of employees and transfer of skills through training (da Silver, 2022:16). Apart from empowerment of teachers in the country is the attitude of teachers. Unlike other findings, teachers in Portugal are found to display positive attitudes and attributes towards the objectives of TQM (Gramaxo, Flores, Dutschke & Seabra, 2023:6). In this regard, both the staff and learners can engage in activities, learn new opportunities and achieve quality institutional performance (Gramaxo et al., 2023:6).

Although e-learning seemed like a valuable component of quality education, in their study, Tomczyk and Walker (2021:6872) found that the system has not yielded effective results in Poland; teachers were overwhelmed by the number of unfamiliar responsibilities. Crato (2021:20) argues that Polish schools should maintain a balance between innovative pedagogical methods and new technology to meet the demands of quality education. Consequently, top management in schools had to address teachers' negative attitudes, evaluate their work, and provide constructive feedback to support a quality e-learning system (Tomczyk & Walker, 2021:6872). During the COVID-19 period, the Polish Ministry of Education decided to close nearly all educational institutions, and e-learning had to kick in to provide quality education (Marchlik, Wichrowska & Zubala, 2021:7107). Since e-learning is now a necessity for quality education and is more relevant in Poland (Szopinski & Bachnik, 2022:2), it is worth noting that it is considered a long-term intervention, and teachers must still be

trained, motivated and evaluated for its intended purpose (Szyszka, Tomczyk & Kochanowicz, 2022:16).

The extent to which TQM is implemented in Qatar's secondary schools is taking an interesting turn. Al-Saffar and Obeidat (2020:86) report that the senior management's strong commitment to TQM fosters a culture of documenting work procedures, making necessary improvements, and conducting effective annual performance evaluations for teachers. Furthermore, the education ministry raises the level of professionalism amongst teachers by conducting regular training courses, motivating their participation in academic development, and strengthening robust communication channels between the appraiser and appraisee.

The commitment of employees in seminars and workshops has helped the Qatari Ministry to cultivate teachers' expertise, skills and high competencies who will, in turn, impart these qualities to learners in schools (Al-Saffar & Obeidat, 2020:86). As teachers are expected to deliver high quality education for achieving Sustainable Development Goals in Qatar (Al-Thani, Ari & Koç, 2021:1), schools in the country have adopted the TQM in which greater effort has been invested to integrate quality into teaching and learning to provide knowledge, attitudes and skills that are required for a functional quality education system (Al-Kuwari, Du & Koç, 2022:514).

Africano et al. (2019:122) state that, out of 50 Angolan schools surveyed, only 20% have effective QMS implementation. The QMS practices in the schools led to improved teaching quality, student satisfaction, and teacher competencies. Paulo (2021:410) argues that although the government has invested more in physical infrastructure to support school functioning, there appears to be an insufficient and ineffective quality management system for teacher development and performance. Despite Angola's education system having quality issues (António & Kuebo, 2024:13), the effectiveness of quality education in Luanda is crippled by a lack of classroom materials, teaching resources and insufficient teacher training.

Shikalepo (2020:62) argues that the government intervened by offering financial incentives and housing to Namibian rural schoolteachers to enhance the effectiveness

of QMS. Therefore, the assertion that monetary motivation is key to improving school performance raises the question of whether there would be evidence of effective quality management in schools without it. Nghixulifwa (2021:80) states that appraisal of teachers in the Ohangwena Education Region indicates that the goals of quality education will be achieved in the future.

Contrary to the effectiveness of QMS in some schools, Uugwanga (2023:5), who conducted a study in Namibian secondary schools, reveals that the results of the National Secondary School Certificate Ordinary (NSSCO) were clear evidence that quality management systems in the country were not adequately implemented. Shikalepo and Katshuna (2023:6435) reveal that unconvincing learner performance indicates that the QMS is not as efficient as expected, negatively affecting the system's integrity in quality teaching and learning. Kaukewahulo and Nkengbeza (2023:102) echo that in the Karas region, both teacher and learner performance are crippled by school managers' failure to assume a shared leadership responsibility. That is, school principals in rural areas struggle to build mutual relationships with their staff and fail to fulfil their roles as mentors and encouragers of teachers' professional development.

According to Annan (2020:1), elements that contribute to effective QMS in Ghana include quality assurance in teacher professional development, teacher training, motivation, and proper compliance. Quality education is achieved when educators' proficiency also meets an acceptable standard. Inevitably, the effectiveness of quality education draws school managers' attention to issues of age, gender, attitudes, expertise, and skills during the recruitment of quality teachers (Mensah, Acquah, Frimpong & Babah, 2020:117).

There are noticeable disparities in Ghana's educational system (Takyi, Amponsah, Asibey & Ayambire, 2021:177). Subsequently, the quality of teaching varies across different parts of the country. It is inexcusable in rural areas due to the neglect of critical factors such as gender, geographic location and income levels, which are determinants of an integrated quality system. However, Stella (2022:64), who conducted a study in Ghana, reports that about 41% of participants in selected senior high schools demonstrated a high level of understanding of QMS. Consequently, the culture of quality has been institutionalised in the schools, where staff were well motivated and high academic performance was achieved. Despite a better outlook for

QMS nationwide, the central region of Ghana appears to have some grey areas in the system's effectiveness. Deterrents to the feasibility of the QMS include inadequate supervision of teaching and learning, a lack of monitoring and appraisal of teachers and negativity towards strategic changes of the system (Asano, Amponsah, Baah-Yanney, Quarcoo & Azumah, 2021:52).

Mefi (2020:98) states that the Performance Contracting Policy (PCP) in Lesotho schools came with challenges. Since it presumably took the position of QMS, the PCP has adversely affected quality education in the country instead of improving the status quo. The demand for financial budgets hampered its implementation at a satisfactory level (Mefi, 2020:98). Despite the efforts by the MoET to establish policies aimed at improving quality education. These problems existed before the policies were implemented (Rakolobe, 2022:2). Therefore, it was not feasible to facilitate and evaluate teachers in accordance with the PCP without significant challenges. Khumalo and Mosia (2023:36) reveal that most teachers in Lesotho secondary schools were not sensitised about or trained on how the educational policies affect their professional practices. Moreover, the lack of teaching and learning resources to support the quality of the QMS remained a challenge, especially in rural schools.

Mutongoza et al. (2021:146) point out that apart from the challenges posed by the effective implementation of QMS in the Eastern Cape, some principals sought to be part of the implementation process. They engage, among other things, in the mobilisation of teaching resources, encourage a technological culture of teaching among educators, and ensure the provision of effective, quality education. Furthermore, principals promoted effective two-way communication so that the staff feel that they are part of the decision-making process. Tachie and Mancotywa (2021:1) reveal that although school principals were part of the team structure for implementing QMS in Mthatha districts, some did not drive the process, resulting in schools finding it difficult to effectively manage the QMS.

Jiyane (2020:3) reveals that tensions between SMTs and educators undermine the quality of professional development in teaching and learning. Therefore, principals of schools in the province perceived QMS as an added burden to the already overloaded teachers and managers (Simelane & Mutambara, 2022:284). As a result, the effective implementation of QMS in the province was challenged by demanding timeframes for

completing ATPs, monthly tests, quarterly exams, extra-classes programmes, meetings and relentless paperwork demands from circuits. Moreover, some school leaders lacked knowledge of QMS despite holding managerial positions. Another challenge undermining the system's effectiveness is the lack of educator involvement in planning and facilitating quality education programmes. Educators believed that since QMS is vital for professional growth, their involvement should be established in the planning phase rather than in the implementation phase (Magagula, 2022:1).

In the Mashishila and Badplass circuits of Mpumalanga Province, several factors hinder the effective implementation of QMS. Shongwe and Mutambara (2023:266) affirm that inadequate resources to facilitate continuous workshops, school politics and lack of managerial skills hinder the functionality of the system of this magnitude. Since technical support is needed to train educators to render quality education, this is not the case in the province. Furthermore, the political tension among the staff members delays the process. Apart from educators themselves lacking QMS knowledge, the SMTs also lack leadership skills required to implement the system to an acceptable level (Shongwe & Mutambara, 2023:276).

In their study, Mamabolo et al. (2022:1) found that schools in Gauteng reported no proper implementation of QMS. As in Namibian schools, teachers conducted the QMS for a monetary reward rather than to achieve quality assurance. In the Ekurhuleni District of Gauteng, Botha (2019:11) reveals that the deficiency in QMS was due to a lack of professional development for teachers, stemming from insufficient resources, inadequate guidelines, and gaps in the management of the system in schools. As leadership capacity for SMTs is crucial for quality education (Naidoo, 2019:12), educators in the Tshwane West secondary schools expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of solid support from the SMTs, the lack of equipment to run training programmes and poor technical support (Kgosi, Makgato & Skosana, 2023:151). However, Lorraine (2023:102) argues that the inconsistency in QMS implementation cannot be blamed solely on schools; rather, the level of animosity and dissatisfaction should be directed at the government, which fails to provide the necessary support to effectively implement QMS in the province.

Although QMS is not fully adopted in schools in Limpopo, Thaba-Nkadimene (2020:8) asserts that inadequacies in school resources, demotivated educators, and poor

working conditions contribute to the ineffectiveness of the system. Due to a lack of specific support strategies to strengthen quality education in the Vhembe District (Muedi, Kutame, Ngidi & Uleanya, 2021:138; Besong & Odinga, 2022:9), the system was implemented too quickly and was impeded by many challenges (Bolberth, 2021:89). Apart from educators having a negative attitude towards QMS, inadequate training and poor advocacy exacerbated the problems further. Mamabolo et al. (2022:1) echo that there was no sufficient evidence for effective QMS in the Warmbad circuit. Additionally, educators' attitudes towards the system are non-existent.

There has been a noticeable difference in the degree to which QMS is effective in secondary schools worldwide. There seems to be a challenge with the effectiveness of QMS in most secondary schools. Most secondary schools, especially on the African continent, exhibit major deficiencies in effective system management. Schools, SMTs, government officials, and other stakeholders suggested strategies to address the challenges outlined below.

3.5 INTERVENTIONS TO STRENGTHEN THE EFFECTIVENESS OF QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

This section reviews literature on interventions adopted by secondary schools to strengthen the effectiveness of QMS. Mahmood et al. (2020:10) establish that the successful implementation of TQMS in Pakistan is prioritised on five key elements: commitment of top management, continuous improvement, training and education, employee focus, and employee involvement. According to Håkansson and Adolfsson (2021:301), Swedish secondary schools have a strategic framework for quality management based on a professional development initiative for school leaders. Consequently, school leaders effectively implemented QMS through the training modules, which were based on common direction, leadership, learning and quality improvement grounded in data and evidence. In Slovakian secondary schools, QMS was effective because leaders prioritised duties aimed at evaluating teachers and complied with legislative documentation processes (Girmanová et al., 2022:472).

Moreover, Slovakian leaders ensured employee satisfaction by introducing feedback mechanisms and fostering strong employment relationships.

Cunha et al. (2020:13) argue that to facilitate a healthy TQM in Portugal, school principals should be upskilled through training programmes to develop quality leadership skills. Through this intervention, principals and other school leaders will be able to flexibly deliver on-site coaching and mentorship programmes to further strengthen the professional growth of other employees. Santos et al. (2021:17) emphasise that individuals involved in quality management must be creative thinkers, leaders, good communicators, and able to instil teamwork during the TQM process.

Additionally, school principals, deputy principals, and departmental heads should know how to motivate their teams, influence them to adapt to change, and strategically manage existing conflicts or resistance. To draw a teacher's attention to systems that enhance school improvement, Gramaxo et al. (2023:10) enumerate five strategies intended to improve the success of TQM in Portuguese schools. Firstly, there should be a review of teacher professional development and competencies. Secondly, teachers should be fully prepared to display positive attitudes and attributes towards the system. Thirdly, school managers should have respect for diversity and differences among their staff. Finally, school managers should develop a strong foundation for understanding the school's values and practices.

In their study's recommendations, Arnaiz et al. (2020:5) suggested that a well-established relationship between teachers and principals in Spanish schools is a performance-enhancing feature. They highlighted that teacher satisfaction with innovations aimed at improving educational quality, as well as the value placed on common goals, could yield the benefits of QMS. Interestingly, Díez et al. (2020:6) offer a different approach: if secondary schools could intensify both internal and external evaluation processes within the system, there would be a strong effect in school improvement, especially in schools that experience a crippling management approach. This means that these evaluation processes will assist schools in identifying priorities for improvement, isolating weaknesses, and fostering accountability (Díez et al., 2020:6). Similarly, Gomendio (2021:196) echoes that Spanish schools, through policymakers, should adhere to international evidence that identifies strengths and

weaknesses of the education system. This could be achieved by adopting effective, innovative practices that have led to a consistent, successful QMS.

Khurniawan et al. (2020:54) suggest that secondary schools in Indonesia should be equipped with sophisticated infrastructure, quality teaching staff and school managers who are fully equipped with managerial and leadership skills to achieve effective implementation of TQM. Another aspect of TQM that can be improved is teamwork. Asnawan (2021:55) argues that teamwork in implementing quality management programmes is one way to create a conducive environment for employee empowerment in Indonesia. As the quality of education is relatively low in Indonesia (Setyaningsih et al., 2023:1954), the government should prioritise international collaboration and innovative policies to improve TQM (Sulstiana & Imron, 2024:485). This can be improved by leveraging the strengths of other countries in the effectiveness of their quality systems. In addition, the government should strengthen teacher training programmes, invest in education infrastructure, appraise and give feedback on teachers' performance (Sulstiana & Imron, 2024:485).

In Polish secondary schools, information and communication technology (ICT) is a recognised element of the QMS. Therefore, through dedicated quality ICT programmes, tutorials and webinars, the context of computer skills will be an effective strategy to improve quality education (Marchlik et al., 2021:7127). When teachers improve on digital competence, they will not only be exposed to simpler ways of adhering to the dynamics of quality programmes, but they will also gain proficiency in infusing technology in their everyday routines, thus achieving professional growth (Tomczyk & Walker, 2021: 6873; Szopinski & Bachnik, 2022:7). In most schools, the culture of digital literacy has led school leaders to devote themselves to teacher training, reward the use of technology, evaluate teachers' tasks, and motivate them (Szyszka et al., 2022:17).

In a study conducted in Kenya, Kavutai (2018:37) reveals that effective TQM has depended on communication between top management and employees in secondary schools in Makueni County. Furthermore, quality implementation in the schools was demonstrated through senior management devising strategic action plans, employee empowerment and leadership granting greater discretion and autonomy to employees, thereby allowing the school to benefit from their knowledge and skills. Public

secondary schools in Ifakara, Tanzania, display TQM elements, including effective leadership, teacher involvement in decision-making, quality planning, staff training, and collaboration among teachers (Kakingo & Lekule, 2021:164).

Namibian rural schools relied on different measures to ensure the effectiveness of QMS. Shikalepo (2020:67) states that improved working environments, well-equipped classrooms and accommodation facilities, well-resourced libraries and laboratories, and increased financial incentives were critical measures to ensure quality achievement in the schools. In the Oshana region of the country, secondary schools proposed that teacher training and principal development, teacher motivation, promoting those committed to quality teaching, and involving them in decision-making can positively enhance the functioning of QMS (Kayumbu, 2020:131). As recommended by Kayumbu (2020:131), teachers should be promoted rather than given monetary rewards. Nghixulifwa (2021:79) contends that teachers should be appraised and offered monetary incentives to increase their participation in quality education. As Namibian rural schools hardly receive quality education (Kawuryan, Sayuti, Aman & Dwiningrum, 2020:824), it is much more interesting to note strategies that are recommended by Kutsiwike et al. (2022:85). To retain teachers in the rural area of the Oshana Education region, advisory services must take heed in visiting teachers to offer required support in terms of QMS. Additionally, continuous teacher training will enable them to become familiar with the length and breadth of the system (Kutsiwike et al., 2022:85).

According to Mensah et al. (2020:126), refresher courses to acquaint teachers with quality skills are needed in Ghana. This can be achieved through training that integrates QMS topics. Moreover, there is a need for a tripartite partnership among the Government, the Ministry of Education, and the National Teaching Council to establish a review committee to examine aspects of teachers' performance. Annan (2020:7) shares the same view that teachers in the country must be trained strictly by educational institutions. Additionally, aptitude tests are recommended to recruit teachers, so that critical skills for delivering quality teaching and learning are understood. In addition to teacher training, curricula reform and teacher motivation should be integrated into the teaching process (Annan, 2020:7).

To address education quality, Takyi et al. (2021:177) propose that accountability mechanisms and intensifying policies should be considered. That is, robust responsibility for principals in evaluating teachers' activities should be at the centre of school functioning. Policies should not only target the formal curriculum; the expansion of the education system should also support the development of sports and creative arts, as these are extramural platforms that support quality education (Takyi et al., 2021:177). Teacher involvement in planning for dynamic systems seems to be lacking in the country. Therefore, Donkoh et al. (2023:12) suggest that teachers and governmental stakeholders should be involved in the long-term strategic planning of QMS.

According to Ademola et al. (2021:270), the quality assurance unit of the Nigerian Ministry of Education in Lagos State must bear the onus of conducting regular inspections of teachers to establish their effectiveness. In addition, teachers' knowledge should be refreshed through continuous in-service training to maintain consistency with the QMS. Cavus et al. (2021:18) state that secondary schools in Nigeria should provide adequate resources to facilitate the efficiency of QMS. Through this, conventional teaching and learning for sustainable education will be augmented even during future uncertainties.

Ajani (2022:45) proposes four strategies to support QMS effectiveness in the schools. Firstly, the Education districts and other participants should restructure existing professional development programmes to increase teachers' proficiency. Secondly, teachers are to be evaluated to determine their classroom needs. Thirdly, a follow-up mechanism should be in place to track teachers' progress in delivering quality education. Fourthly, all teachers should be motivated by the SMT to attend termly professional development programmes to enhance their professional growth in the workplace. Osegbue et al. (2023:24) recommend that school principals in Anambra State establish compact plans that align with the school's vision and goals. They should also implement motivational strategies that recognise staff accomplishments.

Seemingly, most secondary schools in Mpumalanga province faced challenges in implementing QMS effectively, leading some educators to conceptualise it as a fault-

finding administrative exercise. This is advocated by Steyn (2019:101), who points out that principals and deputy principals perceived the QMS as biased and a non-critical process that does not achieve its intended purpose. In addition, the system created conflicts among colleagues, leaving managers to facilitate resolution. However, Simelane and Mutambara (2022:285) note that educators should be continuously retrained.

To harness innovative measures to improve quality education, the Department of Basic Education should introduce computer literacy courses to upskill educators. Since school programmes are sometimes disrupted as principals respond to other responsibilities assigned by top structures, it is further recommended that provincial, district and circuit annual plans be drawn up and cascaded to schools to align their own plans appropriately (Simelane & Mutambara, 2022:285). Shongwe and Mutambara (2023:276) argued that although some schools perform well, the effective implementation of QMS suffers due to inadequate resources to provide technical support through frequent workshops for school managers. Furthermore, the system was dented by organisational politics, a lack of leadership, and insufficient managerial skills.

Mamabolo et al. (2022:5) state that Gauteng schools implemented five strategic elements to implement QMS. That is, monitoring, support and development of educators; proper implementation of QMS; regular assessment and feedback; advocacy and training; and QMS management planning. However, there have been varying levels of success in the delivery of QMS since educators perceived the implementation of QMS as a hindrance rather than a benefit (Mamabolo et al., 2022:5). Apparently, Lorraine (2023:103) comes up with two solutions that the SMT should consider in making educators realise the advantages of the system in the province. Firstly, the SMT should supply educators with the necessary resources. Secondly, it is imperative that the SMT explicitly address educators on the purpose and benefits of QMS before implementing its processes.

Similar to Mpumalanga Province, the Tshwane West secondary schools recommend integrating technology into teacher training for professional development (Kgosi, 2023:123). This will ease the SMT and teachers' annual paperwork burden. Clarke

(2024:103) further asserts that departmental heads should intensify continuous classroom visits with their educators to provide meaningful, constructive feedback that can address areas of concern. This strategy will not only enhance professional growth but also sustain the overall quality of teaching and learning (Clarke, 2024:103; Dhanpat & Naicker, 2024:349).

Despite the inconsistency in the QMS implemented across the Limpopo province, Thaba-Nkadimene (2020:8) recommends that the Department of Basic Education should uniformly apply annual reviews of the effectiveness of the system. Although district officials need to be abreast with school transformational models (Muedi et al., 2021:143), principals must be the first people to be thoroughly trained with QMS before the rest of educators are trained (Bolberth, 2021:99). This will make them (principals) to be motivated and confident to lead educators in shaping the school vision and attaining aspirations of the quality model.

Mamabolo et al. (2022:8) suggest two strategies to strengthen the effectiveness of QMS in the Warmbad circuit of Limpopo. Annual training for supervisors and accountability sessions are key elements of the QMS. That is, planned workshops for district/circuit supervisors should integrate their knowledge and skills before imparting them to school educators. Supervisors must account quarterly for their responsibilities to ensure the system's functioning is not disrupted (Mamabolo et al., 2022:8; Bessong & Ogina, 2022:9; Tshivhula, 2023:61).

In the Western Cape, Steyn (2019:107) provides specific strategies for the SMT. Firstly, it is proposed that the SMT establish an internal, formalised structure to support and promote any programme aimed at quality education. Secondly, the SMT should draw a school improvement plan that addresses the specific needs of each department in the school. Thirdly, the principal with the management team should work on a continuous professional teacher development management system. Fourthly, through the district centre, the SMT should invite a facilitator from the national or provincial department to conduct workshops for educators on QMS issues. Finally, the SMT should motivate their educators to demonstrate professionalism and deliver quality teaching. Niekerk, Goosen and Adams (2021:10) maintain that when teachers are well motivated by a programme that aims to develop the school, they are likely to further

inspire others, including learners, to improve their performance. Additionally, Mullins (2024:136) suggests that performance management policies and evaluation programmes should be intensified to enable educators to identify areas that require intervention.

3.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter explored the perceptions of secondary SMTs regarding the effectiveness of QMS, drawing on the views of various authors from global, African, and South African contexts, except for KwaZulu-Natal, where the study was conducted.

In conclusion, the literature indicates that school principals and other members of the SMT are key role players in ensuring the effectiveness of QMS in secondary schools worldwide. However, their roles can be effectively fulfilled only when education departments at the national, provincial, and district levels provide adequate support. Drawing from the literature, it is evident that many secondary schools globally recognise the importance of QMS effectiveness. Despite this, educators, particularly in the African context, often resist transformational initiatives such as QMS.

Consequently, several researchers propose explicit strategies to enhance the effectiveness of QMS in secondary schools. Commonly suggested strategies include educator training and capacity-building, as well as strengthening appraisal and evaluation processes.

Despite international and national literature documenting various attempts by schools to implement QMS effectively, the reviewed literature still reflects notable gaps in theory, practice and methodology. Consequently, few studies have revealed the perceptions of SMTs in a transformational leadership perspective. Secondly, challenges affecting SMTs in under-resourced secondary schools in implementing QMS remain underexplored. Thirdly, very few qualitative studies have been specific to the perceptions of SMTs on the effectiveness of QMS. The next chapter (Chapter 4) presents the study's research design and methodology.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The preceding chapter presented the literature review. This chapter focuses on the study's research methodology and design. It begins by discussing the different research methods, after which the qualitative approach is further contextualised for the study. The research design is examined in relation to the research paradigm, population, and sampling strategies that guided the study. The procedures for inviting participants are also detailed. In addition, the data gathering methods employed in the study are presented, with specific attention given to both primary and secondary data sources. Issues of trustworthiness and triangulation are explained, followed by a discussion of data analysis and interpretation. Ethical considerations, as well as the study's delimitations and limitations, are also addressed. Lastly, the chapter concludes with a summary of the key methodological considerations.

4.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Erciyes (2020:185) defines research methodology as the strategy or plan of action that underlies the choice and use of certain methods. Similarly, Al-Ababneh (2020:77) states that methodology is a strategy, plan of action, process, or design aimed at selecting certain methods and combining them to achieve desired results. It is a procedure used to gather information and data to make informed decisions about the research (Muzari, Shava & Shonhiwa, 2022:16). Research methodology aims to describe, analyse, and infer a wide range of methods used to gather data (Muzari et al., 2022:16).

Based on the preceding assertions, it can be inferred that research methodology is a roadmap researchers plan and design to guide data collection toward a desired outcome. The roadmap was designed to provide answers to the research question: "*How do secondary Schools' Management Teams (SMTs) perceive the effectiveness of the Quality Management System in the uMkhanyakude District?"*

Subsequently, a specific research method was selected to address the research question. To contextualise the appropriate method for the study, it is imperative to first provide a brief discussion of the three basic research methods from which researchers can choose. They are typically quantitative, mixed, and qualitative research methods, and are discussed below.

4.2.1 Quantitative research method

According to Gihar (2022:445), the quantitative research method describes a phenomenon by gathering numerical data and analysing it using mathematically based approaches. This research method systematically establishes numerical conclusions about a studied phenomenon or issue through objective, systematic means. Taherdoost (2022:54) affirms that it is a method that employs numerical values derived from observations to mathematically explain, analyse and interpret a research phenomenon. Conversely, quantitative research is statistical in nature (Schoonenboom, 2023:5; Ghanad, 2023:3794) and explicitly quantifies things, asking questions such as “how many,” “how long,” and “what percentage.” Furthermore, the characteristic of this method involves, amongst others, the collection of data using standardised instruments across a larger sample. The questionnaires, surveys, observation, and case studies are some descriptive research tools used to collect data in a quantitative study.

Xiong (2022:957) and Mwita (2022:1) argue that, as quantitative researchers are grounded in the positivism paradigm, they are unlikely to develop a deeper understanding of the meanings and explanations underlying participants’ viewpoints. This makes the quantitative research method inappropriate for the study, since the main aim mandated the researcher to “interpret” and “construct” (Ghafar, 2024:4) the viewpoints of participants in answering the question: *How do secondary Schools’ Management Teams perceive the effectiveness of the Quality Management System in the uMkhanyakude District?*

4.2.2 Mixed-methods research

Dawadi, Shrestha and Giri (2021:27) define mixed-methods research as an approach that guides researchers in gathering and analysing data from multiple sources in a single study. This method combines both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. In addition to the quantitative method providing the “breadth” and qualitative method the “depth” of the study, the mixed-methods research helps researchers to answer questions with adequate depth and breadth (Dawadi et al., 2021:27). Researchers using the mixed-methods research integrate quantitative and qualitative data in various ways and premise the study within a specific design (Gihar, 2022:446). The combination of quantitative and qualitative research helps researchers to provide insight into the subject. It enables them to address complex research problems across various fields, such as social and health research (Taherdoost, 2022:55). Schoonenboom (2023:2) argues that in mixed-methods research, data should be meaningfully connected to address the research theme.

Although it has some merits, the mixed-methods research design was not adopted for the study because it is believed to complicate the findings in this field of education. As affirmed by Dawadi et al. (2021:32) and Xiong (2022:956), most researchers obtain conflicting results when combining quantitative and qualitative methods in their studies. To maximise robustness and integrity of the research (Dawadi et al., 2021:32), the selection of the qualitative research method was deemed relevant to justify the study’s findings. The qualitative research method is discussed and rationalised for the study hereunder.

4.2.3 Qualitative research approach

The qualitative research approach was deemed relevant for the study. Nassaji (2020:427) defines qualitative research as a kind of inquiry that is realistic and concerned with non-numerical data. It is contextualised and interpretive, highlighting the process or patterns of development rather than the research results. Qualitative research is an approach that describes and analyses the world as it is experienced, interpreted and understood by people in the day-to-day course of events (Muzari et al., 2021:15; Cropley, 2022:38). Types of qualitative research includes interviews, observations, focus group interviews and questionnaires (Taherdoost, 2021:12). The

strength of the qualitative research is that it studies people in their own definitions of the world, the meaning they give to a phenomenon, focuses on subjective experiences of individuals, and is sensitive to the contexts in which people engage with each other (Mouton, 2022:175; Dzogovic & Bajrami, 2023:158).

Taherdoost (2022:54) states that qualitative research aims to gather primary, first-hand textual data and analyse it using interpretive methods. Xiong (2022:957) and Gihar (2022:445) argue that the fundamental feature of qualitative research is that it explores meanings, concepts and definitions that individuals interpret in their world to understand their everyday behaviours. Similarly, Dzogovic and Bajrami (2023:158) add that the purpose of qualitative research is to describe and interpret experiences, gather, and advance knowledge and understanding without assumptions. It starts from intuitive knowledge and aims at a deeper understanding of the researched phenomenon.

4.2.4 The advantages and disadvantages of qualitative research

As Taherdoost (2022:59) notes, unlike quantitative research, qualitative research offers the first benefit of increasing the likelihood of obtaining in-depth information about feelings, events, and experiences. Secondly, qualitative researchers can access the real meanings of actions. Thirdly, this method enables researchers to explore participants' experiences across various situations. Xiong (2022:957) emphasises that deeper insights can be obtained from the human experience more holistically in particular circumstances. Fourthly, there is a high likelihood that the researcher will interact with participants during data collection. Lastly, the method's flexibility allows qualitative researchers to address complex issues and affords participants the opportunity to express themselves freely. Haq and Yasin (2025:2) outline additional benefits of qualitative research, as follows:

- It involves a large amount of raw textual data.
- Semi-structured interviews are conducted easily.
- A more flexible method than the quantitative method.
- More useful than the quantitative method in understanding social phenomena.
- Trustworthiness is easily maintained.

Unlike in quantitative studies, Taherdoost (2022:59) asserts that there are also limitations of quantitative research. The first limitation is that credibility is low in some fields. Secondly, findings are not generalizable since sample sizes are often small. Xiong (2022:957) argues that generalisability is regarded as the greatest weakness in qualitative research. Thirdly, qualitative researchers can face challenges during the interpretation and analysis processes. Lastly, data analysis is time-consuming (Taherdoost, 2022:59; Xiong, 2022:957). There are also demerits of the qualitative approach as outlined by Haq and Yasin (2025:2).

- Despite the simplicity of conducting semi-structured interviews, data gathering is costly.
- The use of thematic data analysis is tedious and time-consuming.

4.2.5 Rationale for adopting the qualitative research approach

Since the study is grounded in both interpretivism and constructivism paradigms, the rationale for adopting a qualitative approach is compelling for four reasons. Firstly, as this approach helps researchers discover new insights and generate theories about a research phenomenon (Taherdoost, 2022:54), the study explored participants' perceptions of the effectiveness of QMS. This created a space for participants' viewpoints to be analysed and interpreted non-numerically, while drawing explicit conclusions. In the same vein, Xiong (2022:958) posits that, through the qualitative approach, participants' feelings, opinions, and experiences can be explicitly interpreted, thereby constructing meaning on the basis of their lived experiences. The second reason for using the qualitative research approach is the relevance of its multifaceted data gathering methods.

Considering that the study employed among others, the semi-structured interviews, such instrument assists qualitative researchers to interpret the participants' perceptions in their own ways (Xiong, 2022:54). The third reason is that, unlike the quantitative research that generalise findings through numbers, the qualitative approach is ascribed for the study since it provides viewpoints of participants through words, images, in-depth-interviews, and open-ended questions (Gihar, 2022:446; Taherdoost, 2022:55). Finally, qualitative research approach was adopted because it is more flexible for triangulation. Although triangulation will be discussed later in this

chapter, applying it to strengthen the robustness of the qualitative findings is another reason for employing the qualitative approach. Despite its merits, the researcher experienced some weaknesses of this approach. Firstly, as reiterated by Taherdoost (2022:59) that generalisability is the greatest weakness in the qualitative approach, the sample of 16 participants was small to represent the entire population of the district. Secondly, the use of thematic data analysis was time consuming. As opined by Donkoh and Mensah (2023:6) that the effect of the drawbacks in qualitative research on findings can be minimised through the application of triangulation, mitigation strategies were necessary. Firstly, the use of semi-structure telephone interview and document analysis strengthened credibility. Furthermore, a purposive non-probability sampling technique mitigated the sample size weakness. Secondly, methodological rigour rather than speed, was prioritised throughout the process of thematic data analysis, to strengthen trustworthiness.

4.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

According to Hassan and Khairuldin (2020:241), a research design is a logical action plan that serves as a planning framework encompassing all processes holistically to achieve the objectives of the study. In the same vein, Ansari, Rahim, Bhoje & Bhosale (2022:1132) opine that it is a broad framework that unpacks the plan for conducting a research project. It provides accuracy, consistency, and legitimacy of the research. Olawale, Chinagozi and Joe (2023:1385) assert that research design establishes the decision-making process, the conceptual structure of the research, and the analytical methods used to answer the research problem. As argued by Hassan and Khairuldin (2020:241), a research design has the following functions.

- A research design ensures that all data collected are adequate to answer all research questions as clearly as possible through a systematic research plan.
- Without a precise research design, the study's findings will be weak and fail to answer the research questions.
- It explains the relationship between the variables in the study.

- A research design has specific objectives relevant to the data collection and analysis, is supported by accurate references and sources, and has a clear purpose and relevant steps.

Drawing from the perspectives of various authors about the definition and function of a research design, it could be underscored that what is common to these assertions is the proper planning for an intended inquiry. Therefore, this brings the working definition of a research design. It is planned that researchers logically follow, with the purpose of answering the research questions.

Building on the preceding insight, Figure 4.3A below presents the research design that served as a guiding framework for this study. It began with the study's orientation, which is deeply grounded in the research topic, the research questions, and the study's significance. Thereafter, both the literature review and the theoretical framework served as the basis for the study. Subsequently, the literature was reviewed from global and African perspectives, and from South African provinces other than KwaZulu-Natal, where the study was conducted. The TL theory was deemed a suitable framework for the study.

Furthermore, the design connects the previously mentioned features with the research methodology and the research paradigm. The research methodology delved into population, sampling, and data collection methods. The semi-structured telephone interview was the primary data collection instrument, supplemented by document analysis. Thus, trustworthiness and data triangulation were adhered to. Both the constructivist and interpretivist paradigms were adopted as the philosophical stance of the study. Braun and Clarke's thematic data analysis was adopted, and thereafter, the presentation and interpretation of results followed.

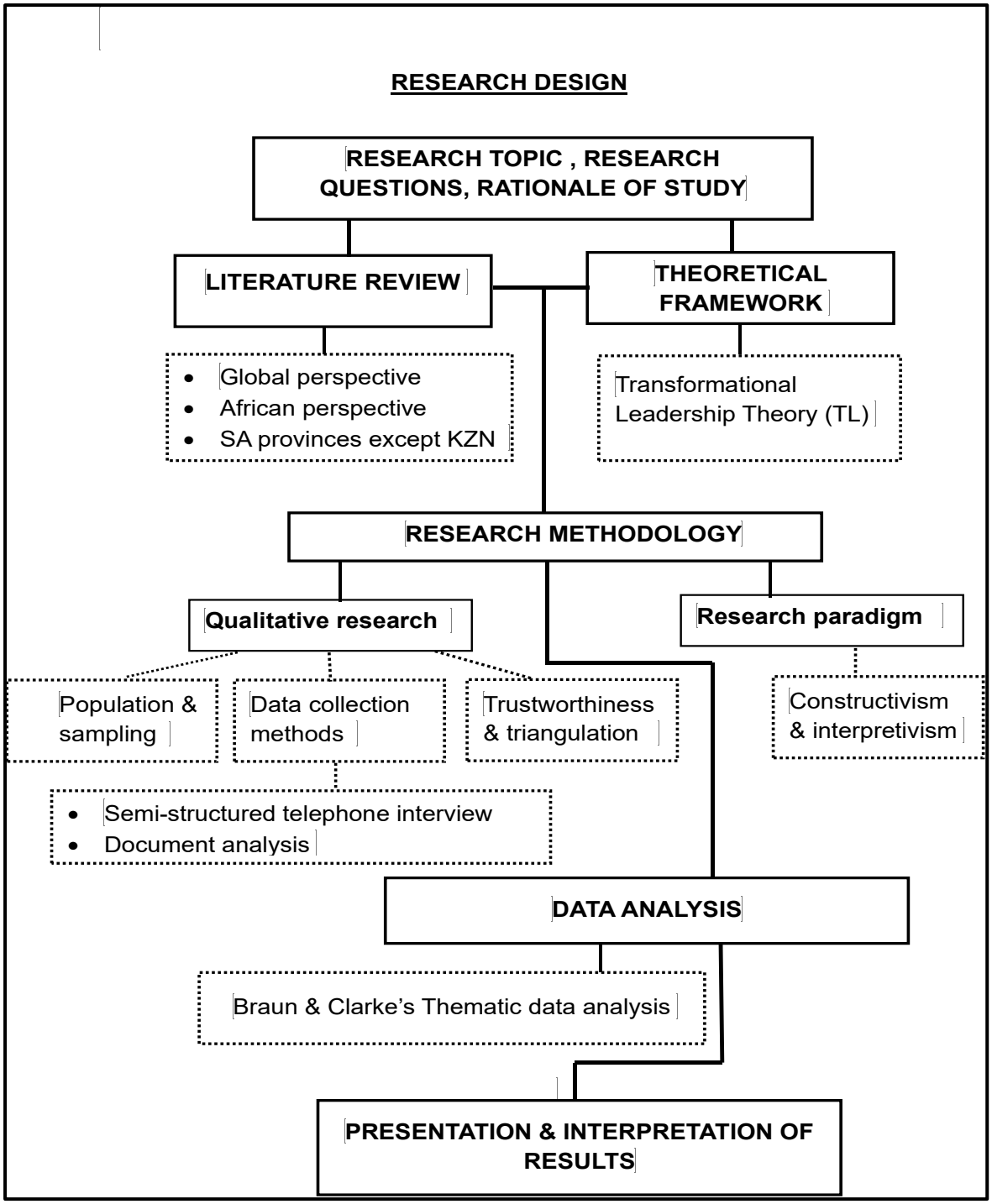


Figure 4.3A: Research design for the study

Source: Researcher's own conceptualisation

There are different approaches to research design. They include, among others, narrative inquiry, ethnography, phenomenology, grounded theory, content analysis, and case studies. Before selecting and contextualising the study's appropriate

research design, this section begins with a brief overview of the different approaches to research design.

4.3.1 Narrative inquiry

This approach is centred on the meaning an individual attaches to an experience through the process of storytelling, thus exposing a relationship between the words within multiple texts and a relationship between text and social reality (Tomaszewsk et al., 2020:3). The narrative inquiry itself becomes an important source of data, which sheds light on socio-cultural and psychological aspects of lived experiences (Gautam & Gautam, 2021:171; Taherdoost, 2022:56). Many narrative inquiries focus on one individual and that individual is chosen based on his or her ability to provide an understanding of issues based on the survey conducted (Sarfo, Debrah, Gbordzoe, Afful & Obeng, 2021:62; Kumatongo & Muzata, 2021:26).

4.3.2 Ethnography

Ethnography is an approach that studies the culture of groups of people, their patterns of social interactions, behaviours, beliefs, and language (Tomaszewsk et al., 2020:3; Taherdoost, 2022:56). Similarly, Gautam and Gautam (2021:171) reiterate that ethnographic studies focus on studying people and their cultures, emphasising understanding their perceptions and experiences. Sarfo et al. (2021:62) acknowledge that it is difficult to obtain information from a single person, as cultural issues are complex. Therefore, this approach will be suitable for use with more than two individuals. Kumatongo and Muzata (2021:25) argue that researchers who want to employ an ethnographic design should be prepared to be in the field for more than six months, since it is more central to the culture and life of the individuals being studied.

4.3.3 Phenomenology

According to Tomaszewsk et al. (2020:3), this approach focuses on the essence of lived experiences or phenomena that individuals with different perspectives can feel. In this approach, participants are interviewed to provide a considerable amount of data (Sarfo et al., 2021:62). However, Kumatongo and Muzata (2021:23) ascertain that for

the purpose of comprehending the meaning participants attach to what is being investigated, methods such as interviews, document analysis, videos and site visits are appropriate for data collection. Taherdoost (2022:56) emphasises that these methods result in gaining sufficient meaning of the lived experiences and events.

4.3.4 Grounded theory

Grounded theory is an approach to developing theories grounded in empirical data (Gautam & Gautam, 2021:158). Moreover, this approach is mainly used in the social sciences, but it is not limited to psychology, nursing, and management. Kumatongo and Muzata (2021:23) state that this approach does not allow the researcher to start with a predetermined theory; rather, theories emerge from the lived experiences of individuals. Sarfo et al. (2021:63) emphasise that grounded theory aims to develop a theory rather than dwell on individuals' stories and shared experiences.

4.3.5 Content analysis

Similarly, in grounded theory, Gautam and Gautam (2021:164) state that content analysis is a tool used across different academic disciplines, particularly in the social sciences. The researcher uses texts, visual and audio materials to discern underlying meaning, patterns, and themes. Taherdoost (2022:57) asserts that content analysis is an appropriate method to be used by researchers in analysing open-ended questions.

4.3.6 Case study

According to Gautam and Gautam (2021:161), a case study design seeks to provide detailed understandings of the experiences and perceptions of a single case or individual. Moreover, its adaptability and versatility in understanding individuals' experiences make it dependent on research objectives and the context under scrutiny. Although a case study might involve a single case, Sarfo et al. (2021:62) argue that a researcher interested in using multiple observations to gain deeper insight into the findings can use a multiple-case study approach. A case study design allows

researchers to use any different methods of data collection, such as interviews, field notes, observation, journals, audiotape, and videotape (Kumatongo & Muzata, 2021:23). Interestingly, Taherdoost (2022:57) proposes that it is crucial to adopt on-site collection methods, which provide a direct interaction opportunity for researchers. Consequently, this approach is relevant to the study as a semi-structured interview is employed.

4.3.6.1 The relevance of the case study design in the study

This empirical study employed the multiple case study design. Since the case study is qualitative in nature (Mouton, 2022: 142), it aimed to provide an in-depth description of a small number of cases. Case studies investigate a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context (Tomaszewski, Zarestky & Gonzalenz, 2020:1). They (case studies) allow the researcher to get a deeper understanding into selected cases for investigation (Mutongoza, 2021:150) and the researcher aim to investigate between the phenomenon and its context (Martinsou & Huemann, 2021:1). Schoch (2022:245) states that a case study is appropriate if the context is relevant to the phenomenon such as investigating a gap in a high school. Since the qualitative study employed a phenomenological theoretical framework, the phenomenon under investigation is the gap in the effectiveness of QMS in secondary schools in the uMkhanyakude District. The case study design was therefore used because, during data collection, SMTs were able to interpret and describe their assertions (Muzari et al., 2022:15) in line with the study's objectives. Similar to qualitative approach, the weakness of this research design was that multiple transcripts were also time consuming. Likewise, rigour was prioritised than speed, to maintain trustworthiness.

Apart from the case study, this research design also features the research paradigm, population, and sampling. These elements of the research design are explained and contextualised for the study in the subsequent sections.

4.3.7 Research paradigm

Erciyes (2020:181) defines a research paradigm as a method of sharing between scientific community members. It is the philosophical stance of a researcher of how an

inquiry is designed. Similarly, Khatri (2020:1435) states that a paradigm is a comprehensive belief system, world view or framework that directs research and practice in a field. Leavy (2023:12) views a research paradigm as a foundational perspective that carries a set of assumptions that guide the research process. Based on the preceding definitions, it can be deduced that a research paradigm is a scientific assumption that guides a researcher in undertaking an educational inquiry.

Erciyes (2020:181) articulates that research paradigms are differentiated through their ontology, epistemology, and methodology. However, Khatri (2020:1435) emphasises that the research paradigm comprises four elements: ontology, epistemology, methodology, and axiology. Ontology is a philosophical belief system about the nature of the social world, whereas epistemology is a philosophical belief system about how research proceeds and what counts as knowledge (Erciyes, 2020:181; Al-Ababneh, 2020:82). Khatri (2020:1436) describes the four elements of the research paradigm. Ontology is described as the nature of reality, and epistemology as the nature of knowledge and the relationship between the knower and that which would be known. Methodology is the appropriate approach to systematic inquiry, while axiology refers to the nature of ethics. Ugwu, Ekere and Onoh (2021:118) further define ontology as the study of the nature of existence or reality. It helps researchers to understand the reality by analysing themes to make sense of the meaning embedded in research data.

Al-Ababneh (2020:77) asserts that epistemology is inherent in the theoretical perspective, serving to explore the world and make sense of it. It refers to how researchers come to know a phenomenon under study and to the truth or reality of that phenomenon (Ugwu et al., 2021:118). Methodology refers to the strategy and plan of action for an investigation (Al-Ababneh, 2020:77). It encompasses research approaches, designs, methods, and procedures used in well-planned research to obtain results (Ugwu et al., 2021:118). All four components are discussed in detail in Section 4.3.7.2.

4.3.7.1 The Importance of a research paradigm in research

Khatri (2020:1436) states that a research paradigm provides a direction for a researcher to identify a research problem, set research questions, determine the nature of reality, knowledge, and methodology, and assess the significance of the

research. Furthermore, a paradigm provides beliefs and dictates ‘what’ and ‘how’ a phenomenon should be studied and how its findings should be interpreted. Similar to Khatri (2020:1436), Omodan (2025:2) emphasises that research paradigms offer a framework for understanding and conducting research, influence how researchers conceptualise their inquiries, collect and analyse data and interpret their findings. Additionally, Omodan (2025:2) explicitly explain why research paradigms are important to qualitative researchers.

- Research paradigms help researchers vividly view the world by providing distinct perspectives, theoretical orientations, and assumptions that direct the research process.
- They contribute to the development of the social sciences by enabling interdisciplinary dialogue and collaborative work.
- They address societal problems by highlighting the importance of a research culture that develops a knowledgeable society and by advancing professional development and educational practice.
- They allow researchers to critically evaluate existing literature, understand theoretical frameworks, and position their research within the wider scholarly landscape.
- Research paradigms also allow researchers to identify knowledge gaps, formulate innovative research questions, and contribute to ongoing debates in their field of study.

4.3.7.2 The components of research paradigms

Apart from understanding the importance of research paradigms, it is critical to have an insight into where these paradigms are grounded. Erciyes (2020:181) articulates that research paradigms are differentiated through their ontology, epistemology, and methodology. However, Khatri (2020:1435) emphasises that there are four elements of the research paradigm, namely ontology, epistemology, methodology, and axiology. These components of research paradigms are briefly discussed below.

a) Ontology

Ontology is a philosophical belief system about the nature of the social world (Erciyes, 2020:181; Al-Ababneh, 2020:82). Katri (2020:1437) describes it as the nature of reality. Moreover, this component is important to the researcher because it provides insight into the world. Ugwu, Ekere and Onoh (2021:118) further define ontology as the study of the nature of existence or reality. It helps researchers to understand the reality by analysing themes to make sense of the meaning embedded in research data. Rosida, Amaliah, Mahardika and Suratno (2023:14) describe ontology as a theoretical study of existence. This is because it explains the extent of a researcher's curiosity about what exists, as it can be analysed through a human perspective. Manik, Nababan, Sai, Ginting and Sari (2024:331) assert that ontology explores questions about what exists in the world, what kind of things exist and how different entities connect. Omodan (2024:9) reveals that researchers grounded in this philosophical foundation are better able to shape the choice of research design, data collection, analysis, and interpretation of results.

Pretorius (2024:2699) edifies that there are two types of ontology, namely realist and relativist. Realist ontology is quantitative in nature, and allows researchers to rely on methods that aim to discover universal truths by minimising subjectivity and bias through experiments, questionnaires, etc. On the other hand, relativist ontology reveals that reality is not a fixed entity but is shaped by individual and collective experiences. Therefore, researchers who use this kind of ontology are qualitative researchers who emphasise understanding how people make sense of the world.

b) Epistemology

Epistemology is a philosophical belief system about how research proceeds and what counts as knowledge (Al-Ababneh, 2020:77). It is inherent in the theoretical perspective as a way of exploring the world and making sense of it. It refers to the nature of knowledge and the relationship between the knower and that which would be known (Khatri, 2020:1436). It refers to how researchers come to know a phenomenon under study and to the truth or reality of that phenomenon (Ugwu et al., 2021:118). It is enough to describe epistemology as centred on the attention of scientists with different assumptions and ideas (Rosida et al., 2023:15). Contrary to realists but like relativists (ontology), epistemology allows researchers to explore the

world through qualitative methods such as interviews, observations and textual analysis, to comprehend the complexity and richness of human experience. Manik et al. (2024:331) acknowledge that this component plays a vital role in shaping researchers' understanding of how people come to know the world and the degree to which their beliefs can be reflected as reliable and acceptable.

Pretorius (2024:2700) edifies that there are three common epistemologies. The first one shows that reality can be objectively known through empirical observation when researchers adopt appropriate tools and methods. Therefore, this epistemology is founded on the assumption that knowledge exists autonomously of human perception and can be exposed through vigilant measurement and testing. The second epistemological stance holds that reality is partially knowable, but only through subjective observation by individuals. In this regard, knowledge is not objective, but is constructed from people's experiences, beliefs, and social interactions. The third epistemology views reality as constantly evolving, making it impossible to fully understand it at any given time. Therefore, the epistemological stance is to encourage researchers to use mixed-methods research (quantitative and qualitative) to grasp the complexity of reality at a particular time.

c) Axiology

Katri (2020:1438) refers to the component of axiology in the theory of value. This is because, in research, it defines, evaluates, and fosters understanding of the concepts of right and wrong behaviour. Concisely, axiology is defined as the study of norms or values (Rosida et al., 2023:12). These norms or values can be linked to everyday life, such as good, bad, right or wrong. Omodan (2024:10) states that axiology is not value-free, but it acknowledges the influence of the researcher's values, beliefs, and biases on the research process. Manik (2024:331) echoes that axiology contributes to a rich understanding and informed approach to life, relationships, and societal issues. As a result, it involves transparency, fairness, respect for human dignity, privacy, and informed consent. Pretorius (2024:2700) opines that axiology plays a crucial role in shaping the ethical and moral magnitude of research. This study includes elements of axiological considerations. That is, ethical considerations are broadly deliberated in the subsequent sections of the chapter.

d) Methodology

Methodology is the most common and important component of the research paradigm. Apart from being the crux of this chapter, methodology is also interwoven with the philosophical stances of researchers. Katri (2020:1437) views methodology as a broad concept that encompasses research design, methods, approaches, and procedures used in a well-planned study to uncover something. This component includes the assumptions made, the limitations encountered, and how they were minimised in the study (Katri, 2020:1437). Methodology allows researchers to employ methods such as interviews and observations to understand subjective meanings and social contexts (Rosida et al., 2023:12).

It is important to underscore the methodology's relevance in this study. This is because the study is oriented by the interpretivist paradigm. Although the relevance of the interpretivist paradigm will be contextualised for the study in the next session, Rosida et al. (2023:12) emphasise that, in interpretive paradigms, methodology shifts towards qualitative approaches. Hence, the study successfully employed semi-structured interviews. The next section explores different research paradigms.

4.3.7.3 The different types of research paradigms

Researchers can use different paradigms in their educational inquiries. They include, amongst others, positivism, post-positivism, pragmatism, and constructivism or interpretivism. These paradigms are briefly explained hereunder.

a) Positivism

Erciyes (2020:182) notes that positivism assumes the investigator and the investigated object are totally independent of each other. That is, the investigator avoids affecting the investigation or being affected by it. Oriented through ontology, positivists assume that reality is objectively given and quantifiably measured using properties which are independent of the investigator and the instruments (Kumatongo & Muzata, 2021:17). Ali, Shah, and Sha (2021:21) echo that positivism is an approach based on ontological

foundations and that there is a free objective reality for the researcher waiting to be discovered. In the same vein, Turin, Raihan, and Chowdhury (2024:1) state that positivism assumes a singular reality that can be empirically measured and observed.

Apart from the criticism that this paradigm gives answers to social sciences research (Ali et al., 2021:21), it was deemed unfit for the study for two reasons. Firstly, positivists argue that reality is discovered only through the application of a scientific research model that incorporates hypothesis testing, experiments, and statistical tools for data analysis. Secondly, this paradigm positions knowledge as derived from direct observation and experience, which mainly employs the quantitative method. According to Junjie and Yingxin (2022:11), positivism's ontological stance holds that there is a single objective reality for any studied situation or phenomenon, regardless of the researcher's perceptions and beliefs. It also adheres to an objectivist point of view by creating distance between the researcher and the research participants, so that the researcher's preconceptions do not influence the studied phenomenon. Pretorius (2024:2702) asserts that, in this paradigm, knowledge is generated independently of empirical evidence, in which data are observed, measured, and verified through the senses.

Since the study is qualitative and centred on semi-structured interviews and document analysis, the positivism paradigm was considered discordant with the study's methodology.

b) Post-positivism

Erciyes (2020:182) argues that, due to the insufficient human intellectual mechanisms and the fundamentally inflexible nature of phenomena, post-positivism is associated with humans being unable to grasp reality but understanding it imperfectly and probabilistically**.** Post-positivism provides researchers with the opportunity to identify and measure the causes that influence outcomes, such as those found in experiments (Kumatongo & Muzata, 2021:18). It conceptualises objective reality as multiple perceptions (Turyahikayom, 2021:213). Kumatongo and Muzata (2021:18) argue that the generation of knowledge is thoroughly attained through the observation and measurement of reality. Contrary to positivists, who state that reality is absolute, verifiable, and measurable, post-positivists challenge these perspectives (Triphathi,

Giri & Triphathi, 2024:115; Kouam, 2025:115). They (post-positivists) recognise the inherent complexities and subjectivities of human perception (Kouam, 2025:115).

Therefore, post-positivism is the set of implications arising from the positivist paradigm. Like positivism, this paradigm is centred on the social sciences but extends to the employability of both qualitative and quantitative methods. Subsequently, it is not suitable for the study, as only a qualitative approach was employed to unearth and construct knowledge through semi-structured interviews and document analysis.

c) Pragmatism

Turyahikayom (2021:214) asserts that the pragmatism paradigm is situated within scientific knowledge aimed at creating positive change in the organisation. This paradigm is characterised by distorted individual knowledge emanating from language and perceptions. It reveals that there is no universally accepted knowledge, except for that which leads to positive organisational changes (Turyahikayom, 2021:214). Therefore, the pragmatism paradigm was created to bridge the gap between positivists and interpretivists.

Similar to the positivist paradigm, pragmatism rejects the notion that a single scientific method is sufficient to explain social reality (Ugwu, Ekere & Onoh, 2021:121). Consequently, the use of multiple methods enables the understanding that knowledge is socially constructed by individuals, each interpreting reality from their own perspectives. The pragmatic paradigm supports action-oriented research and the adoption of diverse methods of inquiry to address complex problems and to facilitate a more comprehensive understanding of the world (Allemang, Sitter & Dimitropoulos, 2022:39; Elder-Vass, 2022:282). Although mixed-methods research has increasingly incorporated elements of the pragmatic paradigm (Hampson & McKinley, 2023:125), this study is qualitative in nature. The pragmatic paradigm, similar to post-positivism, adopts a flexible approach that allows for the use of multiple methods where appropriate (Kumatongo & Muzata, 2020:20; Turin et al., 2024:3).

d) Constructivism and interpretivism

Constructivists and interpretivists are somewhat similar in their ontologies and epistemologies, as they both feature researchers' experiences, views, and

backgrounds. Constructivism (social constructivism) seeks to understand how humans interpret or construct something in social, linguistic and historical context (Erciyes, 2020:184). Interpretivism argues that people's knowledge or understanding of reality is a social construction (Ali et al., 2021:23). Interpretivists generate knowledge through ideas (Turyahikayom, 2021:212). Both the constructivism and interpretivism paradigms imply that the researcher interprets what they have seen or experienced so that the whole truth can be revealed (Kumatongo & Muzata, 2021:19). People seek to understand the world they live in through the advancement of their individual meanings of their experiences (Ugwu et al., 2021:120).

4.3.7.4 Rationale for adopting the constructivism and interpretivism paradigms

Since the study employed a qualitative research method, features of the constructivism and interpretivism paradigms were relevant to the inquiry. Drawing on the study's use of semi-structured qualitative interviews, both paradigms were employed to generate knowledge and construct meaning through the researcher's experiences and views (Turyahikayom, 2021:212; Ugwu et al., 2021:120). Kumatongo and Muzata (2021:19) argue that in interpretivism, qualitative methods include open-ended interviews and document analysis.

Therefore, in this study, participants shared their perceptions of the research topic, which helped the researcher draw sound conclusions. Constructivism creates and develops findings in the investigation process (Erciyes, 2020:185). Constructivists aim to rely much on the participants' views of the case under study and interpret the meanings that the participants attach to the world around them (Kumatongo & Muzata, 2021:19). With the interpretivism and constructivism in mind, the researcher valued people's subjective interpretation and understanding of their experiences and circumstances (Al-Ababneh, 2020:80; Leavy, 2023:13; Pervin & Mokthar, 2022:424). Consequently, the two paradigms were relevant to the study because SMTs provided their perceptions based on their experiences and circumstances regarding the effectiveness of QMS in secondary schools. Furthermore, since the interpretivism paradigm serves as a tool for exploring the truth about the studied phenomenon to address social interaction problems (William, 2024:1), the study also provided

strategies to strengthen the effectiveness of QMS in secondary schools. It should also be acknowledged that a weakness of these paradigms was the researcher's subjectivity in interpreting participants' assertions. To mitigate this weakness, participants were engaged in constructing knowledge and creating meaning from the findings. Thereafter, member checking was done to validate the constructed and interpreted meanings. Tanlaka and Aryal (2025:12) affirm that, through co-construction, interpretivist researchers involve participants to allow for a deeper understanding of how meaning is co-created and interpreted.

4.3.8 Population and sampling

This section discusses the study's population and sampling. Firstly, each one of them is defined and then contextualised for the study.

4.3.8.1 Population

Population is defined as a set or group of all the units on which the results of the research are to be applied (Shukla, 2020:1; Nanjundeswaraswamy & Divakar, 2021:326). It is a group of individuals restricted to a geographical region or certain institutions (hospitals, schools, health centres, etc.), with common characteristics (Willie, 2022:521). Similarly, Ahmad, Alias and Rasak (2023:20) maintain that a population is a group of individuals, objects, or events that share a common characteristic and are the focus of the study. Hossan, Mansor and Jaharuddin (2023:214) view population as a complete set of individuals or items under investigation. Consequently, the population sampled consists of members of the SMTs from the 168 secondary schools in the uMkhanyakude District. That is, secondary school principals, deputy principals and departmental heads were the individuals targeted for the study as they share a similar role in managing educators (Lukhele & Lebeloane, 2024:52).

4.3.8.2 Sampling

Sampling refers to the process of choosing a statistically representative sample of individuals from the population of interest (Majid, 2018:3). It is a process whereby a subgroup of the population is selected for study purposes (Ahmad et al., 2023:21). Since a sample represents a part of the whole population (Lukhele & Lebeloane, 2024:52), the process of selecting a sample from the entire population is termed sampling (Nanjundeswaraswamy & Divakar, 2021:326; Rahman, Tabash, Salamzadeh, Abduli & Rahaman, 2022:46). It can be deduced from the preceding assertions that sampling involves a technique that is used to choose a portion of individuals from the overall population.

There are two basic types of sampling methods, namely probability sampling and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling, also known as random selection, refers to the randomisation implying that the targeted population sample has a known, equal, fair, and non-zero chance of being selected (Shukla, 2020:1). In contrast, a non-probability sampling (non-random selection) is applied where the choice of being chosen is unknown to the participants (Shukla, 2020:1). The non-probability method is utilised within qualitative or exploratory research because the researcher aims to explore an idea in its richness and depth (Pace, 2021:9).

Therefore, the non-probability sampling method was used purposively to explore secondary SMTs' perceptions on the effectiveness of the QMS in the uMkhanyakude District. This sampling method was used because it is considered less difficult, less costly, and more feasible to apply in a qualitative inquiry (Iliyasu & Etikan, 2021:224). While Staller (2021:898) argues that qualitative researchers intend to explain, describe, and interpret, the selection of non-probability methods provided rich information to address the study's research question. Jahja (2021:5) affirms that the main purpose of non-probability sampling in a qualitative study is to obtain rich information rather than to represent the population. Furthermore, this method relies on the researcher's discretion in selecting the sample (Hossan et al., 2023:214), thus making it feasible for investigating a manageable population.

Since the district has four CMCs, four SMT members from each CMC were included in the sample. That is, SMT members with at least three years of experience in a management position were included in the sample. The biographical data of the

participants is evident in table 5.2, in the next chapter. To explore SMT members' perceptions of the effectiveness of QMS, 16 schools were purposively selected through a non-probability sampling method. Therefore, the sample comprised approximately 10% of the 168 total secondary schools. That is, four (4) principals, four (4) deputy principals, and eight (8) departmental heads. Since uMkhanyakude is made up of four CMCs, one secondary school was purposively selected from each CMC. That is, within each selected school, four SMT members were selected: one principal, one deputy principal, and two departmental heads. This resulted in a total sample of 16 SMT participants. The sample of 16 participants was considered appropriate as the study is underpinned by the constructivism and interpretivism paradigms. These paradigms seek to understand participants' lived experiences and meanings they attach to the phenomenon under investigation (Tanlaka & Aryal, 2025:12). Unlike in quantitative studies, this study took prudence of data richness over statistical generalisability.

The SMT members are often regarded as key actors responsible for managing educators and leading school operations. A selection criterion was applied to ensure the credibility of the study's findings. Participants were required to be SMT members in secondary schools and to have a minimum of three years of experience in a management position. This criterion was considered important for contributing meaningful insights aligned with the main aim of the study. The selection of participants was further justified by the ELRC (2020), which indicates that the functionality of QMS rests primarily on members of the SMT, consisting of the principal and, where applicable, the deputy principal and departmental heads (who are at the forefront of curriculum management). Moreover, departments managed by departmental heads were not used as a selection criterion because all SMT members irrespective of their subjects or streams were equally relevant to the study. Conversely, individuals who were not in management positions were excluded from the selection process, as they might not have been able to provide sufficient information regarding the effectiveness of QMS in schools.

4.3.8.3 Research site

Figure 4.3B below shows the research site where data were collected from participants. The uMkhanyakude District is located in the northern region of KwaZulu-Natal province. It is the province's second-largest rural district, with four CMCs: uMhlabuyalingana, Ingwavuma, Hlabisa, and Ubombo. This research site, located in a deep rural area, attracted interest for the researcher due to concerns that quality education often falters in such settings (Shongwe & Mutambara, 2023), potentially undermining QMS effectiveness.

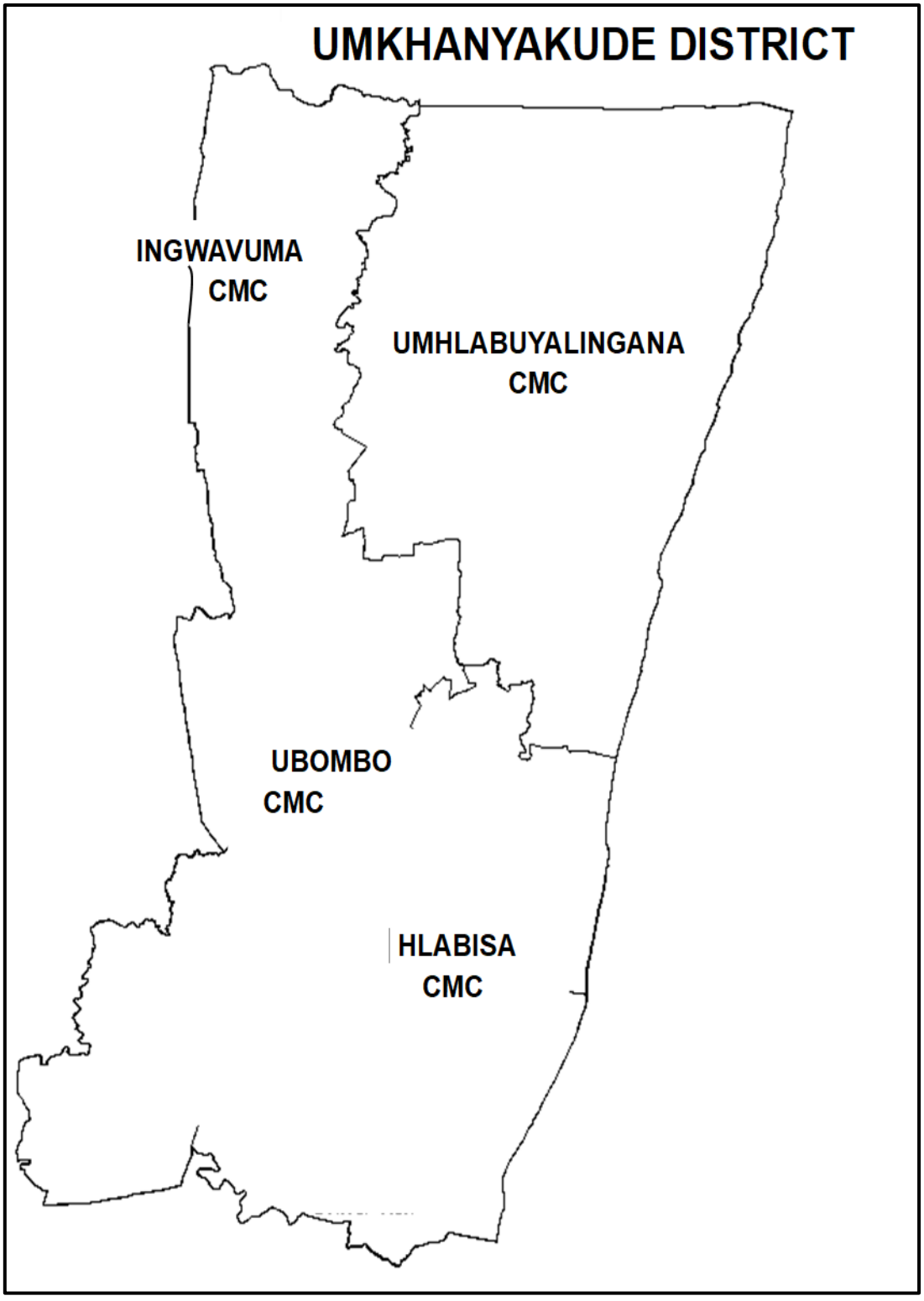


Figure 4.3B: Research site

Source: Adapted from https://municipalities.co.za/map/121/umkhanyakude-district-municipality

4.4 INVITATION OF THE PARTICIPANTS

It was pertinent to invite the rightful participants who would help achieve the qualitative study's aim. The study aimed to explore secondary SMTs' perceptions of the effectiveness of QMS in the uMkhanyakude District. Therefore, invitation letters were written to the school principals (see Appendix E), the deputy principals (see Appendix F), and the departmental heads (see Appendix G). These letters outlined the study's purpose, confidentiality matters, participants' rights to withdraw from the interview, and that participation in the interview was voluntary.

The selection criteria (refer to Table 4.4) were developed to assess participants' relevance to the main research question. Information such as highest qualification, years of experience in a management position, and positions held in management were believed to be relevant for exploring SMTs' perceptions of QMS effectiveness. Such criteria are also included as biographical data in the interview guide (refer to Appendix K).

Before inviting the participants, a letter addressed to the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education (see Appendix C) was drafted as a request to conduct research. After obtaining permission from the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education (refer to Appendix D) to conduct research in the selected schools, invitation letters were distributed to prospective participants to respond to the study's questions. They were each given consent forms to complete and sign before the telephonic interview process (refer to Appendices H, I, and J). It was further explained to each participant that their information would remain anonymous and confidential, and that the interview content would be discussed only with the supervisor (refer to Appendices H, I, and J). Appendix B denotes the proof of registration. The proof of editing and the Turnitin report are denoted by Appendices L and M, respectively.

Table 4.4: Selection criteria of participants

Name (pseudonym to be used for data analysis and interpretation)		
Gender	**M**	**F**
Age		
Home Language		
Highest qualification		
Years of experience in a management position		
Position held in management		
Contact number (for interview purposes)		

4.5 DATA GATHERING METHODS

Data gathering is the process of gathering, evaluating, and analysing precise understandings for research by means of typical genuine methods (Mazhar, Anjum, Anwar & Khan, 2021:6). It is the process of collecting data aiming to gain participants' perceptions regarding the research topic (Taherdoost, 2021:10). Data gathering is the process of collecting data based on the research topic which includes primary and secondary data (Taherdoost, 2021:12; Muzari et al., 2022:16). Mwita (2022:532) broadly defines it a systematic process of gathering information required to answer research questions or to solve a particular research problem.

However, the tools or techniques used by researchers to gather data are called data gathering methods (Mwita, 2022:532). Jahja (2021:6) states that qualitative studies include direct quotes, opinions, feelings, and experiences acquired from participants through various collection methods, such as primary sources (interviews, observations, audio-visuals) and secondary sources (documents). In this study, data were obtained from both primary and secondary sources. These data sources are explained in detail hereunder.

4.5.1 Primary data source

The primary data source involves acquiring first-hand information that is not altered by any individual (Taherdoost, 2021:12). Similarly, Mwita (2022:534) states that such data is gathered by the researcher for the first time from main sources. Although there are drawbacks to gather data from primary sources, this type of data source crucially provided 'fresh' and original information for this study.

Tran and Khuc (2021:3) support the view that primary data are original, serve current research needs, and are flexible in addressing research questions. Since this type of data source is factual and real-time (Ajayi, 2023:1), it was of paramount importance to the study, as it contributed to the generation of new knowledge. Based on the preceding assertions, a workable definition of a primary data source is a data source from which the researcher gathers raw data through practical means. Examples of primary data in qualitative research include interviews, observations, experiments, surveys, focus group interviews and questionnaires (Taherdoost, 2021:12; Mwita, 2022:534; Ajayi, 2023:1). The semi-structured telephone interview was used to gather primary data. It is contextualised for the study hereunder.

4.5.1.1 Semi-structured telephone interview

The telephone semi-structured interview was an effective tool for primary data gathering. The interview lasted 25-30 minutes. The qualitative telephone interview was a suitable method due to its flexibility between the interviewer and the interviewee. Self (2021:12) argues that telephone semi-structured interviews in research empower participants by providing a platform for their voices to be heard. This method helps gather data through word of mouth and through technological means (Mwita, 2022:533). In their study, Lukhele and Lebeloane (2024:124) assert that the telephone interview is a preferred method that enables interviewees to respond at any convenient time, unlike physical contact, which would require interviewing only during the day.

A review of published electronic sources, e-journals, e-books, Google Scholar, general websites, and government documents was conducted first to develop insight into secondary schools' QMS context. Moreover, document analysis provided the

researcher with rich data and ensured understanding with appropriate information before conducting the interviews, hence triangulation of data. Thereafter, interviews were conducted from August to October 2025 (7 weeks).

The interview schedule (Appendix K) consisted of open-ended questions which were generated from the four sub-research questions. Probing was done to help the researcher explore answers relevant to the research questions. Robinson (2023:1) reveals that probing provides access to an extra level of detail and depth through verbal prompts that clarify, elaborate, illustrate, or explain a prior answer to an interview question the participant has already given.

Since questions were asked in English, participants were also allowed to express themselves in their preferred language, isiZulu, to maintain the credibility and originality of the gathered data. Since the recording was transcribed verbatim, the researcher did not interfere with the collected data. Consequently, the recording was transcribed without influence. Data in isiZulu was translated into English so that readers who are not familiar with the language can access and understand the data. The flexibility of the qualitative telephone interview was appropriate for this study, as it aimed to explore SMTs' perceptions of the effectiveness of the QMS in the uMkhanyakude District.

4.5.2 Secondary data source

Primary data rarely achieves the study’s aim independently. Consequently, secondary data adds value to primary data, particularly by clarifying issues and specifying research objectives (Tran & Khuc, 2021:3). Secondary data is defined by Taherdoost (2021:12) as data gathered by someone else for another purpose and can be used for other purposes. In the same vein, Mwita (2022:534) defines secondary data as data that has already been gathered by others and is readily available for researchers to utilise in their studies.

Therefore, it can be deduced from the preceding assertions that a secondary data source is a type of data gathering method that serves as a ‘hub’ of processed information, available for access and reuse by other researchers. Like the primary data

source, this data gathering method also has disadvantages. However, the researcher took advantage of its value in supporting the primary source. Although secondary data sources are less accurate and reliable than primary data sources, Ajayi (2023:2) characterises secondary data as quick and easy to process. There are various secondary data sources that qualitative researchers may access for their studies. They include printed sources (books, periodicals, magazines, newspapers), published electronic sources (e-journals), general websites, weblogs, unpublished personal records (diaries, letters), government records, and public sector records (Taherdoost, 2021:13).

The researcher considered digital technology for the relevance of data in this study. Linthaluek, Wannapiroon and Nilsook (2023:190) argue that the digital technology landscape equips the digital researcher to synthesise, evaluate, and contextualise information for the current research. Consequently, for credibility, the researcher chose to access more secondary data (less than five years old) from published electronic sources, e-journals, e-books, Google Scholar, and general websites. However, some old sources of data remained relevant for the study. These included downloaded government documents and printed official records, such as the South African Schools Act 86 of 1996, the Employment of Educators Act 76 of 1998, the South African Council of Educators Act 31 of 2000, the National Education Policy Act 27 of 1996, and the Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995.

The use of both primary and secondary data sources contributed to the trustworthiness and triangulation of data. These two concepts are clarified for the study below.

4.6 TRUSTWORTHINESS AND TRIANGULATION OF DATA

The study employed both primary and secondary data gathering methods to ensure trustworthiness and data triangulation.

4.6.1 Trustworthiness

Cloutier and Ravasi (2021:114) define trustworthiness as the degree to which the reader can evaluate whether the researcher has displayed honesty and whether realistic conclusions have been drawn from the study conducted. It helps judge

whether the quality is trustworthy, robust, and free of bias (Gorard, 2023:2). Ahmed (2024:1) and Lim (2025:222) argue that ensuring trustworthiness is important for strengthening the credibility of qualitative findings. In a qualitative study, Jahja et al. (2021:8), Subedi (2023:63), Enworo (2023:379), and Fain (2024:442) argue that trustworthiness is assessed through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. These terms are described hereunder.

Credibility

Jahja et al. (2021:8) define credibility as the degree to which the findings are free from bias. It shows the truth of data and participants' ideas and understanding (Kakar, Rasheed, Rashid & Akhtar, 2023:155). Enworo (2023:379) stresses that credibility ensures that the research process was conducted with integrity and that the study's findings are trusted. Therefore, the combination of telephone interviews and document analysis was believed to ensure the credibility of the data. Subedi (2023:63) attests that to achieve credibility, a researcher could involve different data gathering methods, such as in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis.

Transferability

Transferability is the level to which results can be applied in other contexts (Jahja et al., 2021:8). This criterion provides an overall understanding of social phenomenon by capturing details of participants' views so that readers can decide if the results apply to their context (Subedi, 2023:63). Transferability means that the outcome of the study can be transferred to other context (Enworo, 2023:380). As Fain (2024:442) argues, raw data provides rich descriptions, such as participants' quotes. The study valued the participants' direct words, which were believed to enhance the credibility of the data for other users in their own context.

Dependability

Dependability is the extent to which the outcomes of the study are consistent with the collected data (Jahja et al., 2021:8). It ensures that if a study is repeated, the results will remain the same (Enworo, 2023:380). To ensure data consistency, the data gathering process was unbiased. The researcher ensured there was no interference, such as adding to the interviewee's words, during data gathering. Participants'

responses were transcribed as closely as possible to their original spoken form. Fain (2024:441) advises that, to minimise bias, qualitative researchers should monitor their influence on data analysis. The researcher also considered sharing the findings with the participants to verify the authenticity of their responses. Subedi (2023:64) supports that when participants review the researcher's interpretations of data, transparency and trust will be maintained.

Confirmability

Jahja et al. (2021:8) define confirmability as the extent to which the outcome of the research implies reality. Enworo (2023:380) argues that confirmability is recognised when results are centred on data generated and are verifiable. It is a strategy that allows participants to confirm the credibility of research findings (Megheirkouni & Moir, 2023:849). Drawing on the latter narrative, the researcher considered allowing participants to review and confirm whether their statements were credible as per the interview process. Fain (2024:441) emphasises that confirmability is achieved by verifying the phenomenon of interest across multiple data sources.

4.6.2 Triangulation

Triangulation is defined by Dawadi et al. (2022:27) as the use of multiple methods or data sources to develop a comprehensive understanding of a research problem. It is a tactic for establishing credibility that involves combining different methods (Megheirkouni & Moir, 2023:855). Triangulation involves adopting different approaches to answer research questions (Donkoh & Mensah, 2023:7).

Therefore, in this study, the inclusion of diverse data gathering methods, such as semi-structured interviews and document analysis, helped explore SMTs' perceptions of the effectiveness of QMS in secondary schools. Since triangulation involves integrating diverse sources, theories, investigators, and approaches (Kakar et al., 2023:162), the participants' responses addressed the research questions in a rational manner. Donkoh and Mensah (2023:7) assert that data gathered from different sources are used to validate, elaborate on, and illuminate a research problem, thereby reducing personal bias and improving the generalisability of the findings. Moreover, the TL Theory and the thematic data analysis were linked to support the credibility of the

findings. Kakar et al. (2023:152) argue that factors such as diverse data gathering techniques, appropriate data analysis, and theoretical integration are important for maintaining data triangulation in qualitative research.

4.7 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis is defined as the process of transforming gathered data into factual and useful information (Taherdoost, 2020:1). Similarly, Peel (2020:7) states that data analysis involves consolidating, reducing, and interpreting data into meaningful facts. It pertains the conversion of gathered raw data into meaningful facts and ideas so that they are understood in qualitative or quantitative studies (Dawit, 2020:2). However, qualitative data analysis is the organisation and interpretation of linguistic or visual material to make statements about implicit and explicit dimensions and structures of meaning-making in the material and what is accessible in it (Mezmir, 2020:15; Jowsey, Deng & Weller, 2021:475). There are different kinds of data analysis applied in research. They include, amongst others, content analysis, thematic analysis, open coding, axial coding, narrative analysis, phenomenological analysis, and discourse analysis (Humble & Mozelius, 2022:89).

Since the study employed the qualitative approach, thematic data analysis was applied inductively. Thematic data analysis is a qualitative research method that researchers use to systematically arrange and analyse complex data sets (Dawadi, 2020:62). It is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting themes within data (Finlay, 2021:103; Braun & Clarke, 2022:1; Naeem, Ozuem, Howell & Ranfagni, 2023:2).

Thematic data analysis was deemed suitable for the study due to its steps that are relevant to the qualitative approach. Drawing on the constructivist and interpretivist paradigms, thematic data analysis was conducted inductively. This approach was adopted to allow participants to express their own experiences and construct meanings regarding the effectiveness of QMS, rather than imposing predetermined theoretical categories of data. Katz, Fleming and Main (2026:6) edify that by inductive, data is derived from the experiences of participants rather than purely theory driven. Applying the steps of thematic data analysis assisted the researcher in identifying, organising, and reporting themes linked to SMTs' experiences on the effectiveness of

QMS in secondary schools. Thematic data analysis makes it an indispensable resource for researchers seeking to explore and understand the rich and complex experiences of their participants (Braun & Clarke, 2022:4). Figure 4.7. shows Braun and Clarke's six steps of thematic data analysis. The steps were briefly described and contextualised for the study.

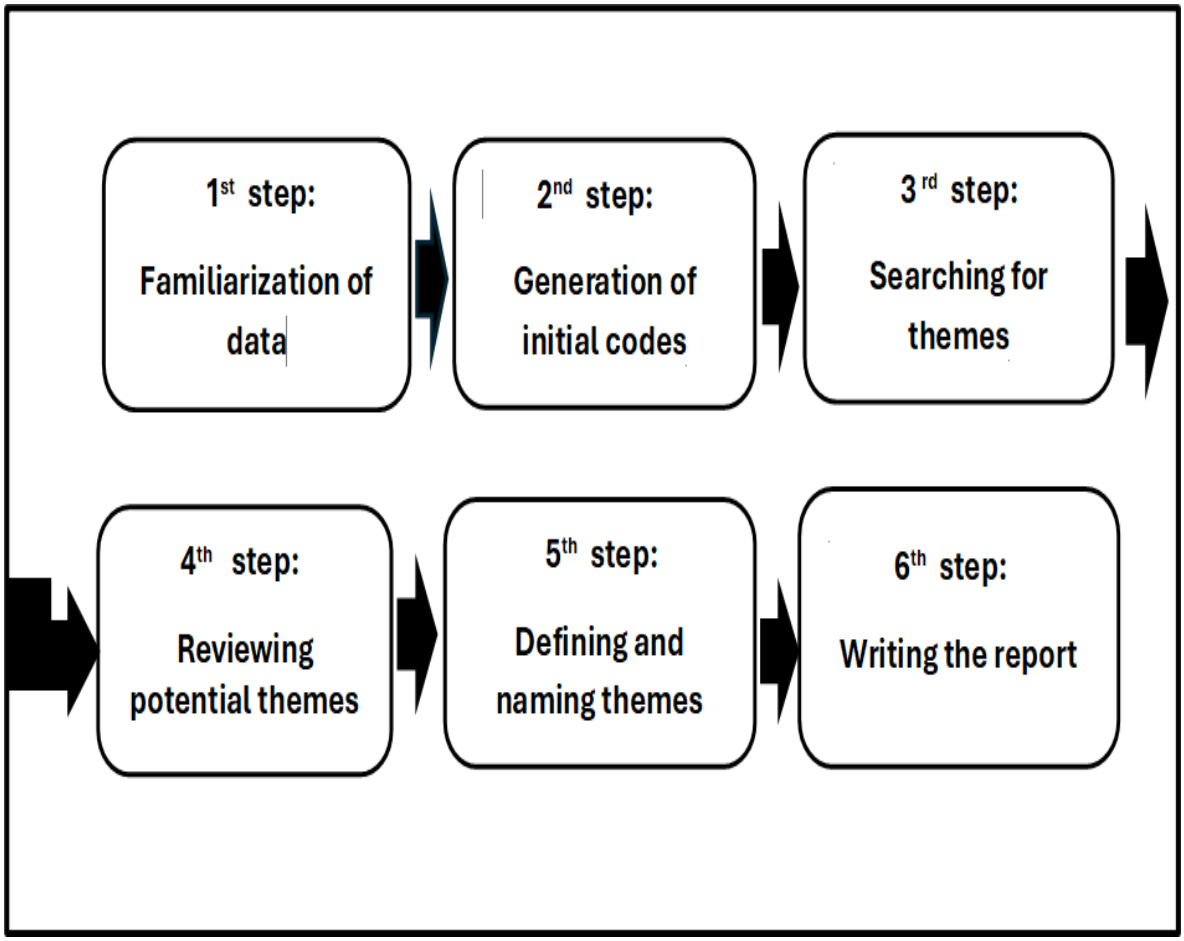


Figure 4.7: Braun and Clarke's six steps of thematic data analysis

Source: Adapted from Braun and Clarke (2022)

First step: Familiarisation with the data

In this stage, the researcher became familiar with the data. Dawadi (2020:64) states that researchers determine the types of themes that might emerge from the data. As the researcher became intimately familiar with the data in this stage (Finlay, 2021:107), transcripts were read and re-read, with notes taken on potential themes. This was carefully done to connect the research objectives. Jowsey et al. (2021:475) support the idea that the researcher sensitises concepts and begins thinking about possible

themes. This is a critical step that involves transcription, immersion and taking notes on initial ideas (Humble & Mozelius, 2022:89).

Second step: Generation of initial codes

The second step is generating initial codes. The researcher organised the data eloquently by collating codes and data extracts (Finlay, 2021:107). Moreover, key features aligned with the research objectives were coded. Jowsey et al. (2021:475) emphasise that coding simplifies a summary and comparison of data. Consequently, as the data were re-read, codes were assigned from the transcript by highlighting phrases and single words. The definitions of each code were given below a table summarising themes.

Third step: Searching for themes

The third step involved searching for themes. In this stage, the researcher was selective in grouping meaning categories. As elaborated by Lochmiller (2021:2035), this was done to ensure that data carrying the same notion were reviewed and combined into a single theme or sub-theme so that they articulate. Therefore, the researcher collated codes into preliminary themes (Humble & Mozelius, 2022:91). Byrne (2022:1403) emphasises that in this phase, codes are combined according to similar ideas to develop themes or sub-themes.

Fourth step: Reviewing potential themes

The researcher reviewed the truthfulness of the themes in this fourth step. Jowsey et al. (2021:475) state that the review of potential themes involves a rigorous exercise of scrutinising the integrity of themes so that they fit in relation to the coded excerpts. A thorough review was also conducted to check if the themes adequately reflect the data. As Jowsey et al. (2021:475) suggest, searches for other related themes were also conducted in this phase. During the review, themes that were not relevant to addressing the research objectives were discarded. Finlay (2021:107) argues that in

this stage, themes are collapsed, split, or discarded if they are not relevant to the research questions.

Fifth step: Defining and naming themes

The fifth step is defining and naming themes. This step follows the researcher's having checked the themes and included any additional emerging ones (Jowsey et al., 2021:475). As recommended by Finlay (2021:107), the researcher concisely refined, crafted and wrote an informative analysis of each theme to tell a convincing story. Byrne (2022:1407) argues that in this stage, the researcher is expected to identify which data items to use as extracts when writing up the analysis results. The selected extracts then provide a rich and convincing account of the arguments for each theme.

Sixth step: Writing the report

The writing phase is the sixth and final step. Finlay (2021:107) notes that this is where the researcher writes a broader report based on the evidence from the findings linked to the research objectives. Humble and Mozelius (2022:92) state that this is a step in which relevant themes are presented and the overall story is fine-tuned. Therefore, the report was compiled in a coherent and logical way while prioritising the order of themes in relation to the research objectives. This establishes the order of themes that connect logically to convey the collected data (Byrne, 2022:1410).

4.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The researcher must consider ethical issues to minimise harm. An ethical conduct is a prerequisite for building trust with research participants, which in turn assist the researcher to obtain honest responses (Kang & Hwang, 2021:7). Ethics is all about doing good and avoiding harm (Aluwihare-Samaranayake, 2022:65). The ethical principles of beneficence, autonomy and equality form the crux of ethical review (Hasan et al., 2021:1). Ethics imply that conducting research with human beings needs protection for them because data gathering methods such as interviews can create harm (Taquette & Borges da Matta Souza, 2022:1). In this qualitative study, the

protection of the dignity and rights of research participants was considered through ethical consideration.

The researcher applied for ethical clearance from the Unisa CEDU research committee to get approval for data gathering before interacting with the research site. The UNISA policy on research ethics was considered and adhered to when inviting participants. An ethical clearance certificate with reference number 8223 was granted (refer to Appendix A). This was to ensure compliance with research involving human participants. However, Taquette and Borges da Matta Souza (2022:2) argue that the ethics of research is not limited to complying with norms, directives, or approval from the ethics committee, as many researchers seem to believe. Consequently, the researcher also took the following ethical matters into cognisance: informed consent, anonymity, and confidentiality.

4.8.1 Informed consent

Informed consent is a basis of research ethics intended to inform participants that they take part in research voluntarily and understand what the study entails (Xu et al., 2020:1). Kang and Hwang (2021:7) argue that informed consent entails that the researcher assures participants that they enter the study willingly and voluntarily, with complete information about the research. The researcher discloses information such as the purpose of the study, research approach, risks, anticipated benefits for the study and a statement offering to answer questions (Badampudi, Fotrousi, Cartaxo & Usman, 2022:3). Consequently, the participants (SMT members) were approached so that the study's purpose and the process of data gathering were explained. They were informed that participation in the study was voluntary and participants had the right to withdraw at any stage without any penalty.

4.8.2 Anonymity

Anonymity in qualitative research involves not gathering data that can recognise or trace an individual (Badampudi et al., 2022:3). It refers to the exercise of data

gathering without any identification of personal information (Kang & Hwang, 2023:2). Although it may be difficult not to be exposed to the identities of participants, the principle of anonymity seems to be safe to protect the participants' identities. Czarnota-Bojarska (2021:63) affirms that safeguarding participants' anonymity is essential for ethical purposes but poses a methodological challenge for researchers. To ensure anonymity, participants were informed that pseudonyms would be used instead of their actual names. Although the researcher ensured anonymity, confidentiality was strictly maintained. The ethical principle of confidentiality is described and contextualised for the study hereunder.

4.8.3 Confidentiality

Czarnota-Bojarska (2021:63) states that ensuring the confidentiality of personal data is essential to obtain authentic responses to research questions. In qualitative research, confidentiality must be valued. Occasional harm must be repaired (Taquette & Borges da Matta Souza, 2022:1). Confidentiality involves the elimination or alteration of any personally identifying information submitted by participants and included in the data (Kang & Hwang, 2023:2). It serves as a strategy for protecting the raw data. Only publishing the aggregated results that can be traced to an individual (Badampudi et al., 2022:3). For this study, confidentiality was sustained by informing SMT members that their identity was strictly not revealed and that their interview responses were only for data analysis.

4.9 DELIMITATIONS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This section provides the delimitations and limitations of the study. All delimitations and methodological limitations that were experienced during the study are presented and justified hereunder.

4.9.1 Delimitations

Delimitations are the factors that prevent researchers from claiming that their findings are true for all people in all time and places (Miles, 2019:7. They are characteristics that limit the study's boundaries, including the research questions adopted by the

researcher (Nankoo, 2021:11). Delimitations are boundaries of the study created by the researcher and can be controlled (Malakar, 2022:54). Therefore, the study's delimitation was that the purposive sampling method could potentially undermine the generalisability of the results. As the sample comprised 16 SMT members from secondary schools, the results provides in-depth insight rather than statistical generalisation of the entire district. Furthermore, as the study was central to the effectiveness of QMS in secondary schools, other quality assurance frameworks were excluded. The study was also confined specifically to the perceptions of SMT members who had more than three years of experience in the management positions in secondary schools. Therefore, the views of post level 1 educators, learners, support staff, and parents were excluded. Lastly, only purposively selected secondary schools in the uMkhanyakude district, KwaZulu-Natal, during the 2025/2026 academic year were included in the study.

4.9.2 Limitations

Miles (2019:2) states that limitations are constraints on the researcher’s study arising from the research methodology and design (Miles, 2019:2). They are issues beyond the control of researchers that affect the research methodology in some ways (Akanle, Ademuson & Shittu, 2020:109). Limitations are abstract boundaries that are not under the researcher's control (Malakar, 2022:53). Therefore, a limitation of the study was reliance on the telephone technique. Some participants experienced communication breakdowns because most areas of the geographical area lack network coverage. A few utterances were not clear during the interview due to network issues. This might have limited participants' willingness to give earnest responses due to network problems.

4.10 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presented the study’s research design and methodology. The research methodology was discussed in detail, with the qualitative approach serving as the study's central guiding method. The constructivist and interpretivist paradigms were identified as appropriate for the study’s design and were thoroughly discussed. In

addition, the study's population and sampling strategies were outlined, together with the procedures used to invite participants. Semi-structured telephone interviews and document analysis were selected as the primary data gathering instruments.

Issues of trustworthiness and triangulation were carefully considered during both data gathering and analysis and were explicitly addressed in this chapter. Braun and Clarke's six-step thematic analysis framework was described and contextualised for the study. Ethical considerations were also detailed, with specific attention given to ethical clearance, informed consent, anonymity, and confidentiality. Furthermore, the study's delimitations and limitations were presented.

As this chapter primarily provided a methodological roadmap for data gathering and analysis, it can be concluded that the qualitative research approach appropriately guided the researcher in gathering data, mainly through semi-structured telephone interviews. The systematic procedure for inviting participants highlighted the researcher's commitment to ethical principles and trustworthiness, thereby ensuring integrity and minimising bias during data collection. Consequently, the next chapter (Chapter 5) focuses on the presentation and interpretation of the study's findings.

CHAPTER 5

PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter presented research methodology and design. The qualitative research method allowed for the use of a semi-structured telephone interview for primary data collection. The secondary data source, in the form of digital technology, supplemented primary data collection. While the study employed a multiple case study design, both the constructivism and interpretivism paradigms guided the research methodology. Therefore, this chapter focuses on the presentation and interpretation of data. It begins with the provision of biographical data for the participants. Secondly, the process of thematic data analysis is briefly discussed and contextualised to provide a coherent routine for developing themes and sub-themes. This was done in accordance with the participants' responses that addressed the study's research questions. Thirdly, an overt presentation and interpretation of findings is detailed. This was done by qualifying some assertions through relevant literature to concretise arguments. Finally, a conclusion for the chapter is drawn.

5.2 BIOGRAPHICAL DATA OF PARTICIPANTS FOR THE STUDY

The biographical data of the 16 participants are presented in this section. Table 5.2 divulges the summary of the participants. They included SMT members (four principals, four deputy principals, and eight departmental heads) with at least three years of experience in their respective management positions.

To maintain anonymity, participants were assigned pseudonyms to protect their identities during the reporting of data. Among the 16 participants, males dominated management positions, with a ratio of 56% to 44%. All four principals were aged 40 to 54. One deputy principal was aged 33, two were aged 46, and one was aged 52. About three departmental heads were between 30 and 39 years old. Four of them were between 42 and 45, and only one was 50. All the participants were IsiZulu-speaking SMT members, except for one who spoke IsiSwati. These two languages are among the eleven official languages spoken in South Africa. Approximately seven of the SMT

members hold a Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.), five hold a Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE), and two hold an Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE). Only two participants hold an Honours degree in Education (BEd Hons), which was the highest level of qualification amongst the participants. All participants had more than three years of experience in management positions. Below is a table of participants' biographical data.

Table 5.2: Biographical data of participants

Participant's name (pseudonym)	Participant's code	Gender	Age	Home Language	Qualification level	Years of experience in management position	Position held in management
Mr. Beige	SSP1	M	40	IsiZulu	PGCE	5	Principal
Mr. Blue	SSDH1	M	34	IsiZulu	BEd	4	DH
Mr. Brown	SSDH2	M	42	IsiZulu	BEd	4	DH
Mr. Gold	SSP2	M	44	siSwati	PGCE	3	Principal
Mrs. Gray	SSDH3	F	45	IsiZulu	BEd Hons	4	DH
Mr. Green	SSDP1	M	33	IsiZulu	BEd	3	DP
Miss. Indigo	SSDH4	F	30	IsiZulu	BEd	3	DH
Mrs. Maroon	SSDH5	F	50	IsiZulu	BEd Hons	7	DH
Mr. Orange	SSP3	M	53	IsiZulu	ACE	9	Principal
Mrs. Peach	SSDP2	F	52	IsiZulu	BEd	14	DP
Miss. Pink	SSDH6	F	42	IsiZulu	PGCE	5	DH
Miss. Purple	SSDH7	F	44	IsiZulu	PGCE	9	DH
Mr. Red	SSDP3	M	46	IsiZulu	BEd	6	DP
Mr. Silver	SSDP4	M	46	IsiZulu	PGCE	8	DP
Mrs. White	SSP4	F	54	IsiZulu	ACE	12	Principal
Mr. Yellow	SSDH8	M	39	IsiZulu	BEd	4	DH

Key for codes

Participant's codes

SSP1 *Secondary School Principal 1*

SSP2 *Secondary School Principal 2*

SSP3 *Secondary School Principal 3*

SSP4	*Secondary School Principal 4*
SSDP1	*Secondary School Deputy Principal 1*
SSDP2	*Secondary School Deputy Principal 2*
SSDP3	*Secondary School Deputy Principal 3*
SSDP4	*Secondary School Deputy Principal 4*
SSDH1	*Secondary School Departmental Head 1*
SSDH2	*Secondary School Departmental Head 2*
SSDH3	*Secondary School Departmental Head 3*
SSDH4	*Secondary School Departmental Head 4*
SSDH5	*Secondary School Departmental Head 5*
SSDH6	*Secondary School Departmental Head 6*
SSDH7	*Secondary School Departmental Head 7*
SSDH8	*Secondary School Departmental Head 8*

Gender

M	*Male*
F	*Female*

Qualification level

ACE	*Advanced Certificate in Education*
B.Ed.	*Bachelor of Education*
B.Ed. Hons.	*Bachelor of Education (Honours)*
PGCE	*Postgraduate Certificate in Education*

Position held in management

DH	*Departmental Head*
DP	*Deputy Principal*

5.3 DATA ANALYSIS

Braun and Clarke's (2022:4) six steps of thematic data analysis were applied to organise themes and sub-themes from the SMTs' experiences regarding the effectiveness of the QMS in the uMkhanyakude District. As explicitly discussed in the previous chapter (Chapter 4), the researcher firstly familiarised himself with themes (Finlay, 2021:107) emerging from the transcripts and then wrote notes. This was carefully done in line with the research objectives. Secondly, key features and data extracts aligned with the objectives were coded, and phrases were created. Finlay (2021:107) argues that in this stage, the researcher organises the data eloquently by collating codes and data extracts. As argued by Byrne (2022:1403), themes that yielded similar perceptions were identified and collated to articulate meaning in the third step.

Fourthly, themes and sub-themes were thoroughly reviewed, and those irrelevant to the research objectives were discarded. Finlay (2021:107) affirms that in this stage, themes that are irrelevant to the research questions are collapsed, split or discarded. After checking the relevant themes (Jowsey et al., 2021:475), the crafting and naming of themes and sub-themes were done to tell a convincing story. Finally, the report is written in a logical way with respect to the research objectives. Table 5.3 below shows the arrangement of themes and sub-themes that emerged from the following four research questions.

- Who are the role players responsible for the effectiveness of the Quality Management System in secondary schools?
- Why is the effectiveness of the Quality Management System important in secondary schools?
- To what extent is the Quality Management System effective in secondary schools?
- Which interventions are required to strengthen the effectiveness of the Quality Management System in secondary schools?

Table 5.3: Arrangement of emerged themes and sub-themes

Theme no.	Main theme	Sub-theme
1	The understanding of QMS	• A systematic tool for measuring educators' professional performance • A method used to evaluate the performance of educators • A management system that evaluates educators' quality job descriptions
2	Role players on the effectiveness of QMS at uMkhanyakude secondary schools	• The principal and the SMT • The SMT and educators • The SMT and circuit managers • The district officials, SMT and educators
3	The need for the effectiveness of QMS at uMkhanyakude secondary schools	• Evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of educators' performance standards • Supporting the professional development of novice educators • Assist in developing school and subject improvement plans • Improving competence and accountability in the job description
4	The extent to which QMS is effective at uMkhanyakude secondary schools	• QMS being effective • QMS being ineffective • QMS being inconsistent

5	Interventions to strengthen the effectiveness of QMS at uMkhanyakude secondary schools	• Proper and timeous planning • Regular training of SMTs and educators • Independent appraisers • Provision of school resources • Revising and strengthening the educator-learner ratio

5.4 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

This part provides a discussion and interpretation of participants' responses on the effectiveness of QMS in secondary schools in the uMkhanyakude District. Taherdoost (2021:10) asserts that collecting qualitative data should aim to gain participants' perceptions regarding the research topic. Furthermore, the collected data should be interpreted and distilled into meaningful facts and ideas so that they are understood in qualitative studies (Dawit, 2020:2). Therefore, the themes and sub-themes that are evident in Table 5.3 are explicitly discussed and interpreted to understand the qualitative inquiry. They (themes and sub-themes) emerged from the responses of the SMTs who participated in the study to address the study's research questions.

Information from the audio recording device was transcribed and typed as is, with no researcher interference or additions. As Mwita (2022:533) opines that the telephone interview is convenient, this was done to ensure the legitimacy and credibility of the findings. Enworo (2023:379) argues that credibility ensures that the research process is conducted with integrity and that the study's findings are trusted. Responses from participants who expressed themselves in the Indigenous languages (isiZulu and siSwati) were typed as they were. However, for ease of access, the responses were further translated into English for people who were unfamiliar with either isiZulu or siSwati. Despite participants' responses to the proposed research questions, it was imperative to first obtain participants' insights into QMS. This was done to interpret the participants' findings in accordance with the *ELRC Collective Agreement number 2 of 2020*. Consequently, sub-themes emerged from the following main themes:

- The understanding of QMS

- Role players on the effectiveness of QMS at uMkhanyakude secondary schools
- The need for the effectiveness of QMS at uMkhanyakude secondary schools
- The extent to which QMS is effective at uMkhanyakude secondary schools
- Interventions to strengthen the effectiveness of QMS at uMkhanyakude secondary schools

5.4.1 The understanding of QMS

It was crucial to first get the participants' general understanding of QMS. Most of the SMT members had an insight into QMS. The SMT members, including secondary school principals, deputy principals, and departmental heads, shared their views on what a QMS entails. Their responses were accurately collated during the analysis stage and then emerged as the following sub-themes.

- A systematic tool for measuring educators' professional performance
- A method used to evaluate the performance of educators
- A management system that evaluates educators' quality job descriptions

The above sub-themes are presented in Figure 5.4A. The graph shows the number of participants whose responses were similar or contained the same idea across the three sub-themes. However, out of the sixteen participants, only one was unable to respond to the asked question.

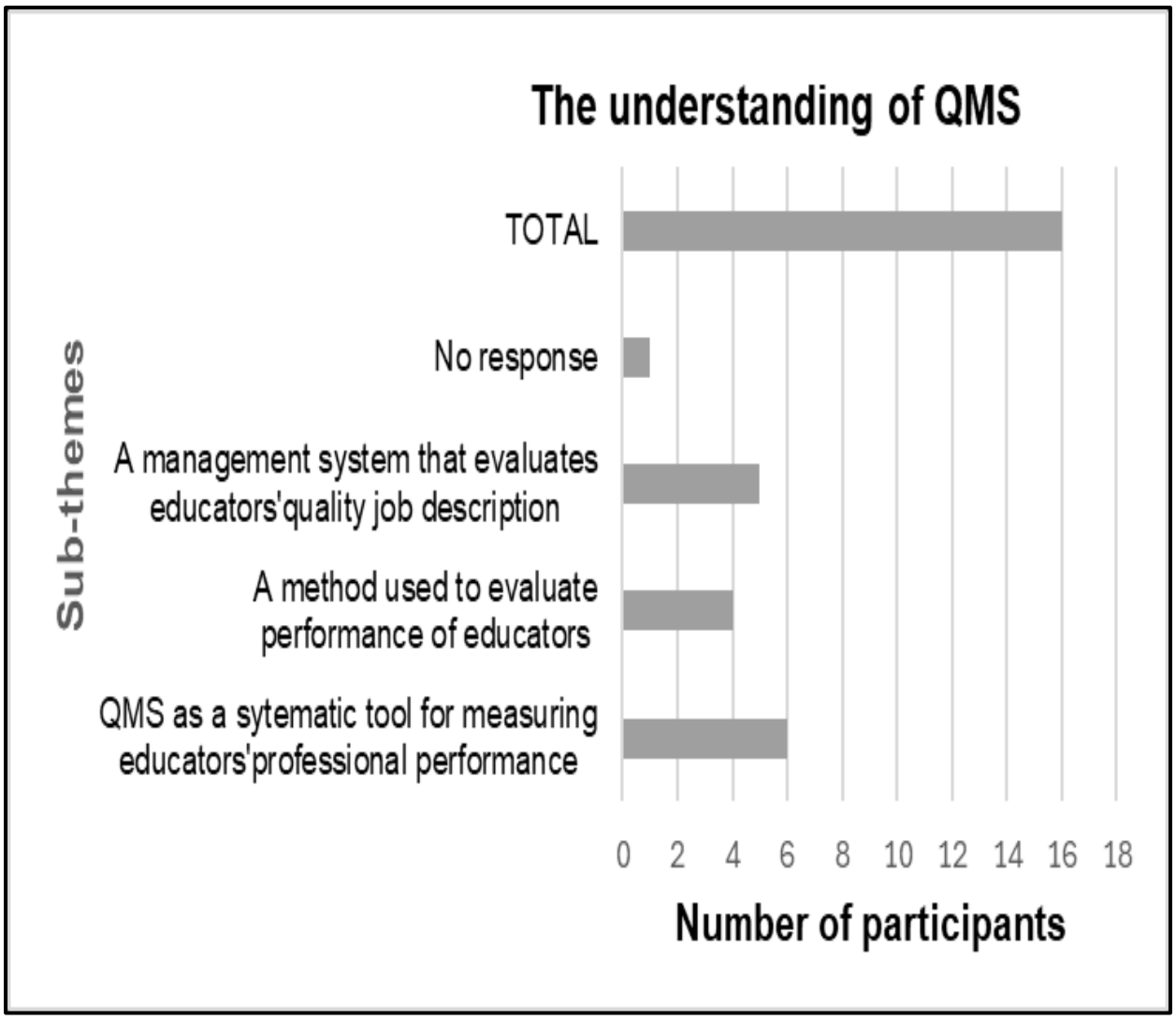


Figure 5.4A: A graph illustrating the responses of participants based on their understanding of QMS

5.4.1.1 QMS as a systematic tool for measuring educators' professional performance

Some participants understood QMS as a systematic tool for measuring educators' professional performance. More emphasis was placed on educators' professional performance in the school and classroom. SSDH2 opined:

> *"I think QMS is a systematic tool that is used to measure how educators professionally perform in the school."*

In the same vein, SSDP1 shared:

> *"QMS is a tool that the SMT uses to measure the performance of teachers through classroom visits so that the SMT can see which support is necessary for them. Uhmmm…it provides a clear direction for the type of support that is needed by teachers when teaching and learning is taking place."*

SSDH5 and SSDH6 expressed a strong sentiment toward QMS as a systematic tool. Their excerpts were as follows:

SSDH5:

> *"Well, I imagine QMS as a working tool for schools that comes from the then IQMS, which was the Integrated Quality Management System. I mean, it concerns how educators perform to maintain their professionalism. So overall, I can say QMS is a system that works as a tool and is used by all educators to evaluate whether they are in line with their professional development."*

SSDH6:

> *"I am of the view that QMS is a system that is aimed at ensuring that teachers perform best as per their professional capabilities in the workplace. So, it aims to evaluate teachers' performance in school and further in class."*

A principal (SSP4) shared:

> *"… eeh…what can I say…eeh, you know, QMS is similar to IQMS, but the difference now is that QMS no longer has a lot of paperwork, just like IQMS…and so, my understanding of QMS is that it is an instrument that principals and other SMT members use to gauge or measure the proficiency of educators so that they perform at their utmost best."*

5.4.1.2 A method used to evaluate the performance of educators

A few SMT members referred to QMS as a method for evaluating educators' performance. Although their understanding of QMS is similar to that of those who weighed it as a systematic tool for measuring educators' professional performance, SSDH3 and SSDH8 further unpacked how the system works. SSDH3 expressed:

"QMS is a way of evaluating the performance of educators."

When probed about how the system works in the evaluation of educators, she added:

" Ok, for my own knowledge, this method works quarterly so that we submit the summary of scores to the department on how we as educators perform as per our responsibilities."

SSDH8 opined:

"My understanding of QMS is that it is a method that is responsible for evaluating the performance of educators about how they teach and assess learners, and how they represent themselves as professionals in the system. So QMS involves the evaluation of educators about how they perform their duties in their respective schools."

5.4.1.3 A management system that evaluates educators' quality job descriptions

Some SMT members understood QMS as a system that evaluates educators' quality job descriptions. Although the participants shared a similar understanding of the concept, a number of them characterised it as central to 'quality' and their 'job description.'

SSDH1 opined:

"My understanding of QMS is that it is a Quality Management System that evaluates the competence of educators in their roles and responsibilities. So it evaluates if there is quality in the delivery of their responsibilities at school"

SSDH4 asserted:

"QMS looks at how quality is achieved through the evaluation or assessment of the overall duties of the SMT and the educators in a school environment."

SSP1 opined:

"QMS is a management system that is used to like…ehhh..ehh evaluate the job description of educators through their quality performance. As the word says, Quality Management System, it requires the principal as the accounting officer to oversee all the processes of QMS in school so that the performance of the

deputy principal, of the ehh…departmental heads and teachers is convincing in a sense that quality output is achieved."

One departmental head (SSDH7) and one deputy principal (SSDP3) shared their understanding of QMS and further enumerated the areas in which both the SMT and the educators are evaluated. SSDH7 shared:

"QMS is a management system that addresses the performance of educators by looking at certain performance standards."

When asked what examples of performance standards, SSDH7 replied:

"There are so many performance standards that QMS has. For example, those of PL1 (Post Level 1) educators are different to PL 2, 3 and 4 (Post Level 1, 2, 3 and 4). For instance, as I am the departmental head, my principal evaluates me according to management of the curriculum, extra-mural activities, lesson preparation in the classroom …uhm…and even professional development, to mention some."

SSDP3 shared a similar comment:

"As I said earlier, on that QMS is focusing on the quality performance of educators and SMT members, there are performance standards that we look at from educators and HODs (departmental heads). I mean the likes of how they present themselves in the classroom, their participation emdlalweni yasesikoleni [extra-mural activities] and also maybe how much they know the subject matter…kuningi nje [there is a lot]."

Based on the preceding narrative, it can be inferred that most participants understood what QMS entails. Most of the participants were abreast with the content of QMS, such that their understanding was in line with what the ELRC edifies. The ELRC (2020:7) states that QMS is a performance management system for school-based educators, designed to evaluate the individual performance to attain high levels of school performance. Indeed, participants understood that QMS is central to educators' performance in schools. Therefore, as the participants adequately understood QMS, the next research objective was to establish the role players responsible for the

effectiveness of QMSs in secondary schools in the UMkhanyakude District. Alongside the latter objective, themes and sub-themes emerged during data analysis, and participants' responses are presented in the following section.

5.4.2 Role players on the effectiveness of QMS at uMkhanyakude secondary schools

Participants were asked to mention the role players responsible for the effectiveness of QMS in their schools. Although all of them were aware that QMS could not operate independently, they gave various replies regarding the role players in the effectiveness of QMS. As noted by Byrne (2022:1403), participants' responses with similar ideas were grouped and combined to develop sub-themes during thematic data analysis. Subsequently, the sub-themes that emerged are presented in figure 5.4B below.

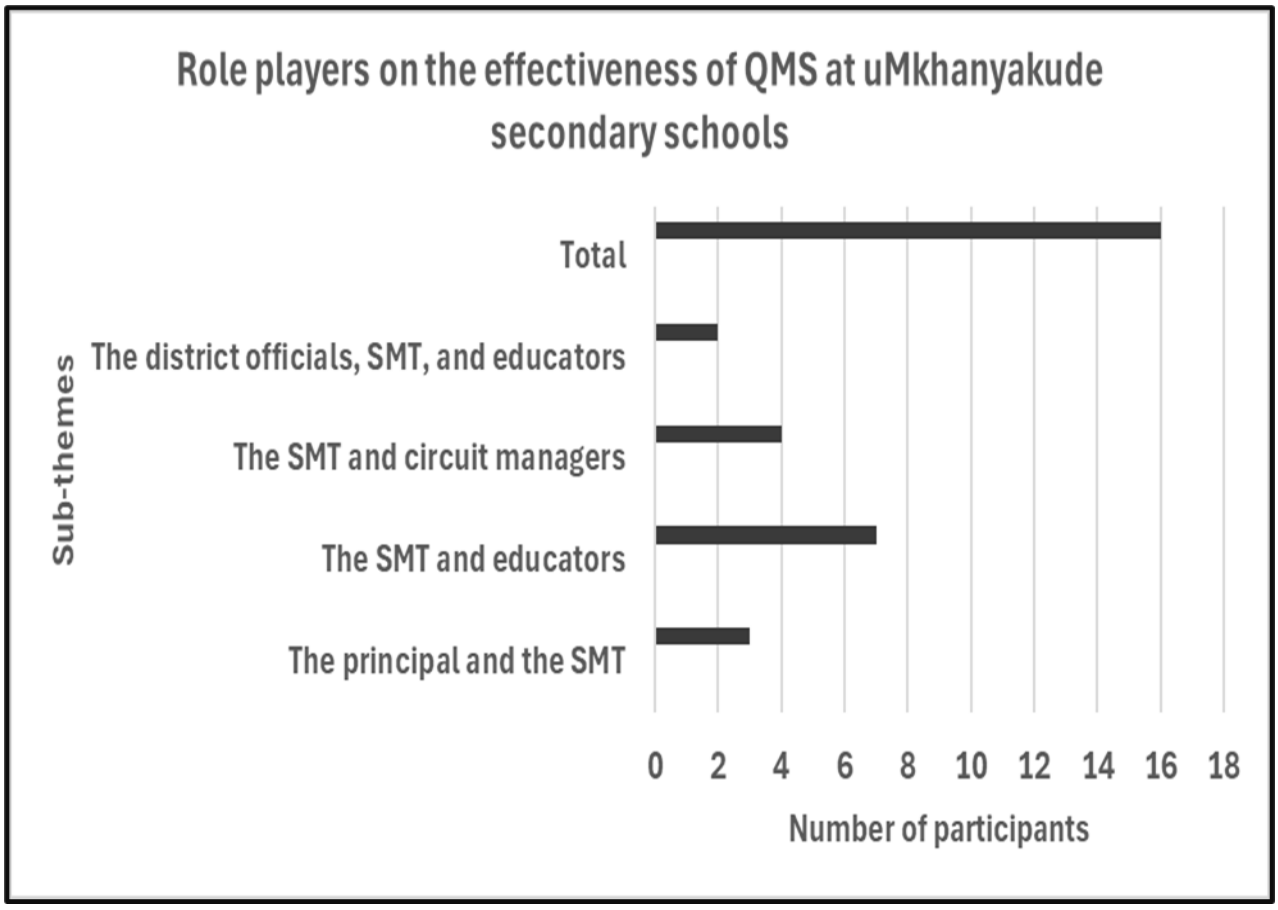


Figure 5.4B: Graph showing role players on the effectiveness of QMS at uMkhanyakude District

5.4.2.1 The principal and the SMT

Approximately three participants stated that the role players responsible for the effectiveness of the QMS include the principal, who oversees all the QMS processes, and other SMT members, including the deputy principals and departmental heads. The following are extracts from the participants' voices.

SSP4 shared:

> *"Well, according to my knowledge and understanding, the principal is the key role player for the effectiveness of ehh…ehh this Quality Management System. Yes, the SMT, as in my case, there are two departmental heads, they are also part of the process of QMS."*

SSDH4 opined:

> *"I think the principal, deputy principal and departmental heads are responsible. But at my school, I am the only one who facilitates the process, even though I believe my colleagues are responsible too. To be honest with you, I do not even know much about it. I have only three years of experience since I was appointed as a DH. I also need to be trained, but my colleagues, including the deputy principal, do not participate in it, and the principal does nothing about it. So yahh…I am the only role player, although we all have to be involved as the SMT, that is what I believe in."*

SSDH2 opined:

> *"People who must make QMS effective are the principal and the SMT, but they know little about it in my school."*

When asked who the specific members (position of management they hold) in his school are responsible for the effectiveness of QMS, he replied:

> *"I can't mention their names, but we are three departmental heads, a deputy principal and a principal."*

5.4.2.2 The SMT and educators

Several participants opined that the effectiveness of QMS in secondary schools depends primarily on the roles of SMT members and educators. They stated that, although the purpose of QMS is to improve the competence of all educators, educators also evaluate themselves. The SMT also take heed in evaluating the proficiency of PL1 educators. Below are the participants' sentiments.

SSDP1 asserted:

> *" I think people who are responsible for the effective implementation of QMS is the SMT. But also, the teachers must appraise themselves because they are also the role players."*

SSDH3 shared a similar view to SSDP1:

> *"Of course, members of the SMT, your principal, your deputy principal and uhm…the DHs. I must also add the PL1 educators, because, being evaluated by the SMT, they also evaluate themselves before the SMT evaluates them. So the educators, as well as the members of the SMT, must ensure that QMS is implemented and that it works effectively in our schools."*

When asked if all the members of the SMT that she mentioned apply in her school, she replied:

> *"No…no, in my school there is only one principal and two DHs."*

SSP2 stated:

> *" I, the principal, and my DH work in an effective way with my teachers. Angati noma kwentiwa kutsi sibancane yini esikolweni [I do not know, maybe it is because we are a few staff], but we try to push QMS and comply with the department. So, in short, the SMT and the teachers ensure the effectiveness of IQMS, sorry, I mean QMS, because we call it that now."*

Another principal (SSP3) articulated:

> *" Ehhh…it is hard to answer that question, especially when one knows that there is no justice with regard to QMS effectiveness. Like ehhh…I feel guilty,*

but to answer your question, actually, it must be the SMT and the whole staff who must be the role players."

The principal was further asked what he meant by saying actually it must be the SMT and the staff. He added:

"Well, sure. I mean, the process does not happen as it is supposed to. To be honest, due to many commitments, I end up delegating duties to my DP, then he tries to do the process with the departmental heads and educators."

SSDP3 stated:

"In my school, the departmental heads appraise all PL1 educators, and I appraise the DHs. The other DP handles the principal's duties because the principal is not often at school. So, we end up signing for each other because the principal is not always in school. When we submit to the circuit manager, we end up doing the wrong thing on his form by signing for him because the circuit manager appraises him. So, he does not talk about QMS at all."

SSDH1 shared a similar sentiment with that of SSDP3:

"I do the whole work. The other DH usually says she knows nothing about QMS, so I am obliged to try. You must remember that I also know little about it, but I try to learn."

The departmental head (SSDH1) was asked whether the principal participates in the process. He added:

"Not at all, actually, he is acting for the principalship. Even when he was the DH, he would also say QMS is difficult and needs more time."

SSDH7 opined:

"The SMT and educators are the role players in the effectiveness of QMS. As I mentioned earlier, I appraise PL1 educators, and the principal appraises me. But we need to consider that as per the requirement of QMS, the educators need to appraise themselves prior to the evaluation by the SMT."

5.4.2.3 The SMT and circuit managers

Participants also mentioned that SMT members and circuit managers are the role players in the effectiveness of QMS in their respective schools. However, unlike the rest of the participants, they excluded educators from the role players who ensure the effectiveness of QMS. For example, SSDH6 stated:

> *"Only the SMT and the circuit manager play their role to ensure that QMS happens in our school."*

Similarly, another departmental head (SSDH8) alluded:

> *"The principal, the DHs and the circuit manager are responsible for the entire process of QMS. I must admit that QMS is not adequately taking place in my school, but the principal and the DHs do it just for compliance and then submit to the circuit manager to sign the forms."*

The DH was asked whether educators were not included in the QMS. He replied:

> *"No, they are just signing the forms that are sometimes filled by the admin clerk who knows nothing about QMS."*

SSDP4 asserted:

> *"The principal, the deputy principal, three DHs and the circuit manager are all the role players for QMS. Even though we sometimes submit for compliance, the people I have mentioned are responsible and accountable for QMS."*

SSDH5 stated:

> *"I think the SMT and the circuit manager."*

When asked to clarify in the case of her school, the departmental head added:

> *"Ok, in my school, QMS is done by the SMT. I am talking about myself, another departmental head, and the principal when he is not that busy. Then either the other departmental head or the principal submits all reports to the circuit office."*

5.4.2.4 The district officials, SMT, and educators

Two participants stated that district officials, SMT members, and educators are responsible for the effectiveness of the QMS. One of these participants even included the grievance committee as another role player. They gave their responses hereunder.

SSP1 stated:

> *"As far as I know and understand the process of QMS, it is the responsibility of the principal, as a person who always accounts, to ensure that the process takes place without fail. The principal oversees the school's policies and procedures. So it does not end there, the deputy principal will appraise departmental heads and may also appraise Post Level 1 educators, in this case helping the DHs..."*

The principal (SSP1) further explained:

> *"…the journey continues, so the educators themselves also appraise themselves. That is what the policy says. Then you will see the DCES (Deputy Chief Education Specialist) appraising me as the principal. We must also not forget that if processes are not carried out to the fullest satisfaction, we have the grievance committee at the school and at the circuit level. So for my school, that is how things are procedurally done as far as QMS is concerned."*

SSDP2 opined:

> *"You know the inconsistency of the way in which QMS is done makes it difficult for me to say who the role players are. Sometimes a PL1 educator is delegated by the principal to facilitate the full process, and in a given year, you will see the SMT do it correctly. Like this year, in the first term, I cannot remember who did it, but in the second year, it was the SMT who properly facilitated it. Last year in the fourth term, it was the PL1 educator because other teachers were busy marking, especially those in Grade 12."*

The principal was asked who, according to her knowledge, has ensured the effectiveness of the QMS in her school. SSDP2 replied:

> *"As I've mentioned, it is difficult to tell, but the SMT, the educators, the district and the resource person should be the role players. But because of*

inconsistency due to some reasons, these people are not always involved in the QMS at my school."

Based on the preceding participants' views, it is clear that they differ in their understanding of the actual role players in the effectiveness of QMS. However, most of them understood that the principal, with the help of the other SMT members, is the key role player in the process. This verdict concurs with that of Mincu (2022:234), who proclaims that school leadership consisting of the principal is the spearhead of quality models in schools. O'Brien et al. (2023:63) reiterate that the principal is a major supporter and driver of the initiative to establish and channel quality education in schools.

Other participants were clear that Post Level 1 educators are also part of the effectiveness of QMS, while some disagreed with this notion. This narrative complements that of Khurelbaatar (2020:123), who underscores that quality education is driven by teachers, who ensure efficiency, effectiveness, and equity in the teaching and learning process. It is therefore important to underline the sentiment of Fasemore and Ileuma (2025:643), who opine that these principles cannot instil teachers' commitment to QMS without the collaboration of other teachers in management positions.

A few participants pronounced that the DCES, commonly known as the circuit manager, is also a role player. They continued to say that not only do the SMT, circuit managers, and educators make the QMS effective, but stakeholders such as the resource person and the grievance committee also have a responsibility to ensure the QMS's effectiveness. Although different authors place these role players in different positions, it is clear that they are involved in the QMS process. For example, in a study conducted in the DRC, the effectiveness of QMS stems from various role players, including qualified teachers, school inspectors, school directors, government and religious officials, donor organisations, parents and teacher unions (Huguette & Kite, 2021:145). Phebeni (2025:132) also supports the view that school principals, deputy principals, parents and education officers are important stakeholders who collaborate and engage in quality education and school improvement.

Despite participants having different views, the ELRC (2020:9) elucidates the role players involved in implementing QMS. They include the members of the SMT, consisting of the principal and, where applicable, the deputy principal and departmental heads. Moreover, the educator, the resource person, the circuit manager, and the grievance committees at the school and district levels all play a role in the effectiveness of the system. The preceding narrative bridges the gap of participants' hesitation about the actual role players responsible for the effectiveness of QMS.

Apparently, lessons could also be learnt from other countries that have seen other role players successfully strengthen the effectiveness of QMS. For instance, the effectiveness of QMS in Thai schools rests on three key arms: organisations (schools and policymakers), people (learners, teachers, researchers, teacher trainers, and content developers), and internet communities (Nguyen et al., 2023:3).

5.4.3 The need for the effectiveness of QMS at uMkhanyakude secondary schools

This theme emerged from the research objective to explore the importance of an effective QMS in secondary schools. The SMT members, who were participants in the study, gave their views on why the effectiveness of QMS is important in secondary schools. After carefully collating participants' responses, the sub-themes evident in the graph (Figure 5.4C) below emerged.

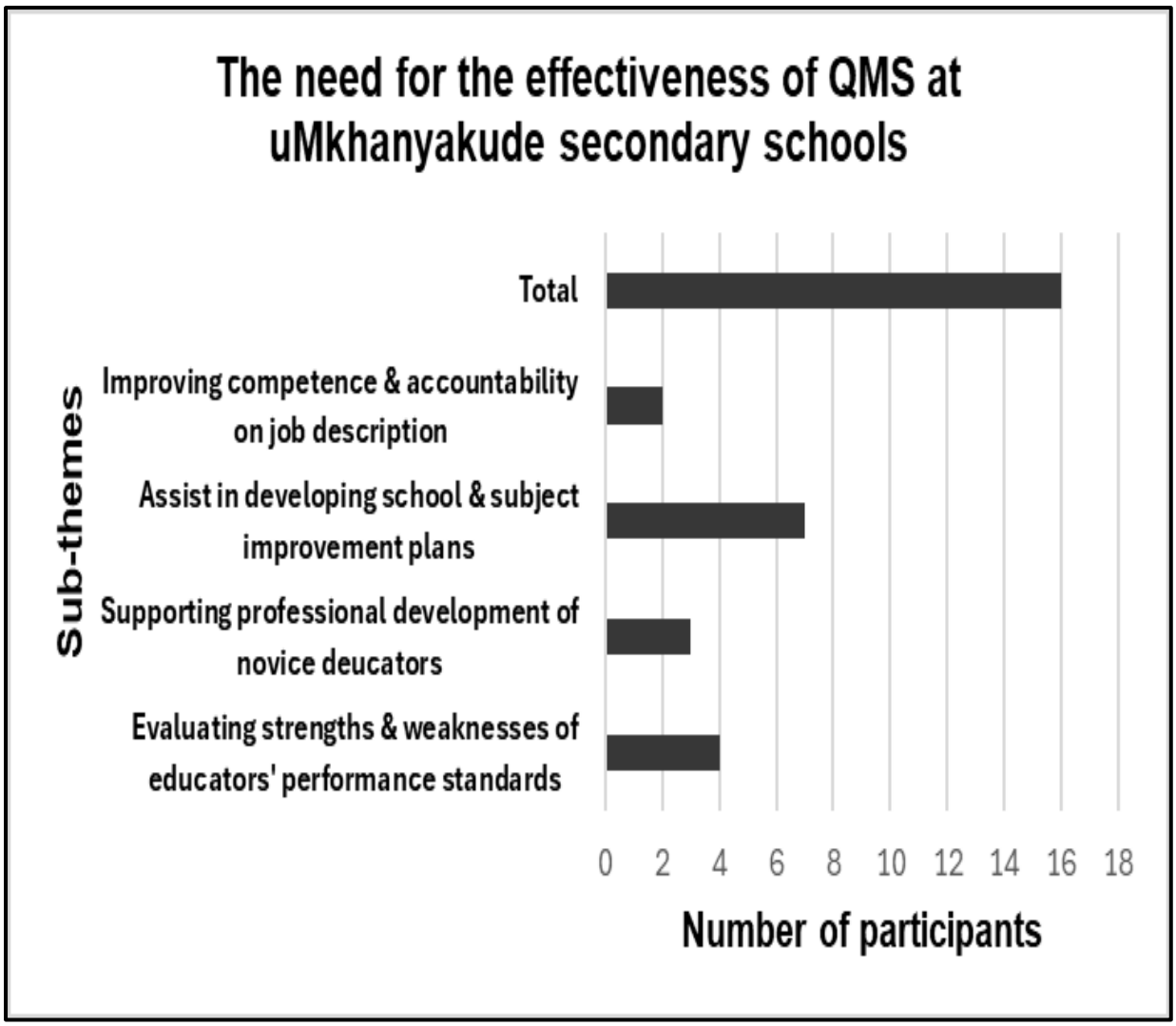


Figure 5.4C: A graph showing responses of participants based on the need for the effectiveness of QMS at uMkhanyakude secondary schools

5.4.3.1 Evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of educators' performance standards

Some participants noted that the effectiveness of QMS is important because it helps school managers and educators in evaluating their strengths and weaknesses through defined performance standards. In light of the preceding statement, the ELRC (2020:7) clearly outlines the performance standards against which both PL1 educators and the SMT are evaluated. Consequently, participants gave their assertions in this regard.

SSDP3 opined:

> *"It is important for QMS to be effective. I mean, we can have everything, the documents with all guidelines, the teachers, and every resource, but if the QMS is ineffective, it means there is no need for it. So I am trying to say we, as managers and the teachers in general, are able to assess areas of weakness so that we are able to improve on the performance standards."*

SSDH7 reiterated:

> *"I think the introduction of QMS was necessary for a number of reasons, but I think it helps teachers to identify their weaknesses and convert them into strengths according to the defined performance standards."*

The departmental head was questioned about how teachers can turn weaknesses into strengths. She added:

> *"Well, as I said earlier, I appraise all PL1 educators after they have appraised themselves. So if a teacher gets the lowest score and we both agree on it, such as uhmm…lesson preparation, then it assists me in developing ways to motivate the teacher so that they improve and perform well in that particular standard in the next classroom visit."*

SSP2 stated:

> *"QMS needs to be effective for a number of reasons, but to be short, it helps us as teachers to do what is called the SWOT analysis. So it helps to see how a teacher performs, and if there is a weakness or threat, there are some means done to work towards the strengths and opportunities…"*

SSDH4 shared the same view as SSP2, and she had to mention:

> *"It is very necessary to have an effective QMS because it assists the SMT in identifying weaknesses that may arise from a teacher. Let's say a teacher is not active in extracurricular activities; this means that there have to be some strategies to help that individual see opportunities in such activities."*

Participants' views indicate that they value QMS as a mechanism for identifying weaknesses in educators' work. This helps educators feel supported and improves their performance across the activities assigned to them. The latter is affirmed by Díez

et al. (2020:6) who state that QMS evaluation processes assist schools in identifying priorities for improvement, isolating weaknesses and fostering accountability. O'Brien et al. (2023:62) emphasise that principals who adopt quality development programmes can identify their strengths and areas for improvement. This enables them (principals) to develop and implement action plans to address challenges that hinder the development of quality systems. Mefi (2020:1) further supports the idea that the efficiency and effectiveness of school management rely heavily on educator evaluation. By identifying weaknesses, schools can devise measures to enhance teachers' effectiveness.

5.4.3.2 Supporting the professional development of novice educators

Some participants opined that QMS is needed to support the professional development of newly appointed educators. The participants emphasised that it is not enough to be evaluated by lecturers at a tertiary institution, as the teaching profession requires the thorough execution and extension of knowledge and skills in the real classroom. A departmental head (SSDH1) reiterated:

> *"We all know that being evaluated at the tertiary level as a student teacher is not enough, so QMS is there to close the gaps because employed teachers will be thoroughly evaluated at school so that they expand their knowledge and skills in the classroom."*

Another departmental head (SSDH5) shared:

> *"QMS is needed in schools because it helps newly appointed educators to have confidence when teaching and learning takes place. Through the support from the SMT, these inexperienced educators will gain more practical skills in the real classroom than when they were in universities."*

A principal (SSP1) articulated:

> *"Eeh…you know if it weren't for IQMS, I would not have gained expertise to deal with classroom management, motivating learners and how a professional teacher should present himself in the class. So, QMS, as we now call it, assists*

newly employed teachers to have a sufficient room to develop themselves professionally and through the support of all stakeholders…"

It is evident from the above quotes that QMS contributes to the acquisition of knowledge and skills that are applied in teaching and learning. Participants noted that the practical skills newly appointed educators gain in tertiary institutions are inadequate. The existence of QMS is said to close existing gaps through support from the SMT. However, this contradicts what Kutsiwike et al. (2022:78) say. They argue that novice educators should enter the workplace well-equipped with high-quality skills to demonstrate in the classroom. Nevertheless, Santos et al. (2021:3) contest the latter and reiterate that QMS empower newly appointed educators to deliver quality education in the country.

It is imperative to agree with Santos et al. (2021:3), who argue that equipping them with the necessary skills aligned with quality education could prepare them to perform at their best during their tenure of appointment. Consistent supervision of novice educators could help them improve their delivery of quality education.

5.4.3.3 Assist in developing school and subject improvement plans

Several participants noted that QMS is necessary, as it helps develop whole-school and subject improvement plans. Since every school is meant to deliver quality teaching and learning, the participants supported the view that quality is recognised through whole-school improvement and subject performance. Therefore, the participants shared their views on this.

SSDH4 opined:

"QMS is good to have because we are able to draw up a school improvement plan."

When probed on how QMS assists them in drawing up a school improvement plan, the DH further added:

"…yes, I am talking about gathering all the weaknesses and strengths that I talked about earlier on and being able to convert them into strengths and opportunities. So drawing up a school improvement plan will help to track these

aspects. For example, teachers, as they are human resources, can be developed through the guidance from QMS evaluation and will eventually take the school forward."

SSDH1 shared a similar comment:

" To realise our weaknesses so that we can draft a school development plan which will guide us on the standards needing our attention."

Other participants continued to stress the importance of QMS in the compilation of subject improvement plans. This was attributed to devising strategies for how a particular subject could improve, emanating from the extent of quality teaching and learning during educator evaluation. Participants expressed their views.

SSDH6 opined:

"During the analysis of results, educators are able to identify some loopholes on a particular topic. Normally, the loopholes come from a particular topic that learners did not understand. So, QMS help teachers to prepare a subject improvement plan."

SSDH8 mentioned:

" QMS is an answer to subject improvement plans because a teacher is able to present some strategies to treat a particular topic that challenges the learners."

SSDP4 and SSP3 stated that there is a link between QMS and a school's plans. They elaborated that QMS not only assists in developing improvement plans at a school level, but the district officials also provide interventions to support educators in schools. As the ELRC (2020:10) upholds the latter, the participants expressed their sentiments.

SSDP4 stated:

"QMS is not only for the responsibility of the school. So, whatever plans the school has will inform other plans as the hierarchy goes up."

The deputy principal (SSDP4) was asked what plans he was referring to. He elaborated:

“ Well, as teachers are gauged by the SMT, whatever aspect they find will inform the subject improvement plans. Likewise, the subject improvement plans will help us, the SMT, develop a school improvement plan. The district will take our SIP to prepare its district improvement plan, so there is a link in these things.”

In the same vein, SSP3 expressed:

“The implementation of QMS helps schools to prepare both subject improvement plans and school development plans. The district officials will take it from there to draft their own plan.”

A principal (SSP4) opined:

“ I believe that QMS has some advantages. For example, even though QMS is inconsistent in my school, when it is in place, it helps us, as the SMT, discuss operational plans that could boost the school. We use QMS as an instrument to address some challenges that come from the side of educators, learners and sometimes everything that involves the school.”

Drawing from the sentiments of the participants above, it could be asserted that they understood the purpose of QMS. One of the purposes of QMS is to provide a basis for decisions on mechanisms to recognise satisfactory performance and address underperformance (ELRC, 2020:8). Therefore, the participants understood that QMS serve as a tool to help educators and SMT members make informed decisions. The decisions could include different plans to be tabled to ensure the school's overall performance is adequately achieved. Girmanová et al. (2022:468) affirm that school improvement plans ensure that teachers develop constant planning for their daily activities.

5.4.3.4 Improving competence and accountability in the job description

Some SMT members mentioned that introducing a QMS would improve competence and that educators are accountable for their job descriptions. These findings are linked to two purposes of QMS outlined by the ELRC (2020:8). Firstly, QMS is meant to determine the levels of competence of all educators. Secondly, it aims to improve accountability levels within schools. The participants gave their assertions.

SSP2 shared:

> *“ …and another thing, the effectiveness of QMS improves teachers ‘competence towards their work. We are able to tell how much support is needed by the teacher by looking at the SWOT analysis.”*

SSDP2 added:

> *“ Its effectiveness assists a teacher to realise the commitment he/she has on their work in order to be competent in the subject and other roles.”*

A principal (SSP3) added from his previous assertion. He articulated that the effectiveness of QMS provides a benchmark for educators to assess their competence and determine whether they can fulfil their defined duties. Below is his excerpt:

> *“ QMS serves as a yardstick to support schools. It lets educators realise their competencies in line with their roles and responsibilities. A full eh…eh…recognition of that will enable them to account for their job description to the principal, SMT members and even to other officials in the department…”*

Therefore, teachers' competence and accountability in the QMS process cannot be overlooked. When both of these factors are well-established, school leaders and educators can recognise the full potential to run a QMS with fairness and integrity. Duraku and Hoxha (2020:20) support the preceding narrative by emphasising that teachers can advance a credible and fair commitment to QMS if they are competent and abreast of accountability sessions scheduled in their school plans. As noted by Al-Saffar and Obeidat (2020:86), teachers perform their duties more efficiently when they receive training opportunities to strengthen their competencies. Apart from teachers gaining competence to achieve the best results, Asnawan (2021:57) also emphasises that their commitment makes the job of school managers easier, as they are responsible for the QMS activities in schools.

5.4.4 The extent to which QMS is effective at uMkhanyakude secondary schools

This theme emerged from the research objective: To examine the extent to which QMS is effective in secondary schools. To align the responses of the participants with the

research objective, sub-themes that emerged during thematic data analysis were grouped as QMS being ‘effective,’ ‘ineffective,’ and ‘inconsistent.’ The findings reveal that, among the 16 schools, four (25%) participants confirmed that QMS was effective in their schools. Eight (50%) participants rated QMS as ineffective, and four (25%) reported inconsistent effectiveness across their schools. These findings indicate that almost 25% of the schools ensured that their QMS was effective. Therefore, there appears to be a challenge with the effectiveness of the QMS in the uMkhanyakude District. To support the latter, the participants' responses are presented in the bar graph in Figure 5.4D below. Thereafter, participants' responses are discussed and interpreted.

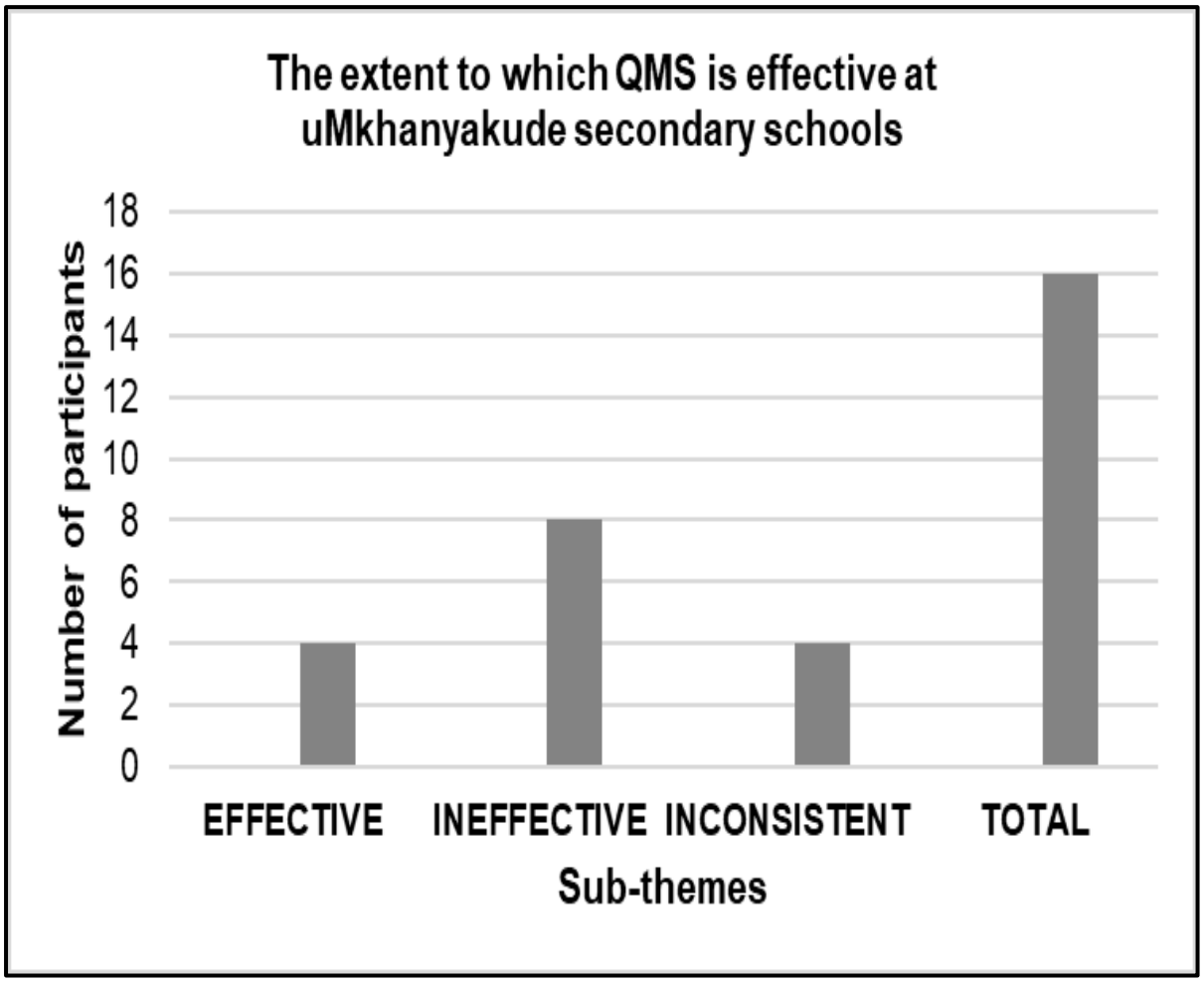


Figure 5.4D: Graph showing the extent to which QMS is effective in the uMkhanyakude District

5.4.4.1. QMS being ‘effective’

Some participants perceived QMS as an important tool for tracking the needs of all educators in the school. The ELRC (2020:16) affirms that the QMS is one of the mechanisms used to identify educators' developmental needs. Consequently, the following participants enunciated that QMS was effective in their schools.

A principal (SSP2) shared:

> *“I can boldly say QMS is effective in my school. We comply with the department's requirements to ensure they are effective. My teachers understand that QMS is an instrument that has a purpose to track our overall needs in the school.”*

Another principal (SSP1) had a similar assertion to SSP2. He stated that the QMS was effective in his school, noting that the principal plays a role in ensuring its effectiveness. This is supported by the ELRC (2020:9), which states that the principal’s overall responsibility is to ensure that the QMS is implemented uniformly and effectively at the school. Below is the sentiment of SSP1:

> *“ Yes, it is effective. As the principal, I need to account for everything about the process of QMS, and I know that it is my role to ensure that it is effective in my school.”*

However, some participants agreed that although the QMS processes are effective, they are not implemented in accordance with the guidelines set for every school. One of the guidelines in the implementation of QMS is that the principal is responsible for signing all appraisal forms after satisfying him/herself that all the processes, together with the accompanying evidence, have been compiled with (ELRC, 2020:12). Therefore, this edifies that the principal must be involved in the process. Although participants agreed that QMS was effective in their schools, their principals did not appear to be fully involved in the process. A deputy principal (SSDP3) and a departmental head (SSDH7) elaborated on their stance.

> *“ I can say yes, it is effective because as a deputy principal, I appraise all DHs, and they further appraise Post Level 1 educators. But the challenge here is that*

the other deputy principal takes on the principal's work because the principal is not always at school. So the DP signs on behalf of the principal and then submits to the circuit manager."

SSDH7 opined:

"QMS in my school is uhmm…effective. Educators start by appraising themselves, and then I appraise them. The principal appraises me, but sometimes he does not because of commitments, especially when the submission date is due."

Since the four participants agreed that QMS is effective in their schools, it is argued that the ELRC's guidelines and principles for implementing QMS are deficient in two schools. The ELRC (2022:9) informs that the principal signs and delivers all QMS documents to the district office within the stipulated time. Moreover, the SMT, consisting of the principal, has overall responsibility for planning and implementing QMS processes. Therefore, it can be concluded that, despite QMS being effective in secondary schools, the principals' involvement in its effectiveness is not readily apparent.

5.4.4.2 QMS being 'ineffective'

About eight (50%) participants indicated that QMS in their schools was ineffective. What this larger proportion indicates is that there is indeed a challenge with regard to the effectiveness of QMS in the district. The ELRC (2020:12) enlightens that the appraisals must be conducted twice per annum (mid-year and annual appraisals). Apart from the latter demands of the system, educators need to be effectively mentored and coached by the SMT through the involvement of subject advisors and other external experts (ELRC, 2020:16). However, the participants' responses seem to indicate that some schools defy the processes mandated by QMS. The participants shared their views on the reasons QMS is ineffective in their schools. A departmental head (SSDH2) commented:

" It is not effective. I think we do not have enough training because no one in the SMT is clear about it. We fill the forms for compliance."

SSDH3 and SSDP1 shared the same view as SSDH2. They mentioned that they comply with the time frame without thoroughly undertaking all expected processes. When probed about whether they understood what was expected of them, they confirmed that they were not called for QMS training at either the school or district level. The ELRC (2020:11) provides that the principal must initiate advocacy, training, and planning at a full staff meeting. Below are assertions of the participants.

SSDH3 stated:

> *" We were not trained for QMS at school or else called by the district. That is the reason it is not effective."*

The deputy principal (SSDP1) reiterated:

> *"We just do QMS for compliance. In fact, we need training because we are not doing it the right way…."*

Some participants voiced out that QMS is only done for monetary value in their schools. This aligns with Shikalepo (2020:62), who conducted a study in Namibia, and Mamabolo et al. (2022:1), who conducted a study in the Gauteng province. It is revealed that educators become involved in QMS because it goes with monetary incentives. It is therefore argued that if QMS is linked with monetary purposes, it could not serve its intended purpose. This has the potential to create a gap in providing convincing evidence of an effective QMS if it is done only for monetary gains. The ELRC (2020:16) clarifies that evaluations for purposes of rewards and incentives need to be de-linked from evaluations for the purposes of professional development of educators. Despite recognition that the two processes should inform one another (ELRC, 2020:16), it is argued that educators should be willing to undergo appraisal in order to sustainably enhance the quality of the profession. SSDH4, SSDH6 and SSP3 had their views:

SSDH4 stated:

> *"I have three years of experience in the SMT, but I am the only one who does the scoring. Remember, we do not even go to evaluate teachers in class; I just*

record the scores when the documents are due in the circuit. So it is hard because neither the deputy principal nor the principal is participating. It is just done for getting that money..."

SSDH6 expressed:

"It is not effective. It's merely about filling those scores and submitting to get money at the end of the year."

A principal (SSP3) agreed that he was not doing justice to his role in the effectiveness of QMS. He complained that principals have many duties, which is why they end up handling QMS for compliance. He commented:

" You know I feel guilty. I am not doing justice. But we have a lot of work to do, so we end up doing it to meet the deadlines because teachers may not get that 1%."

One participant argued that QMS processes are time-consuming. He agreed with SSP3 that the coordination of the system requires more time, and they ended up doing it to meet the deadline. However, the notion that there is a management plan for the annual activities (ELRC, 2020:18) contradicts the SSP3's sentiment that lesson observations shall be conducted at any time as part of the process to support educators.

SSDP3 shared:

" QMS is difficult and requires a lot of time. How can you go to class with educators to observe their lessons every term when you have other work to do? It is too much for us. It is a burden for both teachers and the SMT. We try to do it to meet the deadline."

SSDH8, a departmental head, expressed:

"According to my knowledge, QMS is not taking place in my school. I have never come across any documents to read. The admin clerk just came and gave us documents to sign and would say the principal needs to submit because the documents are due."

When asked whether he and other educators were observed in class for teaching and learning, he responded that such an activity used to take place six years ago, when he was still a Post Level 1 educator.

5.4.4.3 QMS being 'inconsistent'

Some participants reported that the effectiveness of QMS was inconsistent across their schools. Reasons such as time constraints, attitude and lack of skills contribute towards the system being inconsistent. In light of the preceding narrative, the ELRC (2020:14) defends that the principal reserves the right to designate any member of the SMT (who is conversant with the subject or phase) to conduct an appraisal process should it be evident that the relevant supervisor is unable to do so. The inconsistency of the QMS was recognised and affirmed by the following sentiments from the four participants.

A principal (SSP4) proclaimed:

> *"Actually, we try, but there is a major discrepancy for it to be effective. Sometimes we do it, but most of the time we do not."*

The principal (SSP4) was asked what factors might be contributing to the system having significant discrepancies. He added:

> *"There is always limited time to do it appropriately. We believe that we shall spend most of the time teaching the learners. You know, there is always pressure for the results in Grade 12, so that is why we end up creating time during the weekends and holidays…"*

In the same vein with SSP4, a deputy principal (SSDP4) shared:

> *"As I indicated, there are two DHs, myself and the principal in the school, you find that we only do it in the second term because of time. But the principal is always busy, so I can say sometimes it is effective and ineffective at other times."*

Another deputy principal (SSDP2) decried educators' attitude towards QMS. She pointed out that even if the SMT is ready to conduct lesson observations, some

educators are reluctant to be evaluated. They consider QMS an additional burden on their already full workload. She (SSDP2) opined:

“We do have a problem of not effecting it very well. It is due to the teachers' negative attitude. They have no willingness when the SMT prepare to visit them. They believe that QMS is meant to expose their weaknesses to learners and is just a burden on their existing workload. So you find that we sometimes appraise part of the staff or not at all.”

SSDH5 asserted:

> *“I cannot say that it is effective because there is no consistency in its implementation. The principal talks about it only when he is not busy. You also find that some of us have no skill in implementing it because we are not trained on a regular basis.”*

The preceding findings emanated from the extent to which QMS is effective at uMkhanyakude secondary schools. With 50% of participants considering it ineffective and 25% asserting that it is inconsistent, this undoubtedly shows that the implementation of QMS is having discrepancies in the district. This is justified by participants' belief that QMS is central only to lesson observation. Most participants perceived the QMS to be effective when educators were appraised in the classroom on lesson planning and lesson presentation. However, the appraisal instrument includes, among other things, Post Level 1 educators' participation in professional development and extra-mural activities (ELRC, 2020:25). To accord with the latter assertion, an example of a composite score sheet for departmental heads is extracted from the ELRC (2020:46) and is presented as Figure 5.4E below.

QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (QMS)

COMPOSITE SCORE SHEET: DEPARTMENTAL HEAD

(To be submitted to the District Office by the end of the 4th quarter)

Educator		**Date**	
Persal Number		**School**	

PERFORMANCE STANDARD	MAXIMUM SCORE	EDUCATOR SCORE
1. Creation of a positive learning and teaching environment	28	
2. Curriculum knowledge, lesson planning and presentation	48	
3. Learners assessment and achievement	28	
4. Professional development	36	
5. Extra-mural and co-curricular participation	12	
6. Management of the curriculum	76	
FINAL SCORE	**228**	
PERCENTAGE *(Educator Score÷228) x 100=*		%

Comments:

I agree/do not agree with the overall performance rating.

SIGNATURES:

NAME	DESIGNATION	SIGNATURE	DATE
	Educator/ Departmental Head		
	Supervisor/Principal/Deputy Principal		
	Resource person (if applicable)		
VALIDATED BY:			
	Principal		

SCHOOL STAMP

Figure 5.4E: QMS Composite score sheet

Source: Extracted from ELRC 2020 Handbook

5.4.5 Interventions to strengthen the effectiveness of QMS at uMkhanyakude secondary schools

The fourth objective of the study was to propose some interventions required to strengthen the effectiveness of QMS in secondary schools. The ELRC (2020:16) postulates that the SMT is obligated to ensure that structures created in terms of the Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development (ISPFTED) are functional and effective. Likewise, the circuit manager is responsible for ensuring that the QMS is implemented in schools and that principals are supported accordingly. However, the realisation of the discrepancies in the effectiveness of the QMS was sufficient evidence that the system needs to be strengthened. Participants proposed various strategies to strengthen the effectiveness of QMS in secondary schools. These strategies are demonstrated in Figure 5.4F below.

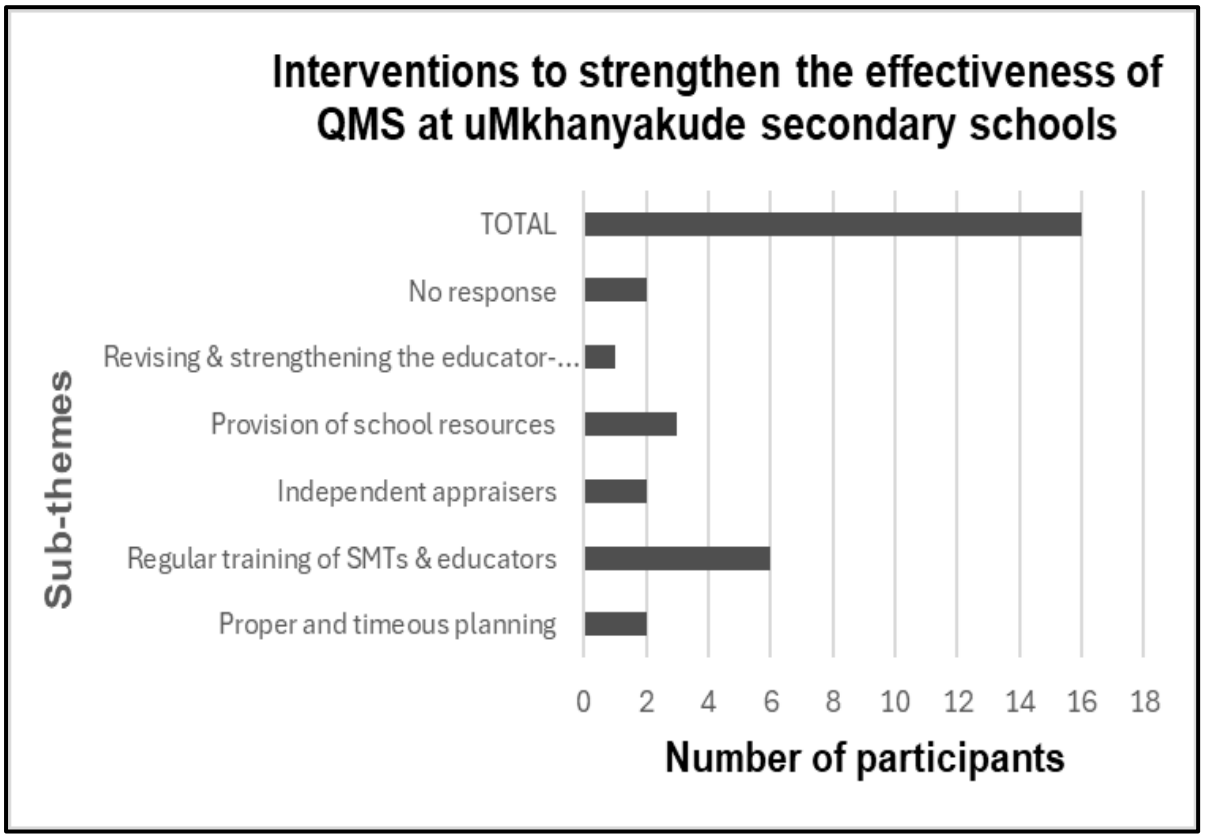


Figure 5.4F: A graph showing the interventions to strengthen the effectiveness of QMS at uMkhanyakude secondary schools

5.4.5.1. Proper and timeous planning

Some participants proposed that the effectiveness of QMS could be strengthened by proper, timely planning. SSDH1 shared:

> *" I think the school should have a management plan that talks to QMS because sometimes it is done in a rush, and we end up not following the right way of doing it."*

The sentiment expressed by SSDH1 aligns with one of the guidelines for implementing QMS set by the ELRC (2020:11). Subsequently, the SMT is required to sign a work plan at the beginning of an evaluation cycle. The work plan includes, among other things, the targets and time frame for key activities to be completed in the year. Kavutai (2018:37) also stresses that an effective QMS enables senior management to draft strategic action plans with timelines, ensuring that employee participation in the school is timely and up to standard. A principal (SSP2) who supported the proposal to have a management plan shared:

> *" QMS can be intensified by a well-prepared yearly plan, which must also involve some dates as to when we can do it. We will know exactly when the period to implement it is. Even though we do not stick to the dates in my school due to time constraints, we try...."*

5.4.5.2 Regular training of SMTs and educators

Several participants proposed that role players should be trained regularly to strengthen the effectiveness of the QMS. Drawing on responses from other SMT members (in the previous theme) indicating that QMS was ineffective in their schools due to a lack of training, the ELRC (2020:11) states that, at a full staff meeting, the principal should lead advocacy, training, and planning. Below are the participants' voices on the regular SMT training.

SSDH3 articulated:

> *" There is a need for a workshop that will train all of us. Actually, we cannot criticise the system itself; there must be someone who understands QMS very well to train us."*

SSDH6 and SSDH4 shared a view similar to that of SSDH3. They both mentioned that the principal, who oversees the QMS processes, should organise a workshop and invite someone to train every member of staff. However, a principal (SSP4) suggested that there must be regular training for the SMT so that they are abreast of the QMS procedures. She expressed:

> *"I believe that when the SMT is well-trained regularly, we can pass our knowledge and skills to our teachers. It is a matter of creating time to have these important training sessions."*

A deputy principal (SSDP3) proposed that training must not only cater to SMTs; educators also need continuous training to remain upskilled in line with the performance standards. He added that some principals are reluctant towards QMS because they were not thoroughly trained to recognise its importance in developing their schools. The participant had the following assertion:

> *"QMS is not only the responsibility of the principal or the deputy principal, but also the responsibility of the other colleagues, who should be trained so that they perform well on their tasks. Even those principals who do not take it seriously may see why it is important when we get trained."*

The training of the SMTs and teachers seems to be supported by several authors. This implies that without capacitating teachers through workshops or seminars, QMS could not be that effective. Lessons could also be learnt from Portugal, where school principals are grouped and upskilled through regular training programmes to enhance their quality leadership skills (Cunha et al., 2020:13). Similarly, Mensah et al. (2020:126) emphasise that refresher courses to equip educators with quality skills are key initiatives to strengthen QMS.

Although QMS training sessions do take place in several schools around the world, the argument is that the training is not proficient. The persistent ineffectiveness of the system remains questionable, yet there are ongoing teacher training programmes. Consequently, it is prudent to support Simelane and Mutambara (2022:285), who point out that educators should not only be retrained continuously but that innovative measures to improve the quality of education should be harnessed through remote digital computer literacy courses to upskill educators. Kgosi (2023:123), who observed

a few schools improving the effectiveness of QMS in the province of Mpumalanga, suggests that integrating technology into teacher training could ease the burden of paperwork and inspire teachers with its flexibility and convenience. This profound assertion could also maximise opportunities for teachers to complete the courses in their own flexible spaces and at their own time. However, an elephant in the room is whether all schools have accessible resources and technological tools to follow the pattern of other successful schools.

5.4.5.3 Independent appraisers

Another intervention proposed by the participants is the appointment of independent appraisers. They opined that people coming outside the school could give a true reflection of the appraisal process. SSP1 shared:

> *" Well, I think that the department may consider assigning the appraisal process to people outside the school. For example, a principal from a neighbouring school could be obliged to understand QMS and must be clear when conducting QMS in a different school. So this will benefit both schools to participate and make the processes run smoothly without any bias."*

SSDH5 added:

> *"My view is that QMS can be strengthened by having independent evaluators."*

The participant was probed on how she thought independent evaluators could strengthen QMS. She added:

> *"The department could hire some people to evaluate the SMT and educators because it is clear that there is not enough time in school for teachers to make QMS more effective. So, the independent…ehh, eh officials could come with a fair evaluation than us who usually do it just for compliance."*

5.4.5.4 Provision of school resources

Some of the guiding principles of QMS acknowledge that schools are not the same; they operate at various levels of performance and in different contexts and are also

exposed to different challenges (ELRC, 2020:8). Despite the challenges that schools face, quality performance should prevail. The participants' suggestions indicate that when resources are adequately provided in schools, performance can increase. Moreover, challenges arising from QMS can be easily addressed. Two participants (SSP3 and SSDP4) shared their views. SSP3 opined:

> *"If schools can be provided with proper infrastructure, such as classrooms, computers, and photocopying machines, I think teachers can be happy to work in that environment. In my school, for instance, there is a challenge of printing material that teachers need in the classroom, so you need to consider that factor when appraising them."*

Apart from curriculum resources, SSDP4 also mentioned that sports facilities are needed to motivate educators to recognise the effectiveness of QMS. As it was argued in the preceding section that QMS should not only be central to lesson observations, the ELRC (2020:25) attests that extra-mural and co-curricular participation of educators should be incorporated during appraisal. SSDP4 opined:

> *"Provide us with resources, and you will see performance. For now, there is a QMS issue, so if we can have enough desks, a computer lab, and printers, you will see the curriculum side improve. We also need sports facilities, so you will see our teachers participating in sports."*

5.4.5.5 Revising and strengthening the educator-learner ratio

A deputy principal (SSDP1) opined that to strengthen the effectiveness of the QMS, the educator-to-learner ratio needs to be revised. He decried classroom congestion, which poses a challenge for educators when delivering their lessons. Below is his excerpt:

> *"Another thing that challenges the effectiveness of QMS is the way our classes are congested. Sometimes you cannot move between desks, yet we still have to ensure that every learner receives assistance. So I think if the department of education can revise the number of learners that a teacher has to teach, it can help to see the benefits of QMS."*

Drawing on the proposals of the participants above, it can be inferred that some of the interventions align with the guidelines for implementing QMS. Advocacy, training, planning, and resource provision are the key guidelines schools should be grounded in. When followed, these guidelines could effectively advance the purposes of QMS outlined by the ELRC (2020:8), namely the determination of educators' competence and the enhancement of educators' efficiency, effectiveness, and reliable performance. Furthermore, educators could perform their duties with integrity and maintain a positive, vigilant attitude towards all learning activities. However, it is argued that some of the interventions proposed by the participants were common across most of the studied schools. This indicates that there is still a gap in the system's proficiency despite the drastic measures considered. It is therefore important to revisit the proposed strategies in line with the recent educational trends.

5.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The chapter was premised on the presentation and interpretation of findings. It began with the provision of the participants' biological data. Although males dominated the principalship, all participants were qualified SMT members with more than three years of experience. This data was relevant to the study because it was used to determine the influence that SMT members could have on the effectiveness of QMS in the selected secondary schools. Subsequently, most participants have demonstrated their understanding of QMS as central to educators' performance in schools. Their understanding of the system was seen as a stepping stone toward answering the four research objectives. After Braun and Clarke's six steps of thematic data analysis, four themes aligned with the research objectives emerged from the participants' responses.

Firstly, participants differed in their views on the actual role players in the effectiveness of QMS. There is a gap between what the ELRC (2020:9) establishes and the responses of most participants. Although the principal and the SMT members were identified as the key role players, most participants excluded the educators, the resource person, the circuit manager, and the grievance committees in their responses.

Secondly, most participants supported the need for QMS effectiveness. They opined that QMS assists in evaluating educators' strengths and weaknesses, supporting the professional development of newly appointed educators, and developing school- and subject-improvement plans. Moreover, to support educators' performance, participants noted that QMS improves competence and accountability in line with job descriptions.

Thirdly, a discrepancy was identified in the extent to which QMS is effective in secondary schools. Most participants perceived the effectiveness of QMS as central to lesson observation, yet the ELRC (2020:25) guidelines also include professional development and extramural activities, amongst other things.

Finally, the participants proposed various strategies to strengthen the effectiveness of QMS. Their suggestions closely aligned with the guidelines for implementing QMS outlined in the ELRC (2020:8) and were linked to advocacy, training, and resource provision.

The chapter revealed a grey area regarding the effectiveness of QMS in secondary schools. The perceptions of the SMT members regarding the research questions indisputably reveal a discrepancy in the implementation of the system for maximal efficiency. Subsequently, the last section of the next chapter will provide detailed recommendations to strengthen the system's effectiveness. In a nutshell, the next chapter (chapter 6) presents the summary of findings, conclusions and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 5 presented and interpreted the qualitative data. The data were analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2022:4) six-step framework for thematic analysis. This chapter provides a summary of the study's findings, as well as recommendations and conclusions. It begins with an overview of the preceding chapters, followed by an expanded discussion of the study's aim that informed the empirical findings. Next, a summary of the findings corresponding to the study's specific objectives is presented. The TL theory is integrated into the discussion to highlight key arguments. The chapter also details the study's recommendations, acknowledges its limitations, and suggests areas for future research. Finally, the chapter concludes with a synthesis of the study's overall contributions.

6.2 SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS

The adoption of both primary and secondary data sources facilitated the synthesis of all the chapters, aligning the summary of the previous chapters with the research question. Moreover, the following discussion briefly outlines the study's chapters.

Chapter 1 provided the orientation of the study. This included the introduction, problem statement, and significance of the study (*cf*. Chapter 1, Sections 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3). The aim, objectives, and research questions of the study were also outlined (cf. Chapter 1, Sections 1.4 and 1.5). The TL theory, which informed the study, was explained under the theoretical framework (*cf*. Chapter 1, Section 1.6). It was followed by a literature review (*cf*. Chapter 1, Section 1.7), research methodology (*cf*. Chapter 1, Section 1.8), research design, and data analysis (*cf*. Chapter 1, Sections 1.9 and 1.10). Furthermore, ethical considerations (*cf*. Chapter 1, Section 1.11), limitations and delimitations (cf. Chapter 1, Section 1.12), definition of key concepts, and an overview of the chapters were presented (*cf*. Chapter 1, Sections 1.13 and 1.14).

Chapter 2 was premised on the study's theoretical framework. The introduction and the theoretical concept framework were discussed (*cf*. Chapter 2, Sections 2.1 and 2.2). They were followed by a discussion of the significance of a theoretical framework (*cf.* Chapter 2, Section 2.3). The TL theory, which informed the study, was defined (*cf*. Chapter 2, Section 2.4.1). Thereafter, its components and characteristics were explained (*cf*. Chapter 2, Sections 2.4.2 and 2.4.3). The chapter concluded by explicitly rationalising and contextualising the TL theory to the study (*cf*. Chapter 2, Sections 2.5 and 2.6).

The literature review was presented in Chapter 3. The chapter began with an introduction (*cf*. Chapter 1, Section 3.1). It was followed by sub-topics that emerged from the four research objectives (*cf*. Chapter 1, Sections 3.2, 3.3, 3.4 & 3.5). For each sub-topic, literature was reviewed from a global perspective, in African countries and in South African provinces, except for KwaZulu-Natal, where the study was conducted.

Chapter 4 was based on research methodology and design. After the introduction (*cf*. Chapter 4, Section 4.1), research methodology, which encompasses three basic methods, namely quantitative research, mixed research and qualitative research, was discussed (*cf*. Chapter 4, Sections 4.2, 4.2.1, 4.2.2 and 4.2.3). Thereafter, the advantages and disadvantages of these three research methods were discussed (*cf.* Chapter 4, Section 4.2.4). As the study was qualitative in nature, the rationale for adopting this method was explained (*cf.* Chapter 4, Section 4.2.5). The chapter also included the research design in which the case study was deemed pertinent for the study (*cf.* Chapter 4, Section 4.3). Furthermore, the research paradigm, the different approaches to research design, and the relevance of using the case study design were explained (*cf*. Chapter 4, Sections 4.3.1, 4.3.2, 4.3.3, 4.3.4, 4.3.5, 4.3.6 and 4.3.6.1). The research paradigm, including its definition, importance, components, types, and rationale for the study, was presented (*cf*. Chapter 4, Sections 4.3.7, 4.3.7.1, 4.3.7.2, 4.3.7.3 and 4.3.7.4). The study's population, sampling, and research site were also incorporated (cf. Chapter 4, Section 4.3.8, 4.3.8.1, 4.3.8.2, & 4.3.8.3).

The invitation to participants and the explanation of data collection methods were also elaborated in the chapter (cf. Chapter 4, Sections 4.4, 4.5, 4.5.1, 4.5.1.1 and 4.5.2). Trustworthiness and data triangulation were explained (cf. Chapter 4, Sections 4.6, 4.6.1 and 4.6.2). Braun and Clarke's (2022:4) six steps of thematic data analysis were

explicitly contextualised for the study (*cf*. Chapter 4, Section 4.7). Moreover, ethical considerations, limitations, and delimitations concluded the chapter (cf. Chapter 4, Sections 4.8, 4.8.1, 4.8.2, 4.8.3, 4.9, 4.9.1 and 4.9.2).

Chapter 5 was premised on the presentation and interpretation of findings. The chapter began with the participants' introductions and biographical data (cf. Chapter 5, Sections 5.1 & 5.2). It was followed by data analysis, during which themes and sub-themes aligned with the research objectives emerged (*cf*. Chapter 5, Section 5.3). A thorough discussion and interpretation of the findings were central to the chapter (*cf*. Chapter 5, Section 5.4, 5.4.1, 5.4.2, 5.4.3, 5.4.4 & 5.4.5).

6.3 LINKING THE MAIN AIM AND THE OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY TO THE FINDINGS

The study aimed to explore secondary SMTs' perceptions of the effectiveness of the QMS in the UMkhanyakude District. As stated in Chapter 1 (Section 1.3), the SMTs are entrusted with ensuring the effectiveness of the QMS (ELRC, 2020:16). The findings of the study revealed varied perceptions among the SMTs regarding the study’s research aim and objectives.

Firstly, some participants' perceptions reveal discrepancies about who should ensure the effectiveness of the QMS. Most participants, all SMT members except educators, resource persons, circuit managers, and grievance committees, were probed about the role players responsible for the effectiveness of the QMS. Drawing on Section 1.7.1 of Chapter 1, Simelane and Mutambara (2022:280) argue that the effectiveness of QMS relies on the quality leadership of SMTs and district officials being directly involved in the process.

To respond to the second objective, which was to explore the importance of an effective QMS in secondary schools, most participants supported the need for an effective system, as it results in satisfactory performance. This aligns with the literature in Chapter 3, Section 3,3, where Díez et al. (2020:2) opine that secondary schools that

recognise the need to ensure the effectiveness of QMS can achieve positive outcomes from the process.

The third objective was to examine the extent to which QMS is effective in secondary schools. Since the ELRC (2020:25) underlines that the effectiveness of QMS should involve lesson observation, professional development, and extramural activities, the findings show a discrepancy in the extent to which QMS is effective in the uMkhanyakude District. Several participants perceived QMS as effective only in lesson observation. This discrepancy supports Kavutai (2018:6) in Section 1.2 of Chapter 1, who notes that schools typically implement quality models without clear guidelines or evidence of their effectiveness.

Lastly, participants proposed interventions to strengthen the effectiveness of QMS in secondary schools. As their suggestions merged with the guidelines for implementing QMS outlined in the ELRC (2020:8), this could be a stepping stone for policymakers to take informed, decisive measures to ensure the effectiveness of the system. As affirmed by Africano (2019:123) in Section 1,3 of Chapter 1, the recommendations to strengthen the implementation of QMS could be a strategic decision that can help improve the overall performance of schools. To draw policymakers' full attention to the recommendations, the TL theory is first adopted in the study's findings.

6.4 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This section divulges the summary of findings. The themes linked to the study's objectives are presented alongside a synthesis of the participants' responses. After providing a brief synopsis of the findings for each theme, the components of the TL theory are integrated to develop a line of argument that underpins secondary SMTs' perceptions of the effectiveness of QMS in the UMkhanyakude District. Therefore, this section begins with Table 6.4, which summarises the themes, participants' key quotes, and the relevance of the TL theory.

Table 6.4: Summary of themes, participants' key quotes and the relevance of the TL theory

Participant's code	Sub-theme	Participants' key quote/frequency of responses	Relevant component of the TL theory
Theme 1: The understanding of QMS			
SSDH2	***A systematic tool for measuring educators' professional performance***	"…a systematic tool used to measure how educators professionally perform in the school"	All components (idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration)
SSDP1		"…a tool that the SMT uses to measure the performance of teachers…"	
SSDH5		"…manner in which educators perform to ensure that their professionalism is maintained…"	
SSDH3	***A method used to evaluate the performance of educators***	"…a way of evaluating the performance of educators"	
SSDH8		"…a method that is responsible for evaluating the performance of educators…"	

SSDH1	***A management system that evaluates educators' quality job descriptions***	"…a quality management system that evaluates the competence of educators on their roles and responsibilities…"	
SSP1		"…evaluate the job description of educators…"	
Theme 2: Role players on the effectiveness of QMS at uMkhanyakude secondary schools			
SSDH4	***The principal and the SMT***	"…the principal, deputy principal and departmental heads…"	Idealised influence
SSDH2		"…it's the principal and the SMT…"	
SSDP1	***The SMT and educators***	"…it's the SMT. But also the teachers…"	Idealised influence
SSDH3		"…members of the SMT, your principal, your deputy principal and uhm…the DHs. I must also add the PL1 educators…"	
SSP2		"…I, the principal, and my DH work in an effective way with my teachers…"	

SSDH6	***The SMT and circuit managers***	"only the SMT and the circuit manager…"	Idealised influence
SSDH8		"…the principal, the DHs, and the circuit manager…"	
SSDH5		"…I think the SMT and the circuit manager"	
SSP1	***The district officials, SMT and educators***	"…it is the responsibility of the principal…the deputy principal, the departmental heads, Post Level 1 educators…the DCES…"	Idealised influence
SSDP2		"…but the SMT, the educators, the district and the resource person…"	
Theme 3: The need for the effectiveness of QMS at uMkhanyakude secondary schools			
SSDP3	***Evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of educators' performance standards***	"…teachers in general are able to assess their weaknesses and convert them into strengths…"	All components (idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and
SSP2		"…so it helps us to see how a teacher	

		performs, and if there is a weakness or threat, there are some means taken to work towards strengths and opportunities"	individual consideration)
SSDH5	***Supporting the professional development of novice educators***	"…it helps newly appointed educators to have confidence when teaching and learning takes place…"	All components (idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration)
SSP1		"…assists newly employed to have sufficient room to develop themselves professionally…"	
SSDH4	***Assist in developing school and subject improvement plans***	"…we are able to draw up a school improvement plan…"	All components (idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration)
SSDH1		"…so that we are able to draft a school development plan…"	
SSDP4		"…likewise, the subject improvement plans will help us, the SMT, to make a school improvement plan…"	

SSP3		"…help schools to prepare both subject improvement plans and school development plans…"	
SSP2	***Improving competence and accountability in the job description***	"…the effectiveness of QMS improves teachers' competence towards their work…"	All components (idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration)
SSP3		"…it lets educators realise how competent they are and whether they are able to fairly account for their defined duties…"	
Theme 4: The extent to which QMS is effective at uMkhanyakude secondary schools			
SSP2	***QMS being 'effective'***	"…I can boldly say QMS is effective in my school…"	All components (idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration)
SSDP3		"…I can say yes, it is effective…"	
SSDH7		"…QMS in my school is uhmm… effective…"	
SSDH2		"…it is not effective…we just fill	All components (idealised

		forms for compliance…"	influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration)
SSDH3	***QMS being 'ineffective'***	"…we were not trained for QMS…that is why it is not effective…"	
SSDH8		"…according to my knowledge, QMS is not taking place in my school…"	
SSP4	***QMS being 'inconsistent'***	"…sometimes we do it, but most of the time we do not…"	All components (idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration)
SSDP2		"…so you find that we sometimes appraise part of the staff or not at all..."	
Theme 5: Interventions to strengthen the effectiveness of QMS at uMkhanyakude secondary schools			
SSDH1	***Proper and timeous planning***	"…the school should have a management plan that talks to QMS…"	Intellectual stimulation
SSP2		"…QMS can be intensified by a well-prepared year plan which must also	

		involve some dates…"	
SSDH3	***Regular training of SMTs and educators***	"…there is a need for a workshop that will train all of us…"	Intellectual stimulation
SSP4		"…I believe that when the SMT is regularly well trained…"	
SSDP3		"…even other colleagues should be trained…"	
SSP1	***Independent appraisers***	"…the Department may consider assigning the appraisal process to people outside the school…"	Intellectual stimulation
SSDH5		"…QMS can be strengthened by having independent evaluators…"	
SSP3		"…If schools are provided with proper infrastructure such as classrooms, computers, and photocopying machines…"	Intellectual stimulation

SSDP4	***Provision of school resources***	"…provide us with resources; you will see performance…"	
SSDP1	***Revising and strengthening the educator-learner ratio***	"…the Department of Education can revise the number of learners that a teacher has to teach…"	Intellectual stimulation

6.4.1 The relationship between the TL theory and the understanding of QMS

It was imperative to first navigate the participants' understanding of QMS before deliberating on the four research objectives. Subsequently, the findings revealed that most participants understood the meaning of QMS, as their assertions corresponded with the ELRC's definition (*cf*. Chapter 5, Section 5.4.1). Since participants could be considered fundamental to the performance of secondary school educators, their perceptions of their understanding of QMS were grouped into the following sub-themes.

- A systematic tool for measuring educators' professional performance.
- A method used to evaluate the performance of educators.
- A management system that evaluates educators' quality job descriptions.

Therefore, bringing the TL theory to the above assertions underscores that understanding QMS could help SMTs achieve high-quality performance in schools. Mbindvo (2021:174) argues that the TL theory makes a significant contribution to how leaders transform their followers. Staying abreast of the QMS could help both SMTs and educators in leveraging their abilities to enhance the system's effectiveness. It is therefore evident from the findings that, through an understanding of QMS, secondary schools could potentially adopt a more transformational performance mechanism. Almonawer et al. (2023:55) emphasise that transformational leaders who have

acquired skills and knowledge from quality models are more likely to voluntarily engage in effective performance systems that yield good outcomes.

6.4.2 The relationship between the TL theory and role players on the effectiveness of QMS at uMkhanyakude secondary schools

Despite participants acknowledging that QMS could not operate on its own, the findings revealed that they had different perspectives when answering the question: *Who are the role players responsible for the effectiveness of the Quality Management System in secondary schools?* Several participants perceived the principal as the key role player in the effectiveness of QMS. A few participants were unsure whether Post Level 1 educators could also participate in the process. The ELRC (2020:90) firmly argues that Post Level 1 educators are evaluated by the SMT, which includes the principal, deputy principals, and departmental heads. In addition, the resource person (optional), the circuit manager, and the grievance committees at the school and district levels are crucial stakeholders who ensure the smooth running of the system.

The findings from this theme draw the relevance of the TL theory into advancing any possible line of argument. Subsequently, as the study was typically phenomenological (Muzari et al., 2022:15), the interest in this theme was to argue on the assertions and interpretations of the participants towards '*idealised influence'* as one of the components of the TL theory. The varied responses of participants regarding the effectiveness of QMS with the actual role players indicate that some lack adequate information about how the system works. For example, below are SSDH4's views:

> *"…To be honest with you, I do not even know much about it. I have only three years of experience since I was appointed as a DH. I also need to be trained, but my colleagues, including the deputy principal, do not participate in it, and the principal does nothing about it. So, yeah…I am the only role player, although we all have to be involved as the SMT, that is what I believe in."*

The idealised influence of the TL theory holds that the capacity of the SMT is important in motivating employees to perform well and realise their full potential to achieve the organisation's mission and vision (Shongwe & Mutambara, 2023:267). Despite a majority of participants being eloquent about SMTs' role in empowering educators in

QMS, as Sliwka et al. (2024:115) opine, some of the members' responses to the posed question warrant closer examination. That is, the hesitancy of a few participants is a concern, as they are also members of the SMTs who should influence educators to achieve the school's mission and vision. Since SMTs should be knowledgeable about members' responsibilities regarding the effectiveness of the QMS (Cao & Le, 2024:158), it is argued that inconsistent responses to the research question may not sufficiently strengthen trust in TL.

6.4.3 The relationship between the TL theory and the need for the effectiveness of QMS at uMkhanyakude secondary schools

Based on participants' responses to the research question*: "Why is the effectiveness of QMS important in secondary schools?",* the findings reveal that several participants valued QMS effectiveness in secondary schools. Firstly, they underscored that the system serves as a mechanism for identifying strengths and weaknesses to improve performance. This notion is closely aligned with the performance standards outlined by the ELRC (2022:7). Secondly, participants stated that it was insufficient to rely solely on evaluations from their respective tertiary institutions. Therefore, continuing QMS processes in schools broadly supports and develops novice educators into professionals in real-world environments. Thirdly, participants affirmed that SMTs should take informed decisions and that QMS serve as tools that help school managers execute critical planning, such as school improvement plans and subject improvement plans. The ELRC (2020:8) supports the view that QMS is a functional mechanism that recognises the importance of planning for satisfactory school performance. The fourth reason participants gave is that the system ensures improvement in educators' competence and accountability regarding formal responsibilities. This aligns with the ELRC's (2020:8) primary purpose, which considers QMS a determinant of competence and educators' accountability.

The findings regarding the theme underscore that participants saw a need for QMS effectiveness. This credits all the components of the TL theory, namely *idealised influence*, *inspirational motivation*, *intellectual stimulation*, and *individual consideration*.

Firstly, the reiteration by Tachie and Mancotywa (2021:1) that *idealised influence* should be adopted by transformational leaders who aim to cultivate professional practice sufficiently characterises the participants (SMTs) as charismatic and visionary leaders. Ahmed (2022:27) emphasises that SMTs who are charismatic leaders persuade their educators to realise the need for QMS, particularly in determining the competence and accountability of their jobs. For example, a school principal (SSP2) was quoted:

> *" …and another thing, the effectiveness of QMS improves teachers' competence towards their work. We are able to tell how much support is needed by the teacher by looking at the SWOT analysis."*

Secondly, the participants' (SMTs') perceptions qualify them as being inspirational leaders who are interested, committed, and motivated to influence their educators to improve quality education. This characterises the *inspirational motivation* of the TL theory. Ismaya et al. (2023:255) concur that transformational leaders who have an attitude of recognising quality systems have the potential to increase teacher motivation and achieve an organisation's vision. A participant (SSDH4) attests on the latter:

> *"…For example, teachers, as they are human resources, can be developed through the guidance from QMS evaluation and will eventually take the school forward."*

Thirdly, participants' responses regarding the need for QMS effectiveness were attributed to the intellectual stimulation provided by the TL theory. For example, SSP1 justified:

> *"eeh…you know if it weren't for QMS, I would not have gained expertise to deal with classroom management, motivating learners and how a professional teacher should present himself in the class…"*

Therefore, this sentiment indicates that the SMT member can solve problems through the QMS. This could, in turn, be an inspiration to other educators who are led. Setiyaningtiyas and Hartutik (2022:685) underline that transformational leader who believe in intellectual stimulation are likely to see their followers reinforced with knowledge, skills, and the ability to autonomously overcome problems. By outlining

the reasons why, the effectiveness of QMS in schools significantly positions participants as creative and innovative thinkers. Meng (2023:3) concurs that, since intellectual stimulation is central to creative and innovative ideas, school leaders could assist their followers (educators) in autonomously seeking solutions to advancing challenges.

The fourth and last component of the TL theory is *individual consideration*. Before reflecting on the merits of this element, the following were extracts from different participants:

> *"…So if a teacher gets the lowest score and we both agree on it, such as uhmm…lesson preparation, then it assists me in developing ways to motivate the teacher so that they improve and perform well in that particular standard in the next classroom visit."* (SSDH7)

> *"... Let's say a teacher is not active in extra-mural activities, this means that there have to be some strategies to help that individual to see opportunities in such activities."* (SSP2).

Individual consideration recognises differences among employees in their strengths and weaknesses (Reza, 2019:121). Consequently, the preceding extracts show that some SMT members embrace the notion that every individual is unique and should be treated as such. Some participants consider the educators they lead to be unique, which is likely to increase their chances of understanding their needs.

6.4.4 The relationship between the TL theory and the extent to which QMS is effective at uMkhanyakude secondary schools

The major theme that emanated from the third research question- *To what extent is QMS effective in secondary schools?* is summarised in this section. Sub-themes that emerged during thematic data analysis were grouped as QMS being 'effective,' 'ineffective,' and 'inconsistent.' The findings, with 50% of participants reporting that QMS is ineffective and 25% reporting that it is inconsistent, clearly indicate the extent to which QMS processes are implemented in the selected secondary schools. In summary, there are discrepancies in the system's effectiveness. This is supported by several participants' assertions that QMS is central to lesson observation. The ELRC

(2020:25) points out that QMS appraisal instruments include, amongst others, lesson planning and observation, participation in professional development and extramural activities.

Similar to the second research question, this section also draws the relevance of all the components of the TL theory. Despite a few participants demonstrating the character of transformational leaders in ensuring that QMS implementation is upheld with earnest commitment, most admitted that QMS was inconsistent, if not ineffective. This builds a compelling argument that the merits of the TL theory are inadequately incorporated in this regard.

Mamabolo et al. (2022:1) argue that schools that adopt idealised influence create opportunities for SMTs to be perceived as role models by their educators. However, in some instances, some SMT members, especially the principals, who are the spearheads of quality management (Lukhele & Lebeloane, 2024:32), are found not to be partaking in the QMS process. Subsequently, the role model character is believed to have been compromised, as Kamau (2020:16) states that transformational leaders should empower their followers to achieve school performance through effective QMS. Setiyaningtiyas and Hartutik (2022:682) emphasise that idealised influence not only positions transformational leaders as role models but also helps them guide and empower educators in understanding the school vision and mission.

The *inspirational motivation* of the TL theory also raises grey areas regarding the effectiveness of QMS in secondary schools. Almonawer et al. (2023:55) argue that SMTs who are enthusiastic about improving quality education do so not only by focusing on how educators teach, but also by promoting and encouraging capacity building, staff commitment, and motivation. However, the assertions by some participants (SSDP3 and SSDH4) raise a concern about whether educators can be adequately motivated by SMT members who are found to be reluctant towards QMS.

> *'…But the challenge here is that the other deputy principal does the work of the principal because he is not always at school. So, the DP signs on behalf of the principal and then submits to the circuit manager."* (SSDP3)

> *"…Remember, we do not even go to evaluate teachers in class; I just record the scores when the documents are due in the circuit. So, it is hard because the deputy principal and the principal are not participating…"* (SSDH4)

Therefore, the reluctance of some SMT members regarding the effectiveness of the QMS could result in the school's goals not being attained. Bakker et al. (2023:701) contend that if SMTs appropriately infuse the inspirational motivation of the TL theory, followers will feel confident they can achieve their optimal goals.

The third element of the TL theory, which recognises the role of strategic thinking in solving problems, is *intellectual stimulation*. This element stresses that positive attitude and behaviour are established in the TL theory to develop quality education through meaning-making, independent critical thinking, and scaffolding of knowledge (Mbindyo et al., 2021:177). However, the study on the extent of QMS effectiveness found that SMT members developed a negative attitude towards the system. This is believed to have contributed to its ineffectiveness in some schools. Below is an excerpt from a participant attesting to the latter.

> *“ QMS is difficult and requires a lot of time. How can you go to class with educators to observe their lessons every term when you have other work to do? It is too much for us. It is a burden for both teachers and the SMT. We try to do it to meet the deadline.”* (SSP3)

Despite QMS being seen by some participants as a burden for SMT members, it is argued that the concerned members might not have tried to create meaning and scaffold their knowledge of the advantages of QMS, as Mbindyo et al. (2021:177) advocate. Consequently, educators’ capabilities may not be fully ignited to stimulate their critical thinking and enable them to autonomously confront challenges affecting schools.

Lastly, *individual consideration* of the TL theory is also infused towards the extent to which QMS is effective in the selected schools. Savitri and Sudarsyah (2021:308) argue that individual consideration requires SMTs to listen to educators’ needs and concerns as well as to recognise their abilities. Furthermore, educators are likely to feel they are part of the transformation process when they are guided and coached and when regular communication occurs. An argument is therefore drawn after the following assertion of a deputy principal (SSDP2).

> *“We do have a problem of not effecting it very well. It is because of the negative attitude of teachers. They have no willingness when the SMT prepare to visit them. They believe that QMS is meant to expose their*

weaknesses to learners and is just a burden on their existing workload. So you find that we sometimes appraise part of the staff or not at all."

The above assertion raises concern about whether there was sufficient guidance, coaching, and regular communication about QMS in schools. Since educators differ in their strengths and capabilities (Reza, 2019:121), Mbindyo et al. (2019:121) argue that SMTs should be active listeners to ensure that school concerns are addressed. Almonawer et al. (2023:57) state that when educators' uniqueness, teamwork, and their participation in decision-making are recognised, higher-quality performance will be attained. Therefore, educators' unwillingness towards QMS could be exacerbated by factors such as SMT members' lack of commitment and poor communication regarding the system's process. The following quote from SSDH8 supports the latter:

"According to my knowledge, QMS is not taking place in my school. I have never come across any documents to read. The admin clerk just came and gave us documents to sign and would say the principal needs to submit because the documents are due."

6.4.5 The relationship between the TL theory and the interventions to strengthen the effectiveness of QMS at uMkhanyakude secondary schools

The fourth and last objective sought to propose interventions to strengthen the effectiveness of QMS in secondary schools. The realisation of the discrepancies in the effectiveness of QMS from the previous theme was sufficient evidence that effective strategies should be fully adopted in secondary schools. Although the study will culminate in robust recommendations before its conclusion, the proposals by the participants and the study's recommendations are anticipated to cohesively pave the way for relevant role-players who wish to address discrepancies in the effectiveness of QMS to deliberate on future research.

Given that the participants' proposed interventions align with the guidelines for implementing QMS in the ELRC (2020:8), this indicates that several participants are eager to adopt TL. Therefore, drawing from the notion that participants were able to propose relevant measures to strengthen the effectiveness of QMS, they became

stimulative thinkers. The latter relied heavily on *the intellectual stimulation provided by* the TL theory. Poturak et al. (2020:121) assert that the minds of transformational leaders should be stimulated to explore innovative approaches to solving organisational problems related to QMS. Ismaya et al. (2023:255) underline that SMTs who exercise intellectual stimulation should also be constructive, creative, integrative, exemplary, disciplined and pragmatic towards the implementation of QMS. As noted in the preceding paragraph, the participants' proposed interventions could align with the study's recommendations. The following section explains this.

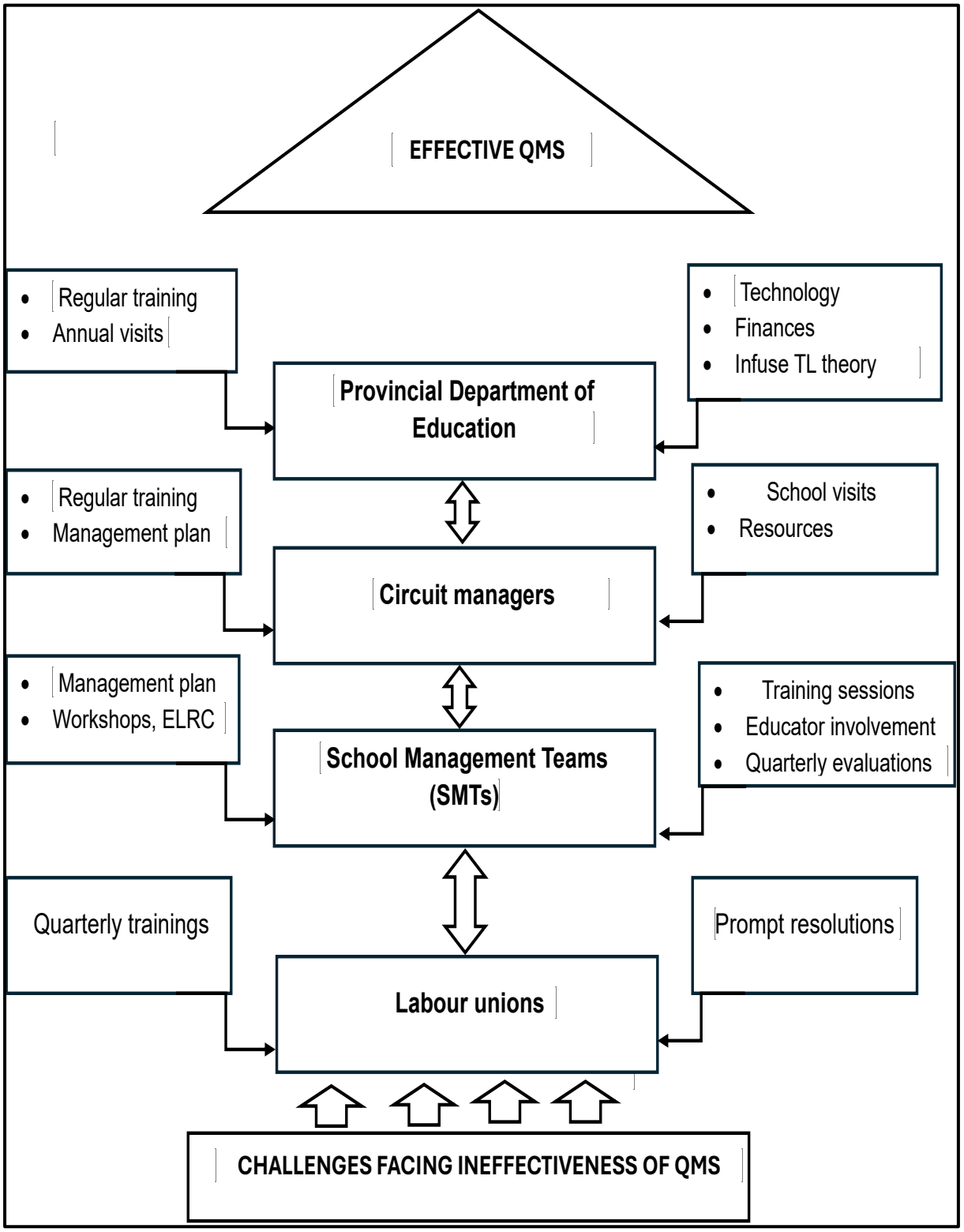
6.5. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study sought to explore secondary SMTs' perceptions of the effectiveness of the QMS in the UMkhanyakude District. This section provides robust recommendations to different role players who are custodians of the implementation and effectiveness of QMS. Based on the findings, which were central to the challenges affecting the effectiveness of QMS, recommendations are directed to the following:

- Provincial Department of Education
- Circuit managers
- School Management Teams (SMTs)
- Labour unions

Figure 6.5 below shows the different role players to whom recommendations are directed. In a nutshell, for QMS to be effective in schools, it is recommended that the role players engage with the identified challenges highlighted in the study's findings. Thereafter, the recommendations could assist in strengthening QMS.

Figure 6.5: Recommendations to different role players



Source: Researcher's own conceptualisation

6.5.1 Recommendations to the School Management Teams (SMTs)

- To minimise the piling up of managerial tasks, develop a workable management plan with all the details for the effective implementation of the QMS.
- To be fully abreast with the content of QMS, attend training and capacity building workshops and revisit the *ELRC Collective Agreement number 2 of 2020.*
- To familiarise educators (especially newly appointed educators) with QMS, conduct training sessions in schools aligned with TL.
- Since QMS aims to improve educators' performance in their job descriptions, it involves them and applies the components of TL theory during the planning and appraisal stages. This is likely to minimise reluctance towards the system, and educators will feel that they are part of the process.
- Have quarterly evaluation sessions to determine whether the QMS process is serving its intended purpose.

6.5.2 Recommendations to the circuit managers

- To acquaint principals and other SMT members with the QMS content, conduct quarterly training sessions.
- Have a management plan to conduct accountability sessions with the SMTs about the effectiveness of QMS in secondary schools.
- To minimise SMT members' reluctance and pessimism towards QMS, conduct robust, efficient school visits to appraise principals on the effectiveness of the system.
- Support principals with a range of resources after conducting a school needs assessment.

6.5.3 Recommendations to the Provincial Department of Education

- Conduct regular training sessions with districts to upskill relevant stakeholders on QMS processes.
- To strengthen the effectiveness of QMS in schools, conduct at least an annual visit to districts to evaluate its implementation and address challenges facing schools.

- To minimise paperwork and the load of SMTs when carrying out the QMS processes, consider implementing compulsory technological interventions to appraise educators.
- Improve school financial resources to enhance the effectiveness of QMS, especially in extracurricular activities.
- Upon future streamlining and rebranding of QMS, the TL theory should be infused for its merits.

6.5.4 Recommendations to the labour unions

- To strengthen work relations, hold quarterly training sessions to align on the QMS performance standards.
- Engage with the challenges submitted by the QMS grievance committees to deliberate on resolutions promptly.

6.6. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study was conducted in a remote rural area of the UMkhanyakude District. Therefore, as a telephone interview technique was used to gather findings from the participants, network coverage was an issue. This was not under the researcher's control, as Akanle et al. (2020:109) suggest. Although the researcher attempted to address some breakdowns through several attempts, some participants lost interest in answering the calls, while others gave incomplete responses. This was a major limitation of the study. Another limitation was that the sample of 16 participants was too small to represent the findings of the entire secondary school district. The sample size was chosen with major factors such as time constraints and costs in mind.

Furthermore, the participants in the study were SMT members, including the principal, deputy principal, and departmental heads. These participants may not all have provided earnest responses on the effectiveness of QMS. This is because other relevant stakeholders, such as circuit managers, resource persons, grievance committees, and educators themselves, were not part of the sampled population.

6.7 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Guided by the study's limitations in the preceding section, further research is recommended. This can be augmented through:

- Revising the methodology used, such as increasing the sample size to minimise bias in the findings.
- Revising the selection of participants, including the circuit manager and other role players deemed relevant to the study.

6.8 CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY

The study explored SMTs' perceptions of the effectiveness of QMS in the uMkhanyakude District. Although participants demonstrated an understanding of what QMS entails, identified the school principal as a key role player, and were aware of interventions aimed at strengthening the system, the core of the main research question remained contested. The findings revealed discrepancies in the effectiveness of QMS across the selected secondary schools. Notably, the majority of participants indicated that QMS was ineffective in their respective schools.

Furthermore, most participants perceived QMS as being primarily limited to lesson observation. While lesson observation constitutes one of the performance standards, the appraisal instrument prescribed by the ELRC (2020) clearly indicates that professional development and extramural activities also form integral components of the QMS process. This limited conceptualisation of QMS, therefore, informs the recommendations presented in Section 6.5.

The study adopted TL theory as its theoretical framework. The key components of TL theory were integrated into the analysis of the findings to strengthen the line of argument. It is therefore concluded that, in implementing the study's recommendations, policymakers within the Department of Education could deliberately incorporate the principles of TL theory to guide the future streamlining and repositioning of QMS. Such an approach would significantly enhance SMT members' transformational leadership practices. As Poturak et al. (2020) emphasise, TL theory enables school managers to exercise visionary leadership, foster staff commitment, and promote value-driven performance.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE

UNISA university of south africa

College of Education _ERC

NHREC Registration # : (if applicable)
Ref #: 8223
Name: Mr Simanga Phillip Lukhele
Student #: 17269741
Staff #:

Date: 15/08/2025

Dear: Mr Simanga Phillip Lukhele

Decision: Ethics Approval from 15/08/2025 to 14/08/2030

Researcher: Mr Simanga Phillip Lukhele

UNISA, Pretora, 003

PRETORIA

17269741@mylife.unisa.ac.za 0714369218

Supervisor: Professor Lazarus Donald Mokula LEBELOANE lebelldm@unisa.ac.za

Co-Supervisor:

Co-Researcher(s):

Email address:

EXPLORING PERCEPTIONS OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS' MANAGEMENT TEAMS ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM: A CASE STUDY

Qualification: PhD Education Management

Thank you for the application for research ethics approval by the College of Education _ERC for the above-mentioned research study. Ethics approval is granted for five years.

The **low risk application** was **reviewed** by the College of Education _ERC in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.
2. Any adverse circumstance arising during the undertaking of the research study that may affect the ethical integrity of the study, including those involving research participants, third parties, or juristic persons, must be reported in writing to the College of Education _ERC without delay.
3. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
4. Any changes that may affect study-related risks to research participants, juristic or third persons, must be reported in writing to the College of Education _ERC, accompanied by a progress report.

5. The researcher will ensure that the research study complies with all applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines, and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Where applicable, adherence to the following South African legislation is essential: the Protection of Personal Information Act (No. 4 of 2013), the Children's Act (No. 38 of 2005), and the National Health Act (No. 61 of 2003)

6. Future use of this research data is permitted only in de-identified form and only for secondary research with objectives similar to those of the original study. Any secondary use involving identifiable human data will require additional ethics clearance.

7. No fieldwork activities may continue beyond the stated expiry date (14/08/2030). A completed Research Ethics Progress Report must be submitted as an application for renewal and is subject to approval by the Research Ethics Committee. A Close-Out Report must be submitted upon completion of the research study.

8. The College of Education _ERC may require the submission of regular progress reports on an annual basis, in alignment with Section 7.2 of the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics (2024).

Additional Conditions

1. Disclosure of data to third parties is prohibited without explicit consent from the research participants and Unisa.
2. Research data must be stored in compliance with the university's research data management policy for a period of up to 15 years.
3. When publishing the results, the researcher must take appropriate precautions to safeguard the confidentiality and privacy of the research participants, juristic persons, third parties, and the university, in accordance with institutional policies and ethical standards.
4. Adherence to the National Statement on Ethical Research and Publication Practices, specifically Principle 7 on Social Awareness, must be ensured. This principle states: 'Researchers and institutions must be sensitive to the potential impact of their research on society, marginal groups, or individuals, and must consider these when weighing the benefits of the research against any harmful effects, with a view to minimising or avoiding the latter where possible.' The University of South Africa (Unisa) accepts no liability for any failure to comply with this principle.

Note

The reference number 8223 should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.

Kind regards,

Prof Reginald Monyai
Chair of College of Education _ERC
E-mail: monyarb@unisa.ac.za

Professor Mpine Makoe,
Executive Dean / By delegation from the Executive Dean of College of Education _ERC
E-mail: qakisme@unisa.ac.za, magolmc@unisa.ac.za

APPENDIX B: PROOF OF REGISTRATION

UNISA university of south africa

2258

LUKHELE S P MR
PRIVATE BAG X615
UBOMBO
3970

STUDENT NUMBER . 17269741

ENQUIRIES TEL : 0800 001 870

eMAIL : mandd@unisa.ac.za

2026-01-08

Dear Student

I hereby confirm that you have been registered for the current academic year as follows:

Proposed Qualification: PHD (EDUCATION) (90019)

CODE	PAPER	S	NAME OF STUDY UNIT	NQF crdts	LANG.	PROVISIONAL EXAMINATION EXAM.DATE	CENTRE(PLACE)
Study units registered without formal exams:							
TFPEM01			PhD - Education (Education Management)	**	E		
@ TFPEM01			PhD - Education (Education Management)	**	E		

@ Exam transferred from previous academic year

You are referred to the "MyRegistration" brochure regarding fees that are forfeited on cancellation of any study units.

Your attention is drawn to University rules and regulations (www.unisa.ac.za/register).
Please note the new requirements for reregistration and the number of credits per year which state that students registered for the first time from 2013, must complete 36 NQF credits in the first year of study, and thereafter must complete 48 NQF credits per year.
Students registered for the MBA, MBL and DBL degrees must visit the SBL's ESOnLine for study material and other important information.
Readmission rules for Honours: Note that in terms of the Unisa Admission Policy academic activity must be demonstrated to the satisfaction of the University during each year of study. If you fail to meet this requirement in the first year of study, you will be admitted to another year of study. After a second year of not demonstrating academic activity to the satisfaction of the University, you will not be re-admitted, except with the express approval of the Executive Dean of the College in which you are registered. Note too, that this study programme must be completed within three years. Non-compliance will result in your academic exclusion, and you will therefore not be allowed to re-register for a qualification at the same level on the National Qualifications Framework in the same College for a period of five years after such exclusion, after which you will have to re-apply for admission to any such qualification.
Readmission rules for M&D: Note that in terms of the Unisa Admission Policy, a candidate must complete a Master's qualification within three years. Under exceptional circumstances and on recommendation of the Executive Dean, a candidate may be allowed an extra (fourth) year to complete the qualification. For a Doctoral degree, a candidate must complete the study programme within six years. Under exceptional circumstances, and on recommendation by the Executive Dean, a candidate may be allowed an extra (seventh) year to complete the qualification.

BALANCE ON STUDY ACCOUNT: 15655.00

Payable on or before:

Immediately: 0.00	2026/03/31: 0.00	2026/05/15: 7730.00	2026/08/15: 7925.00	
	2026/11/15: 0.00	2027/03/15: 0.00		

Yours faithfully,

Prof MM Sepota
Registrar

0108 0 00 0

UNIVERSITEIT VAN SUID-AFRIKA PRETORIA UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

University of South Africa
Preller Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, City of Tshwane
PO Box 392 UNISA 0003 South Africa
Telephone: +27 12 429 3111 Facsimile: +27 12 429 4150
www.unisa.ac.za

APPENDIX C: REQUEST PERMISSION FROM THE KZN DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE
EDUCATION
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

OFFICE OF THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

Private Bag X9137, PIETERMARITZBURG, 3200
Anton Lembede Building, 247 Burger Street, Pietermaritzburg, 3201
Tel: 033 392 1063 **Fax:** 033 392 1203

Enquiries: Ms PN Duma

Application for Permission to Conduct Research in KwaZulu Natal Department of Education Institutions

1. Applicants Details

Title: ~~Prof~~ / ~~Dr~~ / ~~Rev~~ / Mr / ~~Mrs~~ / ~~Miss~~ / ~~Ms~~ Surname: LUKHELE

Name(s) Of Applicant(s): SIMANGA PHILLIP Email: smangalukhele200@gmail.com

Tel No: N/A Fax N/A Cell: [redacted]

Postal Address: PRIVATE BAG X615, UBOMBO, 3970

Proposed Research Title: EXPLORING PERCEPTIONS OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS' MANAGEMENT TEAMS ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM: A CASE STUDY

2. Have you applied for permission to conduct this research or any other research within the KZNDoE institutions?

Yes	No
	X

If "yes", please state reference Number: N/A

3. What is the main research question(s) :

Main research question:

How do secondary Schools' Management Teams perceive the effectiveness of Quality Management System at uMkhanyakude District?

Sub-research questions:

- Who are the role players responsible for the effectiveness of the Quality Management System in secondary schools?
- Why is the effectiveness of Quality Management System necessary in secondary schools?
- To what extent is Quality Management System effective in secondary schools?
- Which interventions are required to strengthen the effectiveness of Quality Management System in secondary schools?

4. Methodology including sampling procedures and the people to be included in the sample:

Research methodology

The qualitative research method is deemed relevant for the intended study. The strength of this approach is that it studies people in their own definitions of the world, the meaning they give to a phenomenon, and focuses on subjective experiences of individuals (Mouton, 2022:175; Dzogovic & Bajrami, 2023:158). Dzogovic and Bajrami (2023:158) add that the purpose of qualitative research is to describe and interpret experiences, gather and gain knowledge and understanding without assumptions. Based on the preceding discussion, the researcher seeks to explore the perceptions of secondary Schools' Management Teams on the effectiveness of QMS in the UMkhanyakude District.

Research design

This empirical study will employ the case study design. Since the case study is qualitative in nature (Mouton, 2022:142), it will aim to provide an in-depth description of small

number of cases. Case studies allow the researcher to get a deeper understanding into selected cases for investigation (Mutongoza, 2021:150), and the researcher aims to investigate the relationship between the phenomenon and its context (Martinsou & Huemann, 2021:1). Schoch (2022:245) states that a case study is appropriate if the context is relevant to the phenomenon, such as investigating a gap in a high school. Since the qualitative study employed the phenomenological theoretical framework, the phenomenal case in the study is the gap in the effectiveness of QMS in secondary schools in the uMkhanyakude District. The case study design will be used because, during data collection, participants (SMTs) will interpret and describe their assertions (Muzari et al., 2022:15) based on the study's objectives.

Population and sampling procedures

The population in which sampling will be done consists members of the SMTs from secondary schools in the uMkhanyakude District. That is, secondary school principals, deputy principals and departmental heads will be targeted for the study as they share a similar role of managing educators (Lukhele & Lebeloane, 2024:52). This targeted population is anticipated to meet the standards for the study's needs. Therefore, the non-probability sampling method will be used purposively to explore secondary school management teams' perceptions of the effectiveness of the QMS in the uMkhanyakude District. SMT members with a minimum of three years of experience in the management position will be part of the sampled population. To explore SMT members' perceptions of the effectiveness of QMS, 16 schools will be selected from the district. Consequently, 16 SMT members, one from each school will be chosen participants that will form the sample of the study. The sixteen SMT members were selected for two reasons. Firstly, the study is underpinned by a case study design which is qualitative in nature (Mouton, 2022:142) and that it provides an in-depth description of a small number of cases (Tomaszewski et al., 2020:1). Secondly, through the review of literature, many studies with the qualitative approach have chosen samples ranging from 1 to 20 cases, which are relevant for a case study design (Subedi, 2021:6). Consequently, the selected participants are believed to be relevant and to provide rich and appropriate information about the research topic, to represent the district.

5. What contribution will the proposed study make to the education, health, safety, welfare of the learners and to the education system as a whole?

Mamabolo et al (2022:1) recommend that when QMS is implemented well, it enhances quality and accountability for educators. However, when SMTs are reluctant to ensure the effectiveness of the system, its integrity is compromised. The study is therefore significant as it will address unresolved discrepancies in the effectiveness of QMS. Through findings and recommendations that will be presented in the study, policy makers in the national and provincial Department of Education may use them (findings and recommendations) to acknowledge SMTs' perceptions and implement decisive measures. This will guarantee the effectiveness of the system because it seems to provide great performance results. Africano et al (2019:123) concur that effective adoption of QMS will be a strategic decision that can help improve overall performance of schools in maximising opportunities and minimising negative effects that emerge.

KZN Department of Education Schools or Institutions from which sample will be drawn – If the list is long please attach at the end of the form		

6. **Research data collection instruments**: *(Note: a list and only a brief description is required here - the actual instruments must be attached)***:**

List of instruments

- Primary data source: Telephone semi-structured interview
- Secondary data source: Government policy papers, scholarly articles, books and other publications related to QMS

Brief description

The study will employ both primary and secondary data collection methods to ensure credibility of findings. That is, methodological triangulation will be featured in the process of data collection. Secondary data sources that will be analysed to support the primary data collection instrument include government policy papers, scholarly articles, books and other publications related to QMS. The telephone semi-structured interview will be a tool for primary data collection. The anticipated duration of the interview will be 25-30 minutes long. The qualitative telephone interview will be a suitable method due to its flexibility between the interviewer and the interviewee. The interview schedule will consist of open-ended questions which will be generated from the four sub-research questions. Probing will be done to help the researcher explore answers relevant to the questions. The participants' answers will be transcribed through an audio recording application, and this will allow the credibility of the responses during analysis and interpretation phase.

7. **Procedure for obtaining consent of participants and where appropriate parents or guardians:**

According to Xu, Baysari, Stocker, Leow, Day and Carland (2020:1), informed consent is a cornerstone of research ethics aimed at informing participants that they join research voluntarily and understanding what the study entails. Kang and Hwang (2021:7) sustain that informed consent entails that the researcher assures the participants that they enter the

study willingly or voluntarily with complete information related to the research. The researcher discloses information such as the purpose of the study, research approach, risks, anticipated benefits for the study and statement offering to answer questions (Badampudi, Fotrousi, Cartaxo & Usman, 2022:3). Consequently, the participants (SMT members) will be approached so that the study's purpose and the process of data collection is explained. Participants will be given the agreement forms that stipulate that their participation in the study is voluntarily and if they wish to withdraw, they could do so at no cost.

Procedure to maintain confidentiality (if applicable):

Czarnota-Bojarska (2021:63) states that ensuring confidentiality of personal data is necessary to obtain honest responses to research questions. In a qualitative research, confidentiality must be respected, and occasional harm must be repaired (Taquette & Borges da Matta Souza, 2022:1). For purpose of this study, confidentiality will be maintained by informing SMT members that their identity will strictly not be revealed and that their interview responses will only be for the purpose of data analysis. That is, to guarantee confidentiality, participants will be informed that pseudonyms will be applied instead of revealing their names.

8. Research timelines

CHAPTER	ACTION REQUIRED	PROPOSED DATES
Chapter 1	Drafting and writing research proposal	6 January 2025- 31 March 2025
Chapter 2	Reviewing Literature	1 April 2025- 13 June 2025
Chapter 3	Writing theoretical framework	17 June 2025- 25 July 2025
Chapter 4 (Research methodology and design)	Data collection	25 August 2025- 04 October 2025
	Data analysis etc.	15 November 2025- 3 January 2026-
Chapter 5	Presenting and interpreting collected data	5 January 2026- 7 February 2026

Chapter 6	Writing a summary, synthesising findings, drawing conclusions and recommendations	8 February 2026- 7 March 2026
Consolidation of chapters (thesis)	Submission to external examiners	20 March 2026- 31 March 2026

9. Declaration

I hereby agree to comply with the relevant ethical conduct to ensure that participants' privacy and the confidentiality of records and other critical information.

I SIMANGA PHILLIP LUKHELE **declare that the above information is true and correct**

16/08/2025

Signature of Applicant **Date**

10. Agreement to provide and to grant the KwaZulu Natal Department of Education the right to publish a summary of the report.

I/We agree to provide the KwaZulu Natal Department of Education with a copy of any report or dissertation written on the basis of information gained through the research activities described in this application.

I/We grant the KwaZulu Natal Department of Education the right to publish an edited summary of this report or dissertation using the print or electronic media.

16/08/2025

Signature of Applicant(s) **Date**

Return a completed form to:
Phindile Duma – Tel: 033 392 1063
Office of the HOD; KwaZulu Natal Department of Education

Hand Delivered:
Office 309; 247 Burger Street; Anton Lembede House; Pietermaritzburg; 3201
Or
Ordinary Mail
Private Bag X9137; Pietermaritzburg; 3200
Or
Email
Research@kzndoe.gov.za
Or
Fax
033 392 1203

APPENDIX D: APPROVAL LETTER FROM KZN DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE
EDUCATION
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

OFFICE OF THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

Private Bag X 9137, PIETERMARITZBURG, 3200
Anton Lembede Building, 247 Burger Street, Pietermaritzburg, 3201
Enquiries : Ms Phindile Duma
Email : phindile.duma@kzndoe.gov.za
Ref: 2/4/8/634
Tel : 033 392 1063

Mr SP Lukhele
Private Bag X615
UBOMBO
3970

Dear Mr Lukhele

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DOE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: **"EXPLORING PERCEPTIONS OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS' MANAGEMENT TEAMS ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM: A CASE STUDY"** Department of Education Institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

1. The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2. The researcher must ensure that Educator and learning programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, Educators, Schools and Institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Heads of Institutions where the Intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6. The period of investigation is limited to the period from 18 August 2025 to 31 August 2027.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Miss Phindile Duma at the contact numbers above.
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report/dissertation/thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Office of the HOD, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to schools and institutions in KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education.

UMKHANYAKUDE DISTRICT

Mr. GN Ngcobo
Head of Department: Education
Date: 19 August 2025

GROWING KWAZULU-NATAL TOGETHER

APPENDIX E: REQUEST PERMISSION TO INTERVIEW SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

REQUEST TO INTERVIEW SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS AT UMKHANYAKUDE DISTRICT

Research title: EXPLORING PERCEPTIONS OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS' MANAGEMENT TEAMS ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM: A CASE STUDY

Attention: The School Principal

Date: 20 August 2025

Dear School Principal,

I, **Simanga Phillip Lukhele,** am a registered PhD student (student number: 17269741) at the University of South Africa, Department of Educational Leadership and Management. Professor L.D.M. Lebeloane is my supervisor. The title of my studies is 'EXPLORING PERCEPTIONS OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS' MANAGEMENT TEAMS ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM: A CASE STUDY.'

I hereby request an interview with you, one of the secondary school principals in the uMkhanyakude District, to gather data for the study. The interview will be conducted on the cell phone at a time convenient for you. I will ensure that it does not disturb your official working hours. The duration thereof could be between 25-30 minutes. The discussion will be recorded and used for study purposes only. Your name will not be disclosed to anyone. Kindly note that it is a voluntary exercise. You can withdraw from the interview at any time. You are welcome to contact me at the cell phone number provided hereunder if you need any clarification on the matter.

I look forward to interviewing you. Thank you in advance.

Yours sincerely,

_____

Simanga Phillip Lukhele (07[redacted])

APPENDIX F: REQUEST PERMISSION TO INTERVIEW SCHOOL DEPUTY PRINCIPALS

REQUEST TO INTERVIEW SECONDARY SCHOOL DEPUTY PRINCIPALS AT UMKHANYAKUDE DISTRICT

Research title: EXPLORING PERCEPTIONS OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS' MANAGEMENT TEAMS ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM: A CASE STUDY

Attention: The School Deputy Principal

Date: 20 August 2025

Dear Deputy Principal,

I, **Simanga Phillip Lukhele,** am a registered PhD student (student number: 17269741) at the University of South Africa, Department of Educational Leadership and Management. Professor L.D.M. Lebeloane is my supervisor. The title of my studies is 'EXPLORING PERCEPTIONS OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS' MANAGEMENT TEAMS ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM: A CASE STUDY.'

I hereby request your participation in an interview as one of the secondary school Deputy Principals in the uMkhanyakude District for data collection for this study. The interview will be conducted telephonically at a time that is convenient for you and will be scheduled so as not to interfere with your official working hours. The interview is expected to last approximately 25–30 minutes. With your consent, the discussion will be audio-recorded and used solely for academic research. Please be assured that your identity will remain confidential and that no identifying information will be disclosed. Participation in the interview is entirely voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any stage without any consequences. Should you require any clarification or further information, you are welcome to contact me using the cell phone number provided below.

Yours sincerely,

Simanga Phillip Lukhele (07[redacted])

APPENDIX G: REQUEST PERMISSION TO INTERVIEW SCHOOL DEPARTMENTAL HEADS

REQUEST TO INTERVIEW SECONDARY SCHOOL DEPARTMENTAL HEADS AT UMKHANYAKUDE DISTRICT

Research title: EXPLORING PERCEPTIONS OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS' MANAGEMENT TEAMS ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM: A CASE STUDY

Attention: The School Departmental Head

Date: 20 August 2025

Dear Departmental Head,

I, **Simanga Phillip Lukhele,** am a registered PhD student (student number: 17269741) at the University of South Africa, Department of Educational Leadership and Management. Professor L.D.M. Lebeloane is my supervisor. The title of my studies is 'EXPLORING PERCEPTIONS OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS' MANAGEMENT TEAMS ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM: A CASE STUDY.'

I hereby request your participation in an interview as one of the secondary school Deputy Principals in the uMkhanyakude District for data collection for this study. The interview will be conducted telephonically at a time that is convenient for you and will be scheduled so as not to interfere with your official working hours. The interview is expected to last approximately 25–30 minutes. With your consent, the discussion will be audio-recorded and used solely for academic research. Please be assured that your identity will remain confidential and that no identifying information will be disclosed. Participation in the interview is entirely voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any stage without any consequences. Should you require any clarification or further information, you are welcome to contact me using the cell phone number provided below.

Yours sincerely,

Simanga Phillip Lukhele (07[redacted])

APPENDIX H: CONSENT FORM TO SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPAL'S CONSENT LETTER

REQUEST TO INTERVIEW SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS AT UMKHANYAKUDE DISTRICT

Research title: EXPLORING PERCEPTIONS OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS' MANAGEMENT TEAMS ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM: A CASE STUDY

RESEARCHER: Mr SP Lukhele (07[redacted])

I, ……., a secondary school principal in the uMkhanyakude District, hereby consent to voluntarily participate as a participant in the research study conducted by Mr SP Lukhele (student number:17269741), a registered PhD student at the University of South Africa, Department of Educational Leadership and Management. I, by giving consent, understand that the interview will be conducted on the cell phone. I will remain anonymous. My views will be recorded and used for study purposes only. I can withdraw from the interview at any time.

Yours sincerely,

_____

Signature of participant

Date:…….

APPENDIX I: CONSENT FORM TO SCHOOL DEPUTY PRINCIPALS

SECONDARY SCHOOL DEPUTY PRINCIPAL'S CONSENT LETTER

REQUEST TO INTERVIEW SECONDARY SCHOOL DEPUTY PRINCIPALS AT UMKHANYAKUDE DISTRICT

Research title: EXPLORING PERCEPTIONS OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS' MANAGEMENT TEAMS ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM: A CASE STUDY

RESEARCHER: Mr SP Lukhele (07[redacted])

I, …….., a secondary school deputy principal in the uMkhanyakude District, hereby consent to voluntarily participate as a participant in the research study conducted by Mr SP Lukhele (student number:17269741), a registered PhD student at the University of South Africa, Department of Educational Leadership and Management. I, by giving consent, understand that the interview will be conducted on the cell phone. I will remain anonymous. My views will be recorded and used for study purposes only. I can withdraw from the interview at any time.

Yours sincerely,

_____

Signature of participant

Date:…….

APPENDIX J: CONSENT FORM TO SCHOOL DEPARTMENTAL HEADS

SECONDARY SCHOOL DEPARTMENTAL HEAD CONSENT LETTER

REQUEST TO INTERVIEW SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS AT UMKHANYAKUDE DISTRICT

Research title: EXPLORING PERCEPTIONS OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS' MANAGEMENT TEAMS ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM: A CASE STUDY

RESEARCHER: Mr SP Lukhele (07[redacted])

I, ……., a secondary school principal in the uMkhanyakude District, hereby consent to voluntarily participate as a participant in the research study conducted by Mr SP Lukhele (student number:17269741), a registered PhD student at the University of South Africa, Department of Educational Leadership and Management. I, by giving consent, understand that the interview will be conducted on the cell phone. I will remain anonymous. My views will be recorded and used for study purposes only. I can withdraw from the interview at any time.

Yours sincerely,

_____

Signature of participant

Date:…….

APPENDIX K: INTERVIEW GUIDE

UNISA college of education

INTERVIEW GUIDE

My name is Mr Simanga Phillip Lukhele (Student no. 17269741). I am a registered PhD student at the University of South Africa. My supervisor is Prof L.D.M. Lebeloane. I am conducting a study titled **EXPLORING PERCEPTIONS OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS' MANAGEMENT TEAMS ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM: A CASE STUDY**. A telephonic interview will be conducted and audio-recorded for the purposes of this study. Participants are requested to respond to all questions honestly. All information provided will be treated with strict confidentiality, and no identifying details will be disclosed to any third party. Participation in the study is entirely voluntary, and no remuneration will be provided. Participants may withdraw from the interview at any stage, for any reason, without penalty.

The interview schedule is divided into two sections. **Section I** requests participants' biographical information, while **Section II** consists of open-ended questions. Where necessary, follow-up (probing) questions may be asked to clarify or expand on participants' responses.

SECTION I: BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

B1	**Name** (pseudonym will be used for data analysis)		
B2	**Gender**	**M**	**F**
B3	**Age**		
B4	**Home language**		
B5	**Qualification level, e.g. B.Ed.**		
B6	**Years of experience in a management position**		

B7	**Position held in management**	
B8	**Contact number** (for interview purpose)	

SECTION II: OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

Q1: What do you understand about the Quality Management System (QMS)?

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Q2: Who is responsible for the effectiveness of QMS in the school?

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Q3: Why do you think the effectiveness of QMS is important in secondary schools?

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Q4: Is QMS effective in the school? Please elaborate.

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Q5: What do you think can be done to strengthen the effectiveness of QMS in the school?

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Q6: Is there any additional information you would like to share regarding this discussion?

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Thank you for your time. Your contribution is highly appreciated.

APPENDIX L: PROOF OF LANGUAGE EDITING

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31 January 2026

Editorial Certificate

To Whom It May Concern,

This certificate confirms that the PhD thesis entitled **"EXPLORING PERCEPTIONS OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS' MANAGEMENT TEAMS ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM: A CASE STUDY"** by **Simanga Phillip Lukhele (student no: 17269741)** was edited by an expert English editor with a PhD. The following issues were corrected: grammar, spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, phrasing, and formatting.

Signed on behalf of NIM Editorial by:

.....

Dr N.I. Mabidi

Founder & Chief Editor

APPENDIX M: TURNITIN REPORT

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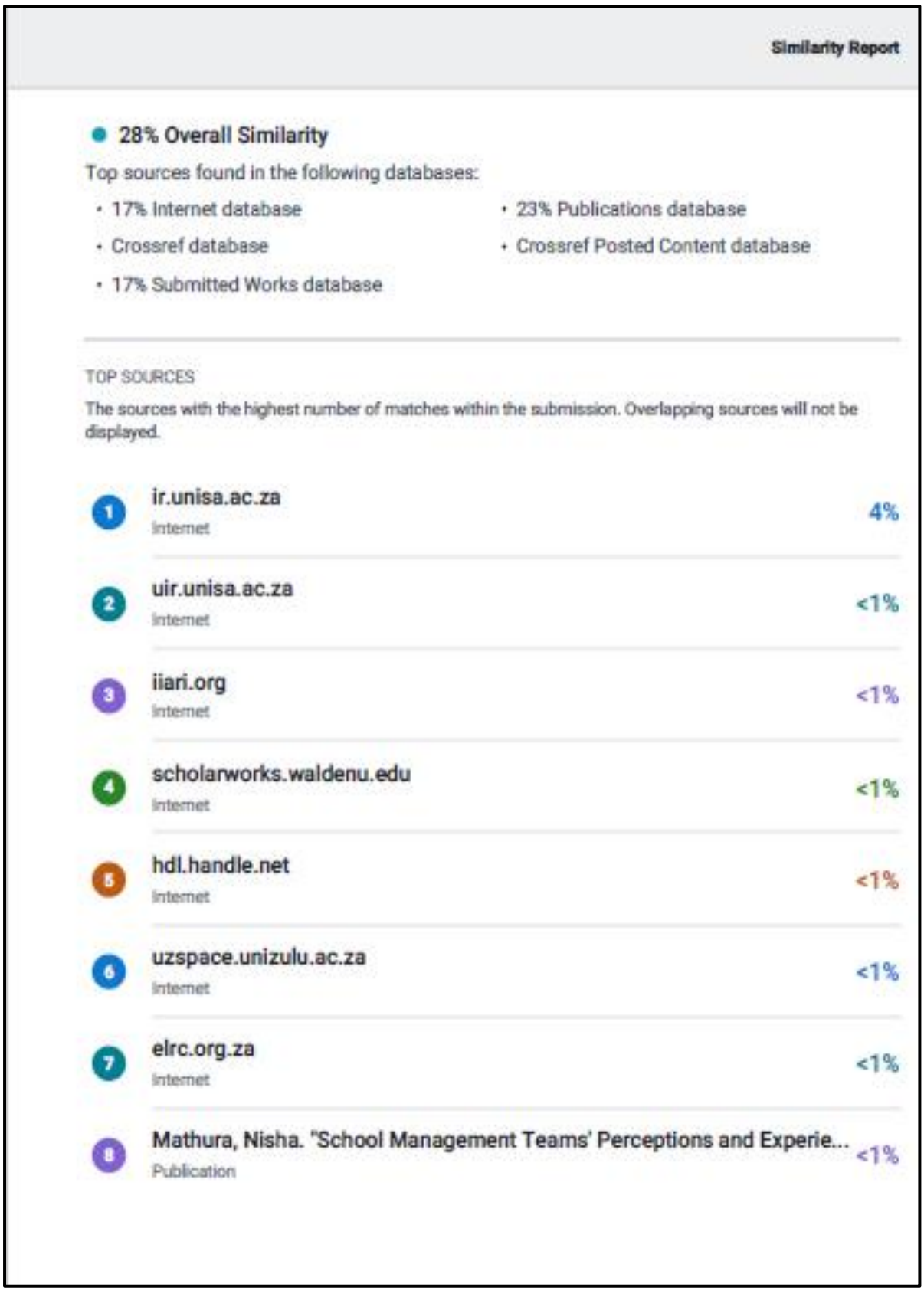

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