



**AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE IMPLEMENTATION  
OF THE NATIONAL POLICY ON DISTRICT  
SUPPORT SERVICES FOR EFFECTIVE  
TEACHING AND LEARNING  
AT SCHOOL LEVEL**

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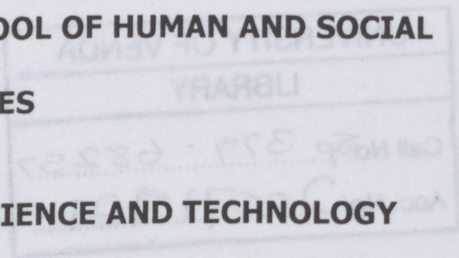
**BY**

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**A**

**THESIS PRESENTED TO THE SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND SOCIAL  
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## APPROVAL: THESIS

This thesis has been examined and is approved meeting the required standards of scholarship for partial fulfilment of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in curriculum Studies.

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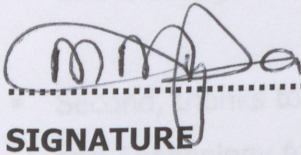
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## DECLARATION

I, **Mokgadi Maggie Masipa**, hereby declare that the thesis for the Doctor of Philosophy Degree at the University of Venda for Science and Technology hereby submitted by me has not previously been submitted for a degree at this or any other university, and that it is my own in design and execution and that all reference materials contained therein have been duly acknowledged.



.....

**SIGNATURE**

25 August 2005

**DATE**

- To Mrs. Kabura, Physic for editing the thesis.
- To Dr. F.M. Ramual for patient editorial assistance and making valuable comments on the drafts.
- In addition, the researcher wishes to thank all the Sekgosese District personnel, principals and educators who devoted their valuable time for the completion of the questionnaires with kindness and patience.
- The researcher is also extremely grateful to Ms. B. Mudau without whose efficiency and dedication in typing thesis the work would never have been completed.
- Finally, but not least, the researcher owes special appreciation and thanks to her family. Sincere thanks are due to the researcher's late father Raitadi Leo Masipa, mother Mabone, and three of her children Malescia, Raitadi and Mabone, for their unwavering support.

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groups, educators (200), principals (16), managers (4), curriculum advisers (16), and administrators (12).

This study examines the extent to which education districts in the Limpopo Province support effective teaching and learning at school level, with general applicability to similar education districts in South Africa and elsewhere. The literature reveals that education districts in most developing countries, do not support the participation of principals and educators, and that changes are required to effect higher levels of involvement. The study focuses on how this might be attained.

The study makes recommendations on District Support Services which will ensure the involvement of district personnel, principals and educators in transforming schools into effective teaching and learning organisations.

The theoretical base is derived from literature review on district support services in South Africa and elsewhere. This review is used to establish common conceptions for the study, and illustrates the extent to which the involvement of all relevant stakeholders is considered desirable and feasible. The analysis also reveals how the policy on district support services in South Africa falls short of complying with the country's local diversity and also with its policy of Outcomes – Based Education which focuses on producing citizens who are equipped with values, knowledge and skills that will enable them to play a productive role in society. The implication of Outcomes – Based Education is that individuals acquire these qualities through active involvement in the learning process. It seeks to create a lifelong learner who is confident and independent, literate and multi-skilled, compassionate, with respect for the environment and the ability to participate in society as a critical and active citizen.

The field work was carried out in education institutions falling under Sekgosesa Education District in Region Three of Limpopo Province and involved a sample of three hundred and thirty-two education practitioners, divided into five target

groups:educators (200), principals (100), circuit managers (4), curriculum advisers (16), and administrators (12).

The analysis of the data is composed of three parts. The first concerns the calibre of people who are implementing the policy. The majority of participants still lacked the relevant qualifications required while the need for staff development was identified by many as a major concern. In the second part respondents overwhelmingly indicated the need for clarification on the nature, the role and functions of the education district. In the third part the report shows that a general agreement also exists amongst the respondents for the need to address the constraints experienced at all levels in the implementation of district support services.

The study concludes that in a globally competitive environment like the one we have today, it is no longer sufficient to make excellent strategic and operational plans. It is rather crucial for organisations to have systems that will ensure that this plans are effectively achieved. The rationale for this view is based on the argument that this may provide opportunities for learners to extend and develop their personal education competence, critical awareness and shared insight of the role which they and schools are expected to fulfil in their rapidly changing communities.

The following key concepts were used throughout the study:

- Education District
- Curriculum 2005-08-24 Education Policy Reserve Fund Programme (EPRFP)
- The School Governing Body (SGB)
- National Policy
- District Support Services
- Effective Teaching and Learning

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The resultant inequality in the provision of education services culminated in the demise of professional ethos in certain sectors of the schooling system, and ultimately in the poor quality of education in Black schools. This system of education prepared learners in different ways for the positions they were expected to occupy in social, economic and political life under the apartheid system.

The fragmentation of education had deep-rooted effects on the provision of facilities and support services to schools. The most significant deep-rooted effect was the breakdown of the culture of learning and teaching. As a direct result of these social and educational inequalities, education in South Africa has always been a terrain of competing political, economic and ideological interests and contestation (Christie 1998:284).

## CHAPTER 1

### ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

#### 1.1 BACKGROUND

The South African democratic government inherited a divided and unequal system of education. One of the most observable legacies of the apartheid education system was the complete fragmentation of the entire system in South Africa. As a result of this fragmentation, nineteen departments were responsible for formal education up to 1994. In each department, the curriculum played a powerful role in reinforcing inequality. What, how and whether learners were taught differed according to the roles they were expected to play in the wider society. This fragmentation of education in South Africa was the result of the separatist practices which were entrenched by the apartheid ideology; with the accession to power of the Nationalist Party in 1948 and the passing of the Bantu Education Act in 1953.

The resultant inequality in the provision of education services culminated in the demise of professional ethos in certain sectors of the schooling system, and ultimately in the poor quality of education in Black schools. This system of education prepared learners in different ways for the positions they were expected to occupy in social, economic and political life under the apartheid system.

The fragmentation of education had deep-rooted effects on the provision of facilities and support services to schools. The most significant deep-rooted effect was the breakdown of the culture of learning and teaching. As a direct result of these social and educational inequalities, education in South Africa has always been a terrain of competing political, economic and ideological interests and contestation (Christie 1998:284).

The ideology of apartheid dominated South African life and effectively shaped, not only a strong differential social structure, but also an attitude and perceptual separation between the various population groups in the country. The apartheid ideology also affected, in some instances, not only the way schools were resourced, but how they were managed as well. The apartheid system of racial exclusion and exploitation has placed an immense burden of challenges on many of our people. It is the view of this study that the task of districts is to grapple with these challenges, to provide an educational environment that enhances learners' ability to meet their obligations and to meet the demands of an increasingly complex world and Africa.

In many cases school management and administration were undertaken by unskilled, poorly qualified principals who did not possess appropriate management and leadership skills (Godden and Coombe 1996:15).

These ineffective and inadequate leadership and management skills contributed to the dysfunction in schools. The problem was exacerbated by the District Offices, which provided no support in management/development programmes. All these problems seem to lie in the history of apartheid South Africa.

The social, political and economic environment of the new South Africa is radically different from the past decade. The paradigm shifts necessitates a new way of looking at and understanding teaching and learning strategies for both learners and educators because of the new demands of the changing world. Over the past years there has been increasing demand from educators and principals at schools to address issues beyond the classroom and relating to the school as a whole. The South African system of education has been copiously documented, with the concerns about low morale among educators, tensions between educators and administrators, learners and lack of a shared vision and direction. This highlights a real challenge to provide quality education and therefore develop effective schools.

It is exactly these kinds of concerns and challenges that this study intends to investigate. This study takes cognisance of the fact that every classroom is located within a district, and therefore affected by what happens within the environment. School districts should identify intervention strategies/projects with clear management plans, outcomes, and desired expectations. These intervention strategies should take into consideration the nature of change and context of specific schools. It is critical to note that such interventions should provide a coherent meaning to national and provincial policy and directives and that they should reflect a long-term sustainable perspective. This consideration implies creating a learning environment, which supports facilities and encourages a quality learning experience which dovetails into the development of quality education in South Africa.

Research by Poplin and Weeres (1993:1) indicates that many educators appear weary and wary, stressed and depressed, alienated and bitter as well as frustrated from the demise of the culture of work in the school and the disintegration of the learning environment, especially in rural schools.

With this background, Christie (1998;289) argues that there may be real limits to fundamentally transforming schools to offer effective teaching and learning. The implementation of new policies is typically a lengthy and uneven process. The idea of replacing the existing education system with a new one is giving people false hope and expectations. What is really needed is not a restoration of the culture of learning and teaching; rather it is the overhauling and transformation of the culture of teaching and learning. In other words, what is needed is the conceiving of a more relevant notion of the culture of teaching and learning. Undoubtedly, this will require huge provision of physical facilities, technical support and human resources including funding.

It is also important to point out that South Africa's programme of reform, to meet basic schooling needs, is being undertaken in the climate of heightened demands for

social support services and a commitment by the state to instill discipline into the consumers of such resources (Chisholm 1995:20).

Research by Fullan (1997:9) argues that, in social reconstruction, teacher education should be based on the educators' abilities to see social and political implications of their educational practices. Subsequently, educational reconstruction should be perceived within the broader context of societal reconstruction.

The conditions of poverty and its resultant disruption in disadvantaged schools have contributed to the low value placed on schooling. Lack of resources and facilities in rural schools have left the public wondering as to where the future of schooling is heading.

Recently, the Deputy Director General (DDG) of Education commissioned the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) to research into the condition of South African schools. The report that appeared in the Star (Thursday May 24, 2001 Johannesburg) was subsequently tabled in parliament. The Auditor-General's report revealed that some buildings have even been declared unfit for education, a clear indication of the severe shortage of teaching facilities that pupils have to endure.

The report also revealed that in certain provincial departments, personnel costs made up more than ninety percent (90%) of the education budget, leaving little to be spent on schools.

The Auditor General's report covering the period September 1998 to January 2000, examined the state of education facilities in seven provinces, the Northern Cape and Kwazulu Natal Provinces were not included. The report found there was a shortage of about nineteen thousand (19,000) classrooms in the Limpopo Province where learners attend classes under the trees; and a shortage of fifteen thousand five hundred and thirty eight (15 538) in the Eastern Cape. Of the four thousand one hundred and fifty

five (4 155) schools in the Limpopo Province, seventy eight percent (78%) were without electricity and almost half were without running water. Almost three quarters of the schools in the Eastern Cape were without electricity while almost a third were without running water.

The report further established that five thousand five hundred and twenty eight (5, 528) schools, which constitute ninety three percent (93%) of the total Eastern Cape schools did not have libraries and ninety four percent (94%) did not have science laboratories. A quarter of the Eastern Cape Province's schools did not have toilets and two hundred and six (206) schools had been declared unfit for education. In addition the report stated that thousands of teachers were found to be without appropriate qualifications.

Not surprisingly, schools seem not to be effective in assisting learners to learn and educators to teach. The current situation in some schools shows signs of organizational breakdown in structures and processes, malfunctioning of administration, loss of legitimate authority among principals and educators.

All parties concerned are disgruntled, showing clear signs of emotions like low morale, disinterest, apathy and demotivation. This translates into poor communication, lack of punctuality in schools, learners roaming in the streets during school hours and teachers basking in the sun, reading newspapers. As a result, the whole culture of teaching and learning is continually in crisis and work ethics and ethos have collapsed among educators.

These problems in the disadvantaged schools account for not only the declining matriculation results but the poor physical conditions into which some of the schools have degenerated: squalid conditions without electricity, no running water, no toilets, no window panes and doors, inadequate or no furniture for learners, no laboratories and libraries.

This country will continue to see traumatized children and thus the moral fibre and In addition uncertainty about security and safety in many schools lead to very ugly incidents on regular basis. Learners and educators, alike, fear for their lives and there is a general uncertainty about why educators and learners ever go to school. add value and contribute to the profession as it deserves

The lack of resources especially in rural schools to its clients according to Lee and Morphet (1989:10) and the failure of government's effort to provide these study schools with appropriate facilities to deliver sufficient improvements in quality still leaves much to be desired. These are some of crucial causes that resulted in growing resistance to the system and, by the 1980s a creeping disintegration of the learning environment. Despite the efforts since the inception of the new dispensation in 1994 to promote a return to the learning culture and teaching, many rural schools are still subjected to disruption and under resourced. dies and the passing of legislation for the newly established provincial departments of education. It was Education mirrors the conflicts, anomalies and debates of the wider society. It was surprising, therefore, that education in South Africa became such a contested terrain characterized by crisis (Hofmeyer 1982:29). The previous system of education in South Africa projected a complex, multidimensional crisis of legitimacy relevance and provision. The crisis has been apparent in an overt form since 1976, but on the contrary the new system has no significant signs of changing rapidly especially in many rural areas. This scenario warrants grave concern for this study. could enable the

education system to achieve the national goals to provide quality education, through Unless these problems receive adequate and urgent attention, the system of education in South Africa will continue to be on the decline. If these prevalent problems besetting the schools are not resolved timeously, the education system in this country is likely to collapse. The system cannot be changed or be improved unless, for instance, more resources are provided, including sufficient funding for the severely disadvantaged rural schools. spotlight on the performance of systems.

This country will continue to see traumatized children and thus the moral fibre and the purpose of education will disintegrate and the aspirations of the learners will not be fulfilled. Fullan (1997:42) contends that educators must teach if learners are to succeed, and learners must learn if society is to succeed. Educators must add value and contribute to the profession as it deserves

Given the situation outlined above concerning education in South Africa, the study now focuses on measures put in place in order to address the situation so that delivery of quality education by the school, through the support of the education districts, may be realised.

The reform in education during the post-1994 period was limited to the creation of a single, national Department of Education, the development of policies and the passing of legislation for the newly established provincial departments of education. It was evident that four years after the new provincial departments of education had been established, education districts and circuit level of offices required coherence, capacity –building, authority and resources to change the performance of the school system for the better (National Centre for Curriculum Research and Development 1999:5; Godden and Coombe 1996:1).

The schools within education districts constitute the nucleus that would enable the education system to achieve the national goals to provide quality education, through the support of district and circuit officers to school, in the view of this study.

According to A Quality Assurance Framework for General, Adult and Further Education and Training in South Africa (1998:1) the Minister of Education declared 1998/99 “the year in which there would be targeted focus on the functionality and performance of the school system” in order to put the spotlight on the performance of systems.

The concern to improve performance of the system was also reflected in the Minister's Action Plan for the 1999/2000 financial year, in which the Department of Education undertook to "rebuild public confidence in the public school system nationally" by ensuring that schools were properly managed and provided quality education (Department of Education 1998:1).

The South African education district was thus expected to identify appropriate intervention strategies in offering support to schools that would ensure that schools become centres of education improvement.

Following the creation of a coherent organisation, the Department of Education introduced a Thousand Schools Project (TSP) in 1995 in order to improve the quality of education in post-apartheid South Africa. The project was implemented in the framework of "the development of the whole school" using a range of services.

Ashely (1997:2) indicates in the national report of the project evaluation which started in 1996 that a national study did not yield reliable or useful data for a variety of reasons.

Ashley further states that the Thousand Schools Project was implemented during a period of profound political transition. It was also based on the premise that individual schools could constitute a locus of effort to improve the quality of education.

The introduction of a Thousand Schools Project (TPS) in 1995 was based on producing quality education with a special focus on the school. The standpoint of this study is that the exclusion of the education district in the focus on producing quality education contributed to the non-delivery of the expected objective as the lessons learnt out of the implementation indicate.

Amongst some of the lessons learnt from the implementation of the Thousand Schools Project, as indicated by the study of its impact conducted by Ashley as quoted in the National Centre for Curriculum Research and Development (1999:6) are the following:

- great care should be taken to relate decision –making power to the needs of the school
- successful intervention requires careful preparation. Schools' early involvement in any change is therefore essential.
- Non - Governmental organizations can make a vital contribution to quality improvement, but needs to operate within a clearly defined framework
- mere delivery of In-Service Training courses does not guarantee sustained improvement of teaching and learning, careful monitoring of teachers and school follow-up is essential
- there should be correspondence between course aims and materials
- the way a school is led and managed is a key factor in determining the success of an innovation. The chances of success are better where a participatory and democratic management style is used

The absence of decision – making powers required by the district in line with the needs of the schools are among contributory factors to the inability of the school improvement model of delivery having not achieved the desired goal, according to this study.

According to the National Centre for Curriculum Research and Development (1999:6) the Department of Education shifted from a school improvement model of delivery to using a district development /improvement model of delivery.

This study contends that delivery of quality education through empowerment of district leadership and personnel, the use of appropriate intervention strategies, the

utilization of effective communication structures and mechanisms has the potential of schools becoming centres of education improvement.

The Education System in South Africa is currently undergoing profound and far reaching changes which challenge the traditional role of its institutions including in particular education districts. The end of apartheid has ushered a new era for rehabilitation and reconstruction of educational institutions, opening up new horizons in the functioning and development of these institutions. The new teaching-learning system (Outcomes- Based Education) leads to a logical conclusion that there is bound to be a drastic shift from the traditional to the new ways of developing and supporting schools in the future South Africa (Bayona, 2000:1).

Participation in this new system presents education authorities at national, provincial, regional and district levels, together with school level with new instinctive challenges and opportunities. This necessitates innovation at all levels of the education system concerning:

- Structures, organization and governance
- Programme development and delivery systems
- Monitoring, assessment and evaluation strategies
- Communication and information delivery service
- Human resource development systems
- Budgeting and financial management systems
- Physical growth and infrastructural development systems

The National Centre for Curriculum Research and Development (1999:6) further points out that the Deputy Director General Branch revealed in an interview that the school improvement model used by the Thousand Schools Project was limited in many respects. It firstly by-passed important organizational layers such as districts and circuits. Again, its multiplier effect and sustainability were questionable.

This study contends that while the focus on the school is an essential element of ensuring that teaching and learning become effective, it is crucial to focus, at the same time, on the district so that creating a balance between the school focus would address quality education in a holistic manner.

The districts, after consideration of the Thousand Schools Project intervention, were then targeted as modes of change and delivery. The reasons for this strategic focus on districts include the following:

- districts are closest to sites of learning and therefore have the potential to provide ongoing support for teaching and learning.
- districts can ensure policy sustainability
- resource mobilization at district level can be used to bring about benefits that have multiplier effects
- districts have potential to bring about a systemic change

Greater clarity is therefore needed to be provided on the role of districts. The resources need to be channeled towards districts and all projects targeting districts be based on similar philosophical understanding (National Centre for Curriculum Research and Development 1999:7).

The districts do indeed have the potential to impact on effective teaching and learning since their core business includes supervision, monitoring, evaluation and support to schools. The reasons for the focus on districts as outlined above are supported by this study.

Godden and Coombe (1996:7) indicate that the colloquium on local/district level governance in education held at Vereeniging, South Africa in June 1995 was for the interests of creating workable education administrations at the local level in South Africa. Quality, resources and decentralization of powers to the local level are crucial.

Africa. It also sought ways to encourage fresh creativity, professional initiative, and proactive leadership at local level.

Godden and Coombe (1996:7) further report that the greatest disparity in education in South Africa exists between different kinds of schools. Schools of varying quality are not in general separated into discrete geographical areas. Most districts have a variety of school types inherited from previous racial and ethnic dispensation, which range from well-endowed to utterly impoverished. Experience suggests that the logical place for redressing such disparities is within the local/district framework. The reason being that statistics on requirements of resources at school level are compiled by districts through the schools and also the district implements government policy.

One of the innovations introduced by the National Department of Education in response to the challenges posed by the new system and after lessons learnt from the new implementation of the school improvement model of delivery, was the introduction of the Education Policy Reserve Fund Programme (EPRF) in the 1998/99 financial year Bayona (2000:2).

The programme is an initiative that focuses on the system's problems in the provision of education. It seeks to improve the performance of schools which participate in the District Improvement Project (IDP). This project is one of the main themes of the Education Policy Reserve Fund. The other themes are Education Development (EMD), Teacher Development (TD), Quality Assurance (QA), the Culture of Learning, Teaching and Service (Colts), Learning Support Materials (LSM), Self Managing Schools (SMS), AND Further Education and Training (FET).

The themes covered by the Education Policy Reserve Fund Programme are a clear illustration and confirmation of the theme of this study, that effective teaching and learning results from effective service rendered by the district wherein management, quality, resources and decentralization of powers to the local level are crucial.

The Education Policy Reserve Fund Programme covers four levels of the Education system in the province. School level, district level regional level and the provincial level.

According to Bayona (2000:2) the following are the intended results of the Education Policy Reserve Fund Programme at different levels:

Intended results at school level

- well informed and responsible representative councils of learners (RCLs)
- functional School Government Bodies (SGBS) with capacity to govern
- competent and committed school management teams (SMTs)
- effective and efficient classroom education
- improved Grade 12 results through effective maintenance of the interim curriculum in selected subjects
- sound administration and financial systems
- skilled and effective administrators
- safe and supportive teaching and learning environment
- completion of learning site audits and reviews in ten schools per region

This study considers these intended results at school level to be comprehensive enough to can contribute towards converting schools into effective learning organizations through the creation of a healthy school environment by providing for stakeholder participation.

Intended results at district level

- managers skilled in administration, management and financial competencies (skills and application )

- officials having sound understanding of and capacity to implement government policies and legislation
- capable support and service staff to manage and monitor programmes
- professional and administration personnel skilled in the use of key government producers such as those used for procurement
- district managed resource centres established

The intended results of the Education Policy Reserve Fund Programme at district level cover issues like skills, understanding of policy, support, and resource, which are pertinent for the district to offer support to schools which focus on effective teaching and learning.

Intended results at the provincial level

- improved management support to Policy Reserve project implementation

There are certain decision – making powers which are only centred at provincial level. For the district to offer support to schools in an efficient manner, the support of the province is crucial so that implementation may unfold smoothly without delays caused by factors beyond the authority of the district.

This study concurs with Bayona (2000:3) when he says that for the outcomes of the Education Policy Reserve Fund Programme to be realized, especially at the district and school levels, the District Improvement Project (DIP) plays a significant role. This Project attempts to tackle the problems in the system by developing capacity at district and circuit levels to enable them to provide effective support to schools in their administrative spheres of influence. The District Improvement Project is based on the assumption that the education system enables districts to provide maximum support to schools and can be used as locus of systemic education change.

Another project in the effort of ensuring that the education district offers support to schools was the Imbewu Project (National Centre for Curriculum Research and Development 1999:5).

The Imbewu Project was the first to be implemented through districts working and gives important insight into working with districts as nodes of change and delivery. It is the largest of all district projects supported financially and with expertise by an international donor.

The number of districts it covers is comparable to those targeted by the District Improvement Project. It covered twenty-eight of the forty-one districts in the Eastern Cape, while the District Improvement Project covered more than thirty districts spread across the nine provinces.

The number of districts and the scope of the provinces that implemented the District Improvement Project illustrate the crucial nature of the role of district support services to schools to provide effective teaching and learning.

Godden and Coombe (1996:15) indicate that proposal of the Hunter Committee (Review Committee on School Organization, Governance and Funding) August 1995 and the Minister's draft White Paper which followed it in November 1995 which indicate that education decision making be entrenched at grassroots level, have apparently committed South Africa to a decentralized course in education.

The decentralized course in education points to the level of the district where powers and authority are needed to take decisions that affect teaching and learning. This study supports the decentralization of some power to the district level so that delivery of services may not be hampered by the bureaucratic structures that existed in education prior 1994 and even at present.

## 1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM curriculum at school level;

The Department of Education at the National level introduced the Education Policy Reserve Fund Programme (EPRFP) in the year 1998. The District Improvement Project (DIP) became the vehicle through which the Education Policy Reserve Fund Programme (EPRFP) focussed on education districts. District Improvement Project (DIP) deals with problems in the system by developing capacity at district and circuit levels to enable the project provide effective support to schools under their administrative spheres of influence. An education district is considered to be in a strategic position to provide maximum support to schools and be used as a locus of systemic education change.

The major problem, examined by this study, was to establish the extent to which education districts in the Limpopo Province support effective teaching and learning at school level.

the problem and objectives of this study the researcher was guided by the following and similar questions:

The sub-problems focussed on establishing the following:

### 1.2.1 Questions about the background of key stakeholders:

- \* the background of key stakeholders in order to establish the calibre of people that are implementing the policy; ive and academic structures of an education district?
- \* the notion of the district support services and the awareness of stakeholders; schools?
- \* the practice in the existing support services within the district. in their core business?

## 1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THIS STUDY

### 1.3.1 Questions about the notion of district support services:

Specifically, the study set out to achieve the following objectives:

#### 1.3.1.1 What is an education district and which factors should be considered in

1.3.1 to establish through literature review the nature, role and functions of an

education district in supporting the curriculum at school level;

- 1.3.2 to conduct a field study to establish the extent to which educators and principals receive support from the district for effective teaching and learning;
- 1.3.3 to determine the kind of professional support services schools need in order to transform into effective teaching and learning organizations; and
- 1.3.4 on the basis of findings in 1.3.1 to 1.3.3 above, make recommendations on how districts may provide support to schools for effective teaching and learning.

## 1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In addressing the problem and objectives of this study the researcher was guided by the following and similar questions:

### 1.4.1 Questions about the background of key stakeholders:

- 1.4.1.1 What are the administrative and academic structures of an education district?
- 1.4.1.2 What are the qualifications of district personnel and the staff at the schools?
- 1.4.1.3 How experienced are the district staff and school staff in their core business?

### 1.4.2 Questions about the notion of district support services:

- 1.4.2.1 What is an education district and which factors should be considered in determining a manageable district?

- 1.4.2.2 What sort of services should an education district give to schools?
- 1.4.2.3 What should be the link between an education district and other education levels?

### **1.4.3 Questions regarding support services within Sekgosese Education District:**

- 1.4.3.1 What are the constraints of an education district?
- 1.4.3.2 In which ways might Sekgosese Education District, in particular, and other districts in general, improve support services to schools?

## **1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The value of this study lies in the fact that districts have now been identified by the National Education Ministry to be geographically and organizationally close to schools more than any other level in the education system. The Policy Reserve Fund Programme was established to help districts develop and bring about innovatory improvements in order to participate in the new system of education, which is outcomes based.

This study, therefore, will contribute to this field of knowledge by analysing the notion of district support services to schools from the perspective of disadvantaged rural communities. Guidelines and recommendations are also provided as to the extent to which the education district can be made to offer service in this setting.

Education authorities at district, regional, provincial and national levels should find the results of this study useful for curriculum implementation, since at present, solutions

are constantly being sought concerning how best to produce quality education at school level through the support of the district.

Finally, this study will contribute to research on district support services by providing the relevant literature and recommendations for further studies.

In addition, postgraduate students in Curriculum Studies, Teacher Education and Educational Management and other educational researchers in Non Governmental Organisations (NGO's) and Government Departments should find this study a starting point for some of the issues facing education districts and schools, especially in rural areas.

## 1.6 DELIMITATION AND LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY

The specific area of this study was the Sekgosese District under the jurisdiction of the Limpopo Department of Education.

The sample was limited to educators, principals attached to schools in the said district, together with officers at circuit and district level.

Although there were some limitations - questionnaires not returned when expected; some questionnaires misplaced - the researcher dealt with these limitations by sending reminders to the respondents, replacing the misplaced/lost ones and also offering extension of deadlines until all the questionnaires were received. Naturally these problems meant extra costs as well as being time consuming.

## 1.7 CLARIFICATION OF TERMS

**Education District:** For the purpose of this study an education district refers to a cluster of schools made up of learners, educators and managers within a given

geographical area, with a district office as its administrative and professional support unit. It also includes school communities, educator unions and other bodies impacting on teaching and learning within the defined geographical area. All these components are supposed to be inter-connected and inter-dependent (National Centre for Curriculum Research and development 1999:5).

**Curriculum 2005:** is the education policy for South Africa that calls for an education that is learner-centred and outcomes-based. Learner-centred education means choosing content, contexts and learning approaches that are responsive to learners' interests, purposes, backgrounds and experiences. (Department of Education 1996:16)

#### 1.2 RESEARCH LAYOUT

**Education Policy Reserve Fund Programme (EPRFP):** is an initiative introduced by the National Department of Education that focuses on problems in the provision of education. It seeks to improve the performance of schools which participate in the District Improvement Project (DIP). The District Improvement Project (DIP) is one of the main themes of Education Policy Reserve Fund Programme (National Centre for Curriculum Research and Development, 1999:5).

**The School Governing Body (SGB):** refers to the structure for school governance constituted in accordance with the South African Schools Act who have certain functions to execute. They are, amongst others, given the responsibility to develop their own policies in specific areas. These policies include a School Governing Body (SGB) constitution; a mission statement; an admission policy; a language policy; a religious policy and a code of conduct for learners ( Department of Education 1996:36).

**National Policy:** In 1998 the Department of Education established the Education Policy Reserve Fund Programme aimed at addressing the "basic functionality and

performance of the system” (National Centre for Curriculum Research and Development, 1999:3).

**District Support Service:** Ruperti (1996:112): defines Support Service” as “the organized outside help given to individual schools so that their function may run smoothly. This support is given to schools by the district.

**Effective Teaching and Learning:** Learning in its full complexity involves the creation of meaning in a larger culture, and the teacher as vicar of the culture at large (Bruner 1996) as quoted by Henning (1999:71).

## 1.8 RESEARCH LAYOUT

Chapter one focuses on the National Policy on district support services based on the understanding that an education district is in a strategic position to provide maximum support to schools. The background, problem, objectives, research questions, significance, delimitation and terms used in relation to the National Policy are dealt with.

Chapter two covers the different views on district support services in relation to the nature and the role of an education district. Factors that impact on district support services, such as labour saving devices, curriculum decision making and power and authority are dealt with.

Chapter three focuses on the population, sample and sampling procedure, instrument, data collection and analysis procedures. The qualitative approach was engaged due to the nature of the data collected and analysed.

Chapter four gives an indepth analysis and interpretation of the data collected. The focus was on the personal background of respondents, the nature and role of an

education district together with constraints of the education district covered by the sampling.

## CHAPTER 2

Chapter five offers the summary, conclusion and recommendations relating to the principles, objectives of district support services and future studies.

The research design followed was quantitative in nature. The respondents were requested to complete a questionnaire for the collection of data.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

The current reconstruction of the South African schooling system has entailed a variety of government policy statements, "White Papers", task-team reports, national and provincial laws, and developments in the national curriculum.

Central to the analysis in this chapter is the focus on the district as an integral part of society which is affected by its immediate and broader social, political, economic context. Similarly, schools can and must impact on their contexts and play a vital role in contributing towards the development of society.

The education districts therefore, need to hold this educational purpose close as they endeavour to begin the process of transformation and development in South African schools. From the fractured and frustrating past in the South African Education System, much of this purpose and hope has been eroded. Part of the challenge of school district offices is the reconstruction and development and to build a sense of dignity and professional pride of educators, and a sense of future opportunities for all learners. This study argues that if the locus of change and appropriate management is really shifted to the school districts, and educators are afforded both responsibility and support for their important work there is the potential to regain what has been lost for decades.

The current state of knowledge and issues on district support services centre around many challenges faced by the education sector and the need for legislation and clarity

of the nature of support to schools. In this chapter the study examines the nature of district support services with specific reference to the education system in South Africa. This chapter serves as a framework and facilitates an understanding of the situation especially in rural areas, with regard to educational support services. The literature review covers major aspects which impact on support services for the entire school development: resources and resource management, finance and administration.

This chapter examines the provisioning elements of schools as a learning organization, in some detail, looking particularly at how they relate to other aspects of school development. All avenues of school development are addressed with the understanding that every supporting service accomplishes a specific task in the interest of educative teaching. The argument here is that a system of support services must inevitably pursue the establishment of a school and its subsequent development into an entire education system.

Finally, the chapter stresses that support services are essential, if provisioning of educational resources at school level is to be made for the divergent abilities and interests of all learners as well as for the fulfillment of a country's needs.

## **2.2 THE NATURE AND ROLE OF AN EDUCATION DISTRICT**

### **2.2.1 THE NATURE OF AN EDUCATION DISTRICT**

Basically, the district is understood as more than an implementer of national and provincial policies, it also shapes policy to suit its context through a process of interpretation and mediation. District development has become a major point of discussion in our new education dispensation because of its proximity at the confluence of streams in the education sector.

Ruperti (1996:112) defines 'support services' as "the organized outside help given to individual schools so that their function may run smoothly". Educative teaching in schools need to be supported and made rich by support services in which the latest methods of teaching and learning are in use. Educators should be made advanced in new developments in education by the support they receive from the district. The focus in doing so lies in reaching the required educative levels and also offering educational development the support it deserves.

During the past few years there has been increasing momentum in South Africa, as in many other education systems, towards developing education initiatives that focus on districts or local education agencies. Education district offices are often the major and sometimes the primary source of external assistance received by schools. Notwithstanding their importance, many district offices lack the capacity, resources and systems to provide the kind of services that are required by schools. The concept of district development has come from two fundamental changes: the decentralisation of school governance and demands for higher learner achievement. The current situation facing schools and districts is one of the greater central accountability and control alongside increased demands on schools to be self-managing and ultimately self-reliant, according to this study.

In short, supporting services are essentially geared to enhance the curricula and those aspects that provide skills and professional knowledge. Schools are primarily dependent on the government for the provision of resources. The school district for the provincial departments is the next focal point of concern with the shift from concerns about policy development to concerns about fast tracking service delivery.

The Department of National Education has identified districts as strategic modes of education service delivery. To legitimize the role of districts and develop a discourse of district development, ten district conferences - one national and nine provincial - were held during the years 1999 and 2000.

Studies conducted by the National Centre for Curriculum Research and Development (2000:4) found education districts in South Africa to be characterized by varying capacities. These studies also revealed that the nationally agreed upon roles, functions, powers and authority for District Offices were still to be defined. Many aspects of the system can be described as having a serious crisis in leadership, governance, management and administration.

The notable absence of nationally defined roles and functions of Districts, including job descriptions, have a bearing on the way district offices execute their business (National Centre for Curriculum Research and Development 2000:4).

The meaning and nature of district support services in the South African context, today, is rooted within the country's historical background. The social, economic and demographic factors have also influenced the character of the South African education system, at district level.

The aim of the educational support service, for this study, is to place every learner in the type of education, school or training centre best suited for his/her individual needs. It should always be born in mind that the particular mandate that a school has to fulfill is within the parameters of ensuring the best interests of every individual learner. Just like all other services, educational support services remain essential in providing school curriculum. The services are directly involved in providing the necessary policies which institutions are expected to fulfill. Lack of adequate resources and administrative support can subtly affect and undermine the morale of educators and learners.

The restructuring of schools concerns a change in the conditions of teaching and learning, it also involves taking up the challenge of changing the conditions of leadership. The effective development and maintenance of new structures and

procedures within the school are also dependent on appropriate resource and financial management and effective administration (Murphy 1993:23).

This implies that the district office must perceive itself, not only as an initiator of strategic plans but also as a service provider whose primary function must be to ensure that individual schools possess what they need to become successful.

The role of the district office is that of a coordinator, enabler and facilitator, focusing on serving and assisting schools and also targeting those that experience difficulties for special attention.

This study maintains that the element of support services is closely linked to all other comprehensive or holistic approaches to development. First, a school needs to identify what resources it needs. This relates not only to the strategic planning process specifically, but also to the understanding of the resources that are required to achieve the aims of the curriculum.

Once the resources have been identified, they need to be accessed by the entire role players and stakeholders within the school, in accordance with the specific needs of each sector of the school.

This entails obtaining information about what the school is entitled to obtain from the Department of Education which is responsible for supplying these services. The process also enhances the Department's responsibility for the provision of other materials: human resources and financial administration. This could involve administrative procedures and a lengthy process of consultation.

It is necessary that an education district's leadership be encouraged to develop a sense of responsibility, so that all stakeholders may look beyond their schools to aspire for great heights. Elmore, Fuhman and Belcher (2001: 67-72) argue that

support or capacity-building only works in conjunction with accountability, merely providing additional resources or capacity does not alter the underlying culture of the organisations, as it merely adjusts to or accommodates external threats.

Management of the resources entails having an effective stock-taking, inventory-keeping and regular auditing that enable the management and administrative bodies to keep in touch with what is available in the school.

Taylor (2001:217-225) also supports the issue of accountability as being crucial in transforming education with the view to improve district projects through restructuring, increasing and improving training and infrastructure. This includes developing awareness and skills in resource and financial management and administration. Supportor capacity building only succeeds in conjunction with accountability

This is important for the purpose of ensuring that the schools are adequately resourced at any given time by improving in teachers' practice and learner achievement which requires more than additional resources.

In the last thirty years, school change models that have been implemented in a number of countries internationally did not bring about the envisaged systematic change in education. It is systemic reform that targets districts that holds "promise for successful change by means of a new wave of educational reform" (Sashkin and Egermeier 1992:1).

According to the National Centre for Curriculum Research and Development (1999:7) the theory of systemic education change is based on long commitment to fundamental, systemic change in education that recognises the inter-relatedness of all parts of the education system.

This study argues that district support services, must inevitably pursue the establishment of a school and its subsequent development into an entire education system.

The change that focuses on the education system needs to pervade all levels of the education system. It means that the existing adversarial relationship must be changed into cooperative relationships. Here we think of relationships between educators and learners, educators and administrators, and educators and parents. Bureaucratic organization should be replaced by team organization, autocratic leadership by shared leadership, centralized controlled by autonomy with accountability, compliance by initiative, and representative democracy by participative democracy.

The education districts need to focus on offering support to schools in such a way as to achieve relationships that will enable schools to deliver effective teaching and learning. It is also crucial that while the districts require autonomy in their support to schools, they always remain accountable.

The public needs to understand that the implementation of systemic reform which requires visionary leadership and long term perspectives on the part of policy-makers is not another short term strategy, but the strategy for combining short term strategy of reform into a long term improvement effort. This is a strategy for development coherence, collegiality and direction in the restructuring process.

The argument in this study is that an education district is a component of the education system and it is composed of schools and communities and has essential elements that can effectively deliver and provide ongoing support to schools in their high quality teaching and learning responsibilities.

Proponents of school improvement modules argue for extreme decentralization, while advocates of district improvement models argue for a balance between centralization

and decentralization. Centralized and Decentralized (school-based or site-based) approaches do not work (National Centre for Curriculum Research and development 1999:7).

The decentralized approaches do not work because individual schools lack the capacity to manage change; especially because they cannot control outside factors such as support, resources and national policy. The centralized approaches do not work because they attempt to standardize curriculum and performance in a centralized, ineffective way.

This study advocates for a balance between centralization and decentralization on the basis that schools frequently get directives from the districts and circuit offices relating to policy and curriculum issues which may not be congruent with the schools' plans and that way may destabilize the planned implementation of change. While in centralized authority the implementation plans of change from the province may also not be aligned to those of the district and as such may result in time consuming adjustments of programmes to accommodate the provincial directive at the expense of the envisaged support of the district to schools.

The National Centre for Curriculum Research and Development (1999:8) points out the following major obstacles to school-based models:

- inadequate time, training and technical assistance
- difficulties of stimulating consideration and adaptation of inconvenient changes
- unresolved issues involving administrative leadership on the one hand and enhanced power among other participant on the other
- constraints on teacher participation in decision making
- reluctance of administrators at all levels to give up traditional prerogatives
- restrictions imposed by regulations and by contracts and agreements with educator organizations

manager has become more of a negotiator, goal-setter and coordinator of diverse  
This study concurs with the assertion that the school will experience difficulties to become the centre of change if it is left on its own. A balance between centralization and decentralization is not only desirable, but also crucial to systemic change. mediator of conflicts. Some of which took major systemic proportions affecting the entire  
Systemic education change should be a negotiated process in order to achieve the balance between centralization and decentralization of authority. A negotiated process has the potential to address the almost insolvable school/district balance that represents an inherent dilemma between autonomy and accountability, variation and consistency. An effective district manager/official should negotiate and monitor this relationship with schools continually in an attempt to stay within an acceptable space or mutual influence. curriculum professional development and instructions were rarely addressed in any meaningful way.

### **2.2.2. THE ROLE OF AN EDUCATION DISTRICT**

This study strongly contends that for the district to be able to offer support to schools  
The duties of the district officials are presumed to be instructional, meaning, educator of educators. It has been found that only managerial and political (negotiator) duties dominate district officers' work. Very few have managed to elevate instructional leadership using managerial and political duties in its service, according to the study conducted by the National Centre for Curriculum Research and Development (1999:11). (1999:11) argues that:

It has also been found that district officers spent less than 7% in discussion with educators while 70% was spent in discussion with school trustees, central office staff members and administrators. acceptance of too many innovations".

In the last twenty years, diverse interest and groups have grown and predominate in districts. Teacher Unions, community and other special interest groups have become more politically active. Communities have become more heterogeneous. The district

manager has become more of a negotiator, goal-setter and coordinator of diverse interests and a person who must learn to lead and involve teams of specialists.

It has again been found that the role of district managers was largely that of mediator of conflicts. Some of which took major systemic proportions affecting the entire district whereas others were minor. There were rarely days when the district manager was not called to make a decision on conflicts. This happened irrespective of the person involved.

What is revealing is the frequency with which curricular issues occupied districts. They appeared to be more involved in politics, school boards, educator union, stress and conflict. As a result curriculum professional development and instructions were rarely addressed in any meaning way.

This study strongly contends that for the district to be able to offer support to schools for effective teaching and learning to take place, the nature, roles and functions of district officers need a drastic change from the occupation illustrated above where the bulk of the time is focused on issues not relating to curriculum, professional development and instruction.

Fullan (1991:197) argues that:

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“The greatest problem faced by school districts is not resistant to innovation, but the fragmentation, overload and incoherence resulting from the uncritical and uncoordinated acceptance of too many innovations”.

A district therefore needs to be viewed as a whole, with coherent and coordinated activities. This is very crucial in order that the district can focus on support to the schools instead of operating on an ad hoc basis.

Districts that are considered to be effective are those in which district managers involved principals in developing district goals or policies and determining their schools' teaching needs. These districts make it clear that principals become continuous learners and, through their leadership, create conditions for teachers to be learners

An effective district should be characterised by involving principals in formulating the district mission and determining school needs; meaning participative democracy; cooperative relationship, team organization, autonomy with accountability and networking. What is actually needed is to work and think through a process of systemic education change that is really practicable.

Districts also perform fund-raising functions. They identify major areas of need and design programmes for these areas and also seek funding for these programmes. The district officials need to use aggressive funding methods. The process of reviewing and writing grant proposals are part of every district official's responsibility. The programme should fit into the vision and mission of the district National Centre for Curriculum Research and Development (1999:12).

According to Fullan (1991:198) district officials must lead multiple-school innovations that;

- test out the need and priority of the change
- determine the potential appropriateness of the particular innovation for addressing the need
- clarify, support and insist on the role of principals and other administrators as central to implementation
- ensure that direct implementation support is provided in the form of available quality material, in-service training, one-to-one technical help and opportunity for peer integration
- allow for redefinition and adaptation of innovation

- communication with and maintain the support of parents and the school board
- set up an information gathering system to monitor and correct implementation problems, and
- have realistic time perspectives

This is precisely what effective districts do or should do. Proper planning will result in these objectives. The district manager's conceptual understanding of the organizational dynamics and processes of change represent generative sources of ideas.

District administrators are critical sources of initiating innovation. Even when the source of change is elsewhere in the system, a determining factor is how district officials will take to the change.

Effective administrators are those who constantly work on communication because problems of communication are natural and inevitable. Frequent personal interaction is the key to implementation. The district administrator sets the pace and tone concerning the climate of communication.

According to Smith, O'Day and Fuhrman (1994:117), the responsibility of districts has been found to be the provision of a supportive environment for the school. This includes examining aspects of their operations such as practices that might inhibit systemic education change. They may also deem it appropriate to establish what they term "long - range goals for improvements in student achievements and other areas that embellish state goals".

District operations need to be changed for the provision of support required by schools to achieve their goals. Standardization of practices includes empowering principals to execute functions that will facilitate the change process.

In District Projects that are institutionalized, district officials are able to pay early and continuing attention to how the programme could be incorporated into the budget with respect to personnel and other support needs

According to Henning (1999:69) district officials should be carrying the key functions of policy, planning (motivation) organizing, providing, maintaining, monitoring, evaluating and reporting.

By carrying out functions relating to provision and monitoring functions the district officials will be enabling teaching and learning in the schools to achieve the desired goal of effectiveness.

According to Henning (1999:70), if you want to maintain the school as the site of educational improvement, and involve educators in the process, policy makers at district level need to learn what values, interests and knowledge of the schools are in which they work in order to develop a clear understanding of what people want.

In the South African context very few districts have been able to tackle recent reforms in an integrated manner. District officials need to acquire the knowledge to be effective in their work. They also need the will to act on this knowledge.

District officials need to tap into the dominant metaphors at each school and examine the role that teachers can play. According to Bruner (1996) as quoted by Henning (1999:71) no educational reform can be successful without the educator being prepared to participate and aid.

The National Centre for Curriculum Research and Development (1999:28) points that office-based educators such as district officials do not have formal job descriptions. There are no procurement provisioning and budgetary control functions at district

level. Orders and requisitions are sent to the regional or provincial office for processing and approval.

The following factors have an impact on the support that the district offers to The absence of budgetary control functions at district level may likely result in the district finding it very difficult to support schools effectively. This study advocates for decentralization of some of the budgetary functions to the district. DEVICES

Curriculum delivery is never overtly viewed as a major management responsibility of the district office. The impression existing is that Curriculum 2005 by-passed district offices in its implementation. It becomes very clear based on considering the practical realities prevailing that change is inevitable at district level in order that quality education may be realized.

programmes such as computer, science subjects and technology. (Bayona, 2000:75)

This study maintains that lack of electricity and labour saving devices in the district office is a very serious hurdle towards support by the district to schools. Practical subjects would require improvisation from both the curriculum adviser who has to support the school and the school itself when conducting experiments without a laboratory.

Bayona(2000:76) maintains that even against the background of poverty, schools and the district office may, through self-help programmes, dedication and cooperation, achieve phenomenal success. In principle and practice such programmes far outweigh the inconveniences of lack of physical facilities.

Despite poor and dilapidated classrooms; poor or shortage of transport facilities and shortage of school libraries this study supports the idea of self-help programmes, which are in reality, what the rural schools and districts are surviving on and despite shortages they still produce reasonable results.

## 2.3 FACTORS WHICH INFLUENCE DISTRICT SUPPORT SERVICES

The following factors have an impact on the support that the district offers to schools:

### 2.3.1. EDUCATION SUPPORT SERVICES AND LABOUR SAVING DEVICES

Teaching and learning cannot be successfully carried out without certain basic services such as the availability and use of electricity, laboratories, water supply, toilet facilities, transport facilities, stationery, security and necessary knowledge and skills to handle teaching and learning activities. In this modern age, for example, electricity opens doors for schools' programmes such as computer, science subjects and technology. (Bayona, 2000:75).

This study maintains that lack of electricity and labour saving devices in the district office is a very serious hurdle towards support by the district to schools. Practical subjects would require improvisation from both the curriculum adviser who has to support the school and the school itself when conducting experiments without a laboratory.

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Despite poor and dilapidated classrooms; poor or shortage of transport facilities and shortage of school libraries this study supports the idea of self-help programmes, which are in reality, what the rural schools and districts are surviving on and despite shortages they still produce reasonable results.

### 2.3.2 PARTICIPATION IN CURRICULUM DECISION MAKING AND DEVELOPMENT

Hardly any formal and regular curriculum decision-making and development structures in schools exist, most educators and principals are not empowered in this field. School-Based Curriculum Development Facilitating Structures (Teams) need to be established in schools; and sustainable short-term and long-term training, development and decision-making programmes need to be carried out (Bayona, 2000:77).

This study contends there is a need for educators to be encouraged to participate actively in curriculum decision-making in their schools and other levels of curriculum development. This will promote their own ownership and control of the school curriculum. The view-points of educators in planning and effecting the school curriculum is a prerequisite for effective teaching and learning. There is also a need for principals and educators to be trained in basic principles of curriculum development, and to create suitable platforms in which relevant curriculum topics, issues and decisions can be discussed at an operational level.

### 2.3.3 MANAGEMENT OF STAFF AFFAIRS

This study finds the present district arrangement where power to manage staff affairs is centred in the region and provincial offices creating delays and other difficulties in solving staff problems in the district. And thus settles for decentralization of some powers to the district level.

The audit conducted by Bayona (2000:77) recommends the decentralization of the following staff services to the district offices:

- recommendations by school governing bodies to appoint educators be sent directly to district office for processing

- the district office should be responsible for analyzing situations related to transfers of educators, and make decisions promptly
- applications for promotions and leave be located in the district office
- labour officers to be located at district office to speed up the resolution of labour conflicts and problems

#### 2.3.4 DISTRICT BUDGET

The top-down characteristics of district budgeting and financial control system makes the district too dependent on the regional and provincial offices to make operational decisions related to finances. There is a need for the control of the district budget to be located in the district office. The entire district budget should be developed from within, in a bottom-up process, starting from schools to circuits and district office. (Bayona, 2000:78).

Allowing the district to have the control of the budget is an indispensable measure required to enable the district to support schools timeously and relevantly. This could be coupled with training of district personnel, school principals, educators and School Governing Bodies in budgeting and finance management. The skills to establish effective budgeting and internal auditing systems within their institutions will also be required.

#### 2.3.5 STRUCTURAL RELATIONSHIPS

The quality of the school-district relationship is affected by the degree of frequent interactions and communication, mutual coordination and influence, some shared goals and objectives and the level of bureaucratization, the presence of extensive rules and regulations governing relationships. (National Centre for Curriculum Research and Development 1999:14).

High engagement and low bureaucracy present the only positive district context. The picture is one of co-management, coordination and joint planning enhanced through the development of consensus between staff members at all levels about desired goals for education. Schools with this district profile experience successful school improvement projects.

### 2.3.6 COORDINATION AND COMMUNICATION

Coordination and communication are considered a problem that needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency. District officials indicate that about 97% of schools in the majority of rural districts do not have telephones.

Once it is not possible for the district to communicate with schools, it results in the hampering of coordination of activities that are geared to benefit schools that are the focus of change into effective teaching and learning organizations.

### 2.3.7 POWER AND AUTHORITY

The Medium Term Expenditure Framework of 1997 recognised that the system of education in South Africa is currently over-centralised with consequent cost escalation and managerial clumsiness.

### 2.3.8 CONCEPTIONS

The report recommends an improved, decentralized equity-with-efficiency system with highly enhanced accountability and a willingness to punish offenders. But injection of resources (material and human) without devolving relevant decision-making powers and functions to districts will contribute little systemic change.

Districts need powers and functions devolved to them in order that they can use the position of being closest to the schools to help transform schools into learning organizations. The researcher considers devolvement of powers to districts as

indispensable for service. To address problems facing education districts, it is considered crucial that district offices be restructured. The restructuring could include aspects such as:

- devolving certain decision-making powers and functions such as handling the budget coupled with the necessary training
- establishing the vision of the district
- establishing centres of learning that are well managed
- dedicated provisioning, finance and administrative capacity, and
- addressing structural coherence

The fact that schools have been given the authority by the South African Schools Act, districts seem to be disempowered in the running of schools and supporting teaching and learning in schools. The challenge is to develop a coherent change programme with authority and resources to effect transformation and change at district level. (National Centre for Curriculum Research and Development 1999:32).

For the district to offer support to schools, some of the essential elements required include good leadership, the adequate supply of resources and empowerment of district personnel.

## 2.3.10 RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

### 2.3.8 CONCEPTIONS

The researcher contends that the elements of support services are closely linked to all. What is urgently needed is the transformation of subjective realities in the districts. The District Improvement Project is understood differently by different players.

This study maintains that real change requires more explicit and understood concept of the project if it is to achieve the intended objectives.

### 2.3.9 DISTRICT PERFORMANCE

It is common knowledge that Grade 12 (formerly Standard 10 or Matric) is the key tool used to measure performance of a district. This was the case with the selection of districts implementing the District Improvement Project and other district projects. In order to develop a measurement of district performance, district roles and functions need to be clearly spelled out and based on similar philosophical underpinnings.

It is through the availability of defined roles and functions that districts will manage to offer support activities to schools that would also be knowledgeable about what the district expects them to do.

According to the National Centre for Curriculum Research and Development (1999:31), fixing systemic problems takes time, and thus concerted effort to bring about change is required. This means all parts of the system working together at once. But the question is how the performance of districts will be measured. No solution can be imposed. The players need to negotiate a measurement instrument that will be accepted by all. The challenge is to link such an instrument to learner performance and attainment.

### 2.3.10 RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

The researcher contends that the elements of support services are closely linked to all other components of the school as a learning organization and, therefore, needs to be developed within the context of a comprehensive or holistic picture as they need to be accessed by the entire role players and stakeholders within the school. This entails obtaining information about what the school is entitled to obtain from the Department of Education.

This is important for the purposes of ensuring that schools are adequately resourced at any given time, and are able to control possible losses. Maintenance of school facilities and other resources is also an area in which students, educators, parents and other community members play a central role.

De Clereg (1999:108-112) argues that it is important for school districts to familiarise themselves with policy documents in order to identify gaps between the old and new and to provide the necessary support in the form of guidelines where the school district has the capacity to do so. This may lead to greater ownership and commitment through participatory decision-making process. The ability of school districts to manage the processes of performance and management implementation seems to be exacerbated by lack of power, authority and clarity or role in managing policy implementation.

According to Ramusi (1993:21), it is clear that budgetary constraints constitute one of the most critical issues of educational provisioning and planning. The National Education Department needs to finance provinces through bilateral partnerships. Examples would include the use of human, physical and financial resources in the training operations of institutions by concentrating on those areas or activities where the most urgent need can be served, or where the highest quality products and services can be attained.

This study maintains that the increasing need for resource-based learning methods and mechanisms to meet different and divergent needs of learners in a rapidly changing educational situation, is a cause for concern, especially at district level in schools.

The new educational dispensation has raised legitimate expectations in the communities which have rapid growth in learner enrolments, a wide spread

phenomenon in South Africa. Yet district offices have had no corresponding increase in the public resources allocated to formal education (Ramusi1995:20).

Demand for multi-talented, reskilling and continuing education has also changed the profile of those participating in formal education. These changes have, inter alia, created and culminated into far-reaching resource management of crisis situations at school level in the view of the researcher.

Against this background, the proposed study argues that South Africa's progress towards a well-balanced schooling system will be impeded unless provisioning policies are directed at rectifying grossly distorted allocation inequalities. It is clear that if South Africa is to compete educationally on the world stage, it will need increasing numbers of skilled people to strengthen its economy. The facilitation of this process may be realized in relation to its human resource development needs. Support services at district level should increase radically within the framework of a national policy of planned and responsible growth of the entire education programme which should be linked to capacity, the availability of resources, the enhancement of quality and the broad human resource needs of the country Ramusi (1993:29).

The challenge, in the researcher's view, to formal education system, and the schools in particular, is to increase access of learners of all ages to resources and to make success a reality by improving the quality of learning and teaching.

Consideration must therefore be given within the district to provisioning of all schools, many of which lack resources for learning and studying in a variety of circumstances. Basically, learner support is largely lacking or inadequate and may be provided through collaboration, through large national or provincial consortia using existing under-utilized infrastructure. According to Hargreaves (1998:73), one of the reasons why educational change is difficult to achieve is that the change is poorly resourced or

the resources are withdrawn once the first phase of innovation is over. The result is that the change is built on the backs of educators, who constantly need support.

This study further argues that for district support to be effective the Department of National Education must establish a framework for cost effectiveness and appropriate study levels for district offices. In addition, the Department should set up an organizational and financial framework for the collaboration of service providers to supply course materials and classroom support to educators and learners alike, at all levels of learning.

The implementation efforts within the education system fail because educators are not being trained in the new skills required to bring about the desired change. Schools should take cognisance of the fact that educator training and development demonstrate a commitment and support on the part of the district. It is critical therefore, for the Provincial Department to invest time and resources on professional development and opportunities for collaboration. Educator training and development should form an integral part of the policy implementation process. These actions should be taken to develop positive attitudes, knowledge and skills in relation to implementing new performance management. In addition to the provision of educational resources, Fullan & Hargreaves (1996:176) maintain that interactive professionalism is the key to achieve redefinition of the role of educators and conditions within which they operate. It is therefore imperative for districts to create a desire in educators to change and sustain the change and motivate educators throughout the change.

The transformation and organisational development of the school in a changing educational environment is necessary. With inadequate human resources this change cannot materialize. The nature and quality of the education system and the total social, political and economic contexts within which the system of schooling operate should continue to experience changes. Transformation also includes the

fundamental need to support schools with human resources in order to eradicate inequalities in schools' resources and curriculum design. Hartshorne (1987:11) writes that another issue on human resource development concerns the vital need for a sincere commitment to a policy of support services including in-service education and training in order to rectify the history of neglect in these areas.

Ramusi (1995:11) argues that the modern school's management task team has already grown to such an extent and in so many diverse ways that it is imperative that an educational leader should take an interest in all aspects of educators' professional development.

Ramusi suggests that the district may consider the following in human resource management:

- \* group planning,
- \* mission and vision development,
- \* strategy development,
- \* group dynamics,
- \* group bonding/team building,
- \* conflict resolution,
- \* group problem-solving strategies,
- \* strategic retreats,
- \* meeting facilitation, and
- \* communication strategies.

The researcher argues that these aspects of professional development will enhance, among others, principles and policy, management, financing systems, planning, curriculum development, guidance, special education, building services, person power, natural sciences in particular, technical education, educators' development, innovative

strategies, equal quality in education, legal aspects, technology and the culture of learning and teaching.

and strategic attention to be give to support services and a training policy to be entrenched within the legislation for support services to create a

The researcher contends that a suitable view for district support to schools for effective teaching and learning, is the one that will involve all participants when decisions relating to the role to be played by each level, the resources that are needed for each level to be functional, are taken.

which will include priority targets, budget-time scale and implementation strategies. For teaching to take place

Lemmer and Bandehnorst (1997:178) have identified an additional organisational reality that effective schools are characterised by a culture of co-operation and collaboration in which all stakeholders within the school share a commitment to work together to develop the institutional learning climate. In effective schools, educators are typically involved in participatory decision-making processes which play important roles in effective schools concept. In the final analysis it is learners who benefit academically, wherein educators share ideas on teaching methods, collaborate in activities and assist one another in their professional practice and development.

out to sustainable growth. Developing human resource capabilities, especially through

Such a view attempts to create an environment wherein opportunities are seen and grasped as the bedrock upon which education must be developed. The view should also be sensitive to the contexts within which the role players operate and also consider the impact of social and economic factors on the successful implementation of support.

#### THE ROLE OF THE PRINCIPAL

The study maintains that the school's capacity to manage its resources, including finances, needs to be developed. This necessarily entails that staff development programmes include this important area for those who need to pursue studies and upgrade their qualifications. This should include the training of administrative staff who should be provided with any necessary development and support to ensure that they can fulfill their tasks optimally. Based on the current information gathered concerning district support services, it is critical for legislation to be put in place on

the role of districts in providing support at school level. Clearly, there is an urgent need for conscious and strategic attention to be given to support services and a training policy to be entrenched within the legislation for support services to create a conducive environment for education in South Africa.

Effective support service in education provisioning demands coherent district and national policies based on strategic planning which will include priority targets, budget-time scale and implementation strategies. For teaching to take place effectively, within the present dispensation, support services are but a compelling prerequisite. The context of district service will need to be reconstructed upon capacity-building of the entire infrastructure and institutions, both rural and urban, in the view of the researcher.

Educational management and installation of sound macro-economic policies are of vital importance in the district. This study holds the view that while several attempts are being considered to improve education at national level, there is no short cut to sustainable growth. Developing human resource capabilities, especially through education, is vital if the district level has to produce capable and competent skilled learners. A holistic approach will be needed to deal with poor or lack of educational resources.

### 2.3.11 THE ROLE OF THE PRINCIPAL

Murphy (1993:25) argues that if the relationship between the district office and the school is the key element of change in the school-based management strategy, the relationship that needs most change in the teacher empowerment strategy is that between the principal and the educators. The continuous interaction creates a context of mutual communication between the district office and external environment. The external environment consists of the socio-political and, legal and economic setting.

Principals are often referred to as “administrators” because their primary management tasks are to ensure that the school runs well. Moreover, to respond effectively to the demands of a fast changing and complex leadership style, the principal must engage in continuous generative learning

The principal must become the means of restructuring efforts by accepting additional responsibility and accountability on behalf of the school and delegating some responsibilities to middle managers for the facilitation of the district’s roles.

The principal is thus charged with a host of responsibilities as the manager within the school. The current principals cannot afford to manage the school without proper training in management. There is a need for principals to attend courses on diverse managerial tasks tied to the delivery of educational services in order to continuously be conscious and connect with the external environment.

The principal will have to move closer to the staff to ensure that they become mediators of shared decision-making and governance, a shift, which will dramatically highlight the importance of participatory leadership and administration together with inter-personal relationships.

Furthermore the principals should always ensure that the school resources such as the building facilities, furniture, textbooks, machinery and other equipment are kept in good condition and that the necessary records and inventories are kept. These records should be regularly checked, where possible, monthly, in order to make available the school resources that are run short of, where applicable, in the view of the researcher.

According to Davidoff and Lazarus (1997:29), the human resource aspect of a school’s life involves issues concerning members of the staff, such as educators and non-

teaching staff. The principal is therefore expected to consider three basic aspects that concern the human elements at the school level. These include:

- \* human resource development,
- \* informal, interpersonal relations, and
- \* conditions of employment.

Townsend (1994:94) suggests that the principal as the chief executive officer of the school, is responsible for the processes that will bring about the development of an appropriate school policy, utilizing the best information and best methods of development at the school's disposal, and the staff are responsible for ensuring that the policies are implemented in such a way as to facilitate the best possible success in the culture of learning and teaching in schools.

Bisschoff (1997:9) on the other hand highlights three elements of co-operative educational management, namely, co-operation; communication; and involvement. He signals a caution that it is only when principals perform their daily functions with a co-operative managerial model, as agents of change, that they will accomplish far-reaching changes.

### 2.3.12 THE ROLE OF EDUCATORS

Fullan and Hargreaves (1996:137) argue that school districts should create a desire in educators to change, and should sustain and innovate educators throughout the change. The authors maintain that interaction professionalism is the key to achieve this. In supporting educators the school district office must redefine the role of educators and conditions in which they work. More especially, this entails collaborative work ethics and organisation behavior. This study concurs with this thinking that in this instance, district offices can determine norms for continuous

improvement, discretionary judgment and greater personal mastery, and efficiency and satisfaction in the teaching profession.

Management system should be shared with educators, parents and other stakeholders, structures in the implementation of a performance school district change. Unless there are strategies for convincing district officials, principals of schools and educators that change is desirable, old traditions and beliefs will prevail and practitioners will fall short in fulfilling the promises and intentions that policy-makers envisioned in their carefully crafted policies. In this respect Fullan and Hargreaves (1996:4) state that improving teachers and schools is the key to improving pupils. If we look at conditions required for effective learning to take place, we cannot divorce this from teachers' role and needs in order to be able to provide quality learning

Educators also need administrative support to fulfill their educational task adequately. If these needs cannot be met, there is a strong likelihood that goals set will not be achieved.

The history of neglect, inferiority and inequality of basic resources have cost South Africa dearly, particularly in terms of the frustrations and wastage of human resources. According to Ramusi (1993:20), the funding crisis within the South African education system is exacerbated by the legacy of apartheid education policies. Given this legacy, the process of transformation in education must give serious attention to resource allocation and management in all institutions.

According to Murphy (1993:25), educators involved in transforming schools assume responsibilities, which should include the assumption of control over decisions and ownership of such decisions. This was historically not the case in the previous system of education. The new dispensation has brought new paradigm shifts, which has brought about the educator's right to participate meaningfully in formal decision-

making. This new involvement provides educators with a platform to express their views on those issues that affect their work and performance. Inherently, such involvement should have a positive impact on their attitudes and impact on the teaching and learning in schools. In addition to their professional qualifications the following resources or facilities are central to the effective functioning of the school - buildings, library, laboratory, sport field, furniture, materials, teaching and learning aids, overhead equipment, video, television equipment, computers - all these resources should have an impact on the district support services.

## 2.4 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the literature review has demonstrated that in order to deal with the full range of real issues that educators and principals and other staff members will inevitably encounter in creating effective schools within the South African context, education authorities should recognize the multiple dimensions of support services. Transformational leadership should perceive these dimensions and their implications for school effectiveness through a complex prism.

The focus of the study is on district support services with specific reference to the education system in South Africa, in particular the situation in rural areas. The Department of National Education has identified education districts as its modes of education service delivery.

The main issues that exist between policy and implementation, which have been identified in the literature review and served as the bases of the research questions study are summarised hereunder:

- \* resources, resource management, finances and administration are major aspects impacting on support services for the entire school development;

- \* the role of the district office is seen as that of co-ordinator, enabler and facilitator, focusing on serving and assisting schools and also targeting schools that experience difficulties;
- \* the new dispensation has brought about new paradigm shifts, which have brought about the educators' right to participate meaningfully in formal decision-making;
- \* support services are essential if provisioning of education at school level is to be made for divergent abilities and interest of all learners as well as for the fulfillment of a country's person power needs;
- \* learners, educators, parents and other community members should play a central role in the maintenance of school facilities and other resources;
- \* the principal should ensure that conditions for professional development of educators are built into the core processes of the school.
- \* the principal will have to move closer to the staff as mediator of shared decision-making and governance, a shift which dramatically highlights the importance of participatory leadership and administration together with inter-personal relationships; the principal should ensure that conditions for professional development of educators are built into the core processes of the school;
- \* there is the vital need for a sincere commitment to a policy of support services including in-service education and training in order to rectify the history of neglect;

- \* district support to schools for effective teaching and learning should involve all participants when decisions are taken on the role to be played by each level and the resources that are needed for each level to be functional;
- \* sensitivity to the context within which the role players operate and consideration of the impact of social and economic factors on the successful implementation of support are essential.
- \* School districts that recognize the power of capacity-building strategies, along with framework for accountability, will achieve significantly more change on the ground than those that employ distant hierarchical (top-down) methods of compliance.
- \* The principles of connectedness and empowerment should underpin school district guidelines on building capacity of educators and schools to assume the innumerable daily actions necessary for transformation, there is a dire need for school districts to balance the bottom – up and top-down strategies in order to produce more fundamental and meaningful change.

## CHAPTER 3

### 3.3. SAMPLE AND SAMPLING PROCEDURE

#### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The procedure followed in the selection of educators and principals was random while

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

included in the sample. A list of schools and the names of their educators and principals were used. The selection was done by picking every

In chapter two the primary objective was to gain clarity and insight into the concept of district support services in the provisioning of education. The explanation of the conceptual framework was necessary to provide a sound understanding of the issues of support services. The rationale behind the study stems from the argument that district support services could be effective if only the district, including schools, could be adequately provisioned and resourced.

Table 1 : Target Groups

The research design was quantitative because of the nature of the data that was collected.

Principals

1 800	200	36
128	100	78
42	12	100

The data collection was conducted at the district office, the circuit offices, and the schools falling under the wider Sekgosese education district in the year 2001.

Administrators

The stages followed included the identification of the population of the study; the sampling of the respondents; the drawing of the instruments in line with the objectives of the study; checking the reliability and validity of the questionnaires and analysing the obtained data.

#### 3.2 POPULATION OF THE STUDY

designed and open-ended in order to allow the respondents to give their quality opinions and value judgements. The items allowed

The population of this study is composed of one thousand eight hundred (1 800) educators, one hundred and twenty eight (128) principals, and forty two (42) district office personnel. At the time of the study the respondents were employed by the Limpopo Province Department of Education within the Sekgosese District.

The questionnaire was composed of the following sections:

### 3.3. SAMPLE AND SAMPLING PROCEDURE

Section A : Personal background

The procedure followed in the selection of educators and principals was random while all district officers were included in the sample. A list of schools and the names of their educators and principals were used. The selection was done by picking every other name until the number required was reached. The final sample was 200 educators, 100 principals, 4 circuit managers, 16 curriculum advisers and 12 administrators

The validity of the questionnaire was checked by experts who were senior members

### SUMMARY OF THE TARGET GROUPS

University of Venda for Science and Technology

**Table 1 : Target Groups**

Target Group	Population	Sample	%
Educators	1 800	200	36
Principals	128	100	78
Circuit Managers	4	4	100
Curriculum Advisers	16	16	100
Administrators	12	12	100

### 3.4 INSTRUMENTATION

#### 3.4.1 QUESTIONNAIRE

The results of the pilot test were analyzed carefully and this necessitated major

The questionnaire items were structured and open-ended in order to allow the respondents to give their quality opinions and value judgements. The items allowed respondents to provide comments on aspects that exist in the district and the impact on teaching and learning.

3. The questionnaire was composed of the following sections:

- Section A : Personal background
  - Section B : Nature and role of the education district
  - Section C : District support services at school level
- (See Annexure A on page 94)

### 3.4.2 PILOTING OF QUESTIONNAIRE

The validity of the questionnaire was checked by experts who were senior members of staff in the Department of Curriculum Studies and Teacher Education at the University of Venda for Science and Technology.

The reasons are: The module is located in the department. The staff in the department have done extensive research on issues of curriculum development and education in general. The items were certified as being related to the context of the study and to the literature reviewed.

The instrument was also pilot-tested for reliability, using an independent group within the same population. The test was meant to establish whether the questions were comprehensive enough; the time that would be required to complete the instrument; and the of items.

The results of the pilot-test were analysed carefully and this necessitated minor adjustments to some items. This exercise confirmed that this type of instrument would yield the expected results.

### **3.5 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE**

Formalities relating to permission to conduct research in Sekgosesa Education District were obtained from the Regional Department of Education. Copies of the letters of request and permission are attached. (Annexure B, C and D on pages 98, 99 and 101 respectively).

Permission at district and school level was obtained by writing letters to the district and schools informing them of the prior permission granted to the researcher by the Regional Department of Education. Appointments for data gathering times were also made with the circuit managers, curriculum advisers, administrators, principals and educators.

The researcher distributed the questionnaires to school offices where school-based respondents were requested to complete and to return them to the circuit offices where the researcher would collect them.

The questionnaires for circuit managers, curriculum advisers and administrators were distributed to the district office and circuit office by the researcher.

The respondents were given a period of two weeks to complete and return the questionnaires. This period included the distribution and return of the questionnaires to the agreed centres. All questionnaires distributed were returned.

### **3.6 DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURE**

The analysis and presentation of data was qualitative in nature. Analysis was restricted to simple statistics of frequency distributions and percentages. The data was analysed and presented in three major sections, namely respondents' personal

background data, the nature and role of the education district and district support services at school level. Details of the data analysis are presented in chapter four.

## DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

In chapter three attention was focused on the research design for gathering qualitative and quantitative data in this study. An important aspect to be borne in mind is that this study distinctively and systematically revealed perceptions and experiences of the respondents on the implementation of the national policy on district support services at school level. The issues raised are critical to the learners because these issues have a profound impact on the culture of learning and teaching and effective schooling.

Data was collected by means of questionnaires that were distributed to schools and education offices for completion and collection by the researcher. All the questionnaires distributed were returned.

The presentation in this chapter is divided into three sections as follows:

- Section A : Respondents' Personal Background Data
- Section B : The Nature and Role of an Education District
- Section C : Constraints of Sekgosing Education District

Section A deals with particulars relating to qualifications, gender and experience of the respondents, in order to give a picture of the background to the sources of information for this study.

## CHAPTER 4

### DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

In chapter three attention was focused on the research design for gathering qualitative and quantitative data in this study. An important aspect to be borne in mind is that this study distinctively and systematically revealed perceptions and experiences of the respondents on the implementation of the national policy on district support services at school level. The issues raised are critical to the learners because these issues have a profound impact on the culture of learning and teaching and effective schooling.

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- |           |   |  |
|-----------|---|--|
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| Section B | : | The Nature and Role of an Education District |
| Section C | : | Constraints of Sekgosesse Education District |

Section A deals with particulars relating to qualifications, gender and experience of the respondents, in order to give a picture of the background to the sources of information for this study.

Section B requested the respondents to say what, according to them, should be taken into consideration when establishing an education district and also to indicate the role the education district should play in schools in order to make them functional.

The constraints experienced by the education district in the execution of its core business are dealt with in Section C. These constraints were observed by the principals, educators and district personnel.

#### 4.2 SECTION A : RESPONDENTS' PERSONAL BACKGROUND DATA

Respondents were requested to indicate their personal background in terms of gender, highest academic and professional qualifications; teaching experience for principals and educators and service experience for district personnel. Their responses are summarized in **table 4.1** below:

**Table 4.1** : Personal background of principals, educators and district personnel

ITEM	RESPONSES					
	Principals N = 100		Educators N = 200		District Personnel N = 32	
	C	%	C	%	C	%
<b>Gender</b>						
Male	60	60	130	65	20	63
Female	40	40	70	35	12	38

	<b>Principals</b>		<b>Educators</b>		<b>District Personnel</b>	
	<b>N = 100</b>		<b>N = 200</b>		<b>N = 32</b>	
<b>Highest Academic Qualification</b>						
Matric	33	33	169	85	12	38
Grade 10	00	00	01	0,5	00	00
First degree	60	60	20	10	02	06
Second degree	05	05	10	05	14	44
Third degree	02	02	00	00	04	13
<b>Highest Professional qualification</b>						
Teachers' Diploma	52	52	103	52	00	00
	<b>C</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>%</b>
Teacher Diploma +FED	32	32	64	32	01	03
Postgraduate Diploma +HED	16	16	33	16	19	59
<b>Teaching Experience</b>						
31 - 35	02	02	04	02	-	-
26 - 30	15	15	30	15	-	-
21 - 25	26	26	52	26	-	-
16 - 20	19	19	19	09	-	-
11 - 15	16	16	35	18	-	-
06 - 10	14	14	36	18	-	-
01 - 05	08	08	24	12	-	-
<b>Service Experience</b>						
31 - 35	-	-	-	-	00	00
26 - 30	-	-	-	-	06	19

	Principals		Educators		D. Pers.	
21 - 25	-	-	-	-	08	25
16 - 20	-	-	-	-	09	28
11 - 15	-	-	-	-	09	28
06 - 10	-	-	-	-	00	00
01 - 05	-	-	-	-	00	00

#### 4.2.1 GENDER

The data in Table 4.1 indicate that there were more males than females in each target group. Females accounted for less than forty five percent (45%) in each group, forty percent (40%) principals, thirty five percent (35%) educators, thirty seven percent (37%) district personnel. It appears that the implementation of the national policy on gender equity and representativity has not yet been fully realized in the Sekgosese district.

The fact that males outnumber females in the category of principals and district officers may also imply that females in the Sekgosese District are not sufficiently empowered to take leadership positions or positions requiring high levels of responsibility. This means that measures need to be put in place to empower females.

For purposes of this study, however, the data reveals that both genders were represented.

#### 4.2.2 HIGHEST ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS

The problem of low academic qualifications at all levels still exists in the district. The thirty three percent (33%) of principals and the eighty five percent (85%) of educators with matric as the highest academic qualification indicates that principals and educators with matric are on the same level of academic attainment.

Principals are expected to interpret departmental policy and to assist educators in understanding and implementing the policy but with matric as the highest academic qualification, some principals may experience problems in giving support to educators. At the same time they might not be very willing and co-operative to receive support from the district personnel if their level of understanding education policy is insufficient.

The thirty eight percent (38%) district personnel for whom matric is the highest academic qualification also poses a problem. There is a possibility of confusing issues relating to curriculum which are meant to be conveyed to schools as this may result in serious disruption of effective teaching and learning. For example if clear directives accompany policy documents that are to be distributed to schools by district personnel, who due to lack of high academic qualifications are not able to interpret the implications of not distributing the documents as directed, schools may fail to receive the documents as prescribed, with the result that the objectives of the department would not be achieved as planned.

Some hope exists as the majority of respondents both at school and district levels have gone beyond matric. There were those with first, second and third degrees. However, the problem of low qualifications still exists.

The ten percent (10%) of educators who hold the first degree and five percent (5%) of educators who hold two degrees holders imply a problem in staff development.

Very few educators are advancing themselves academically and professionally. A majority of educators are possibly going to find it difficult to understand and implement the new curriculum in all its aspects. Since new curriculum is preceded by understanding of curriculum issues, if such understanding is lacking, educators may resort to the old way of teaching. It would seem that one of the challenges of the Sekgosese district support services is that of putting programmes in place for improving academic and professional qualifications of educators and district personnel.

#### 4.2.3 HIGHEST PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

The fifty two percent (52%) of both principals and educators with a teacher's diploma as against the thirty two percent (32%) for both categories with a diploma plus a further education diploma is indicative of the fact that very few principals and educators upgrade themselves on the latest professional practices related to teaching and learning methods, assessment methods, classroom research, school management, budgeting and curriculum development.

The sixteen percent (16%) for both principals and educators with a postgraduate diploma plus another higher education diploma is very minimal. The challenges of the new curriculum require upgrading also on the methods of teaching and curriculum management.

Similarly the three percent (3%) of district personnel with a diploma plus another further education diploma is also a cause for very serious concern. The core business of district personnel is to support schools; and one needs to be an authority in the field in which support is given to schools. This is another challenge to the notion of district support service. The situation needs urgent attention to capacitate the district officers to the relevant level of professional qualification.

The fifty nine percent (59%) of district personnel with postgraduate diploma plus a higher education diploma seems to be a positive step towards addressing the problems of the district. Compared with those who have only a teacher's diploma plus Higher Education Diploma (HED) who are at three percent (3%), these personnel would be better equipped to deal with the challenges of the new curriculum, which is outcomes-based.

#### 4.2.4 TEACHING AND SERVICE EXPERIENCE

Most respondents in the study have above ten years teaching and service experience.

Although considered sufficiently experienced in the field, they may be less experienced in the new curriculum policy. It is not enough to have long experience, as this may result in rigidity and resistance to change because of lack of exposure, this may affect the implementation of the new curriculum. It is a challenge for the district to balance between the old, new, untrained and trained educators.

### 4.3 SECTION B : THE NATURE AND ROLE OF AN EDUCATION DISTRICT

The respondents were requested to indicate factors that should be considered in establishing an education district and its role. Their responses are summarized in **Table 4.2** below:

**Table 4.2** : Factors to be considered in determining the nature and role of the education district

FACTORS	RESPONSES					
	Principals		Educators		District Office Personnel	
	N = 100		N = 200		N = 32	
	C	%	C	%	C	%
Distance between the district office and schools	100	100	200	100	20	91
Physical resources	100	100	200	100	32	100
Human resources	100	100	200	100	32	100
Financial resources	100	100	200	100	32	81
Communication between the District office and schools	100	100	198	99	26	81
Number of schools in the district	99	99	180	90	31	97
Clarity in roles and functions of the district	90	90	179	89	28	88
Boundaries of the local government	90	90	179	89	28	88

#### 4.3.1 DISTANCE BETWEEN THE DISTRICT OFFICE AND SCHOOLS

Hundred percent (100%) of principals and educators said that the distance between the district office and schools should be considered in determining the nature and role of the education district, while ninety one percent (91%) of the district personnel consider distance as an issue to be considered.

The indication here is that agreement exists between all principals and educators in the sample that the district office should be accessible to schools. The district personnel is also in agreement with the issue of distance, which means that a majority

of district personnel within the district would consider distance as crucial, together with all other district personnel within the province.

Similarly, an overwhelming majority of all respondents (hundred percent (100%) of The point being made here is that the distance travelled by principals and educators to the district office impacts on the finances and the time of the school negatively if the office is too far from the schools. This may result in principals not giving sufficient attention to administrative and professional responsibilities while educators would spend a lot of time away from the learners whose lessons may suffer and study time may not be sufficiently supervised. This may result in the teaching and learning being negatively affected.

that for schools to be functional, national and provincial circulars and directives on what needs to be done should reach schools timely so that The challenge for the district is that the issue of the central office should be addressed with the regional office and the provincial authorities.

done effectively and timely.

#### 4.3.2 RESOURCES

The main conclusion here is that the education district must ensure that All the respondents, hundred percent (100%) agreed that physical, human and financial resources are a necessity in determining the nature and role of the education district.

Communication therefore requires using a variety of mechanisms to provide and This is an indication that all principals, educators and district personnel in the district would support the fact that resources are highly critical in establishing an effective education district.

ations, designing and using procedures to get feedback on the ongoing status of implementation and continuous refining or revising implementation The results also imply that in order for the national policy of district support services for effective teaching to succeed, the district carries the responsibility of ensuring that adequate resources are availed to schools.

### 4.3.3 COMMUNICATION

Similarly, an overwhelming majority of all respondents (hundred percent (100%) of principals; ninety nine percent (99%) of educators; and eighty one percent (81%) of district office personnel) considered communication between the district office and schools to be an important factor. This implies that all stakeholders represented by this study would support the point that communication between the district office and the schools impacts on teaching and learning.

Respondents argued that for schools to be functional, national and provincial circulars and directives on what needs to be done should reach schools timeously so that implementation can be effected. Schools also need to communicate whatever problems they may encounter to the district for guidance, and this also needs to be done effectively and timeously.

The main conclusion here is that the education district must ensure that communication facilities and channels which impact on teaching and learning are put in place.

Communication therefore requires using a variety of mechanisms to provide and receive feedback about the progress towards implementation of goals in relation to the plan of action, and time schedule and about the effectiveness of implementation structures and actions, designing and using procedures to get feedback on the ongoing status of implementation and continuous refining or revising implementation of goals, plans and structures as warranted.

#### 4.3.4 ESTABLISHMENT

The 'establishment' is taken to include the number of schools, the district office and the local government boundaries.

Again the results here reflect that these are essential components in determining the nature of the district. This is evidenced by the majority of respondents in the group who have confirmed that boundaries of local government, schools, district office are factors requiring consideration in determining the nature of the education district.

This implies that if the number of schools constituting one district is abnormally high and the district itself is expected to render a variety of services while it is not linked to the local government offices, this will affect the district's contribution. This is because district offices often have a budget that caters for education projects like the provision of classrooms and water to schools. Too many demands mean some schools will fail to achieve their objectives due to in-sufficient provisioning by the district. As a result teaching and learning will be adversely affected.

The majority of respondents argued that the situation in Sekgosese relating to boundaries needed urgent attention as the alignment of education and local government boundaries appears not to have received attention.

#### 4.4 SECTION C : CONSTRAINTS OF SEKGOSESE EDUCATION DISTRICT

Respondents were requested to indicate what they considered to be the constraints of their district in offering support services for effective teaching and learning. The purpose was to establish the extent to which the district experiences problems of implementation of the national policy on district support services for teaching and learning. The results are summarised in Table 4.4 below.

**Table 4.3** : Constraints of Sekgose Education District

CONSTRAINTS	RESPONSES					
	Principals		Educators		District Office Personnel	
	N = 100		N = 200		N = 32	
	C	%	C	%	C	%
Lack of authority by district personnel	100	100	135	68	29	91
Poor communication between the district office and schools	10	100	200	100	25	78
Insufficient and under-qualified district office staff	99	99	162	81	30	94
Insufficient resources at the district level	100	100	195	98	32	100
Inadequate training of staff at district and school level	10	100	136	98	32	100
Lack of transport for educators and principals	80	80	182	68	32	100
Lack of training for SGB's	91	91	120	91	20	63
Fund raising problems in schools	79	75	114	60	13	40
The community offers insufficient support to schools	88	88	169	57	27	87
Schools are not maintained sufficiently by the schools' governing bodies	77	77	170	85	13	41

The outstanding feature of the above results is the evident commonality in the opinion of respondents. Not only did the majority of respondents in each group raise some constraints, but there was also a great deal of common ground in their reasons for these responses. The fact that the majority of respondents offered these constraints independently demonstrates that there is a remarkable awareness of these problems among educators and officials in the district. These facts are important and hence are discussed below under each constraint.

#### 4.4.1 LACK OF AUTHORITY BY DISTRICT PERSONNEL

The inability of the district to provide adequate resources is exacerbated by lack of power, authority in policy implementation. The majority of the respondents pointed out the inability of district personnel to take critical decisions when solving problems. This was attributed to the centralised decision-making system existing in the district. The argument was that decisions on some matters should be left to principals to make. Principals should be given powers to approve such issues as leave, to decide on the financial needs of the school and to purchase and utilize funds as the school situation may determine.

#### 4.4.2 POOR COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE DISTRICT OFFICE AND SCHOOLS

On this issue the majority of respondents observed that the information relating to courses, workshops, meetings, and policy matters either reach the schools late, after the stipulated date, or does not reach some of the schools at all.

This situation may be very disastrous to the effective functioning of both the district and the schools in the sense that workshops and meetings focus on disseminating information that has to be implemented in order to achieve certain objectives of the department. If the flow of information is hampered by poor communication, then it

means principals and educators will lack behind on some policy issues, and will also not know what is going on within the Department. This problem will result in teaching and learning being negatively affected. The same applies to information that fails to reach the district from schools due to poor communication. The district will lack behind in feeding the region and the province with critical information and this will ultimately impact negatively on teaching and learning. For example, lack of statistics from schools to the Department may result in the supply of insufficient resources to schools.

#### 4.4.3 INSUFFICIENT AND UNDER-QUALIFIED DISTRICT OFFICIALS

It is obvious from the above responses that the staff at the district office is insufficient and underqualified. Almost all respondents agreed that the quality and quantity of the district staff are a matter of concern. The human resources are required to ensure a sound professional and administrative role of facilitating the culture of teaching and learning.

The implication of few and underqualified district officials is that there will be problems relating to the running of workshops where district personnel would feel wanting and therefore not be able to speak with authority in front of principals and educators. This tended to result in loss of confidence in them by the principals and educators, which in turn resulted in a failure by the participants in absorbing the workshop material and thus resulting in poor teaching and learning situations.

The thirty seven percent (37%) of district personnel without even a single degree is enough to cause concern since there are schools that are directly to be serviced by them despite their colleagues who are sufficiently qualified. In addition, the few district officials find it difficult to visit the many schools and educators and give professional advice and services. The government has a challenge in ensuring that recruitment processes attract enough people who are sufficiently qualified who will be

in control of the situation so that ultimately the objectives of the government will be achieved. Educators are key contributors to transformation of education in any society.

#### 4.4.4 INSUFFICIENT RESOURCES AT DISTRICT LEVEL

All the respondents in the sample hundred percent (100%) agreed that resources at district level are insufficient. Resources at district level include transport to go to workshops; photocopiers to duplicate policy documents and circulars; reference books that serve as resource materials; overhead projectors, science laboratories and other teaching aids.

Such insufficient resources would render support to schools impossible and the implication is that the district office, whose core business is curriculum support to schools, will find it difficult to execute their task. Schools are largely dependent on external resources to survive.

#### 4.4.5 INADEQUATE TRAINING OF STAFF AT DISTRICT AND SCHOOL LEVEL

Specific skills training should be pursued by the relevant staff when necessary and practically possible. In a similar vein inadequate staff development was seen by principals, hundred percent (100%) educators, ninety eight percent and district officials, hundred percent (100%) as a serious constraint that needed urgent attention. In addition to this, developmental workshops highlighting general awareness and skills relating to this area of school culture could be a useful strategy for enhancing the district capacity.

In particular the respondents claimed that there was insufficient knowledge and skills on the implementation of outcomes-based education in Sekgosese District. They pointed out that the training of staff at district and school levels would help

those educators who still have to adjust to the new approach of teaching which is learner-centred, and also would assist principals and district personnel to manage and administer the curriculum efficiently.

The challenge rests with the district to ensure that measures are put in place to provide adequate staff development programmes at district and school level so as to help make teaching and learning effective.

#### 4.4.6 LACK OF TRANSPORT FOR EDUCATORS AND PRINCIPALS

The inability of principals and educators to reach venues for workshops and meetings was expressed by a majority of the respondents eighty percent (80%) of principals, sixty eight percent (68%) of educators, and hundred percent (100%) of district personnel. It was indicated that the absence of transport for principals and educators put to a halt several activities planned for schools by the district. The long-term effect is that this would result in teaching and learning not being updated with the latest developments in curriculum implementation and evaluation.

Respondents called for an immediate solution to this problem through the supply of vehicles and establishing wards where meetings and workshops could be held nearer the schools.

#### 4.4.7 LACK OF TRAINING OF SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES (SGBs)

The majority of respondents ninety one percent (91%) of the principals and sixty three percent (63%) of district personnel considered the lack of capacity on the side of the School Governing Bodies from the absence of training by the Department to be a serious factor that needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

This suggests that the governance of the school will suffer when School Governing Bodies do not have the know-how concerning their duties and responsibilities. The result would be that principals and educators would focus on governance issues like ensuring the availability of funds at school and building projects at the expense of teaching and learning.

The district office is thus faced with the challenge of ensuring that the School Governing Bodies are trained so that they may be able to execute their duties and responsibilities efficiently.

#### 4.4.8 FUND RAISING PROBLEMS IN SCHOOLS

General agreement existed among the respondents, seventy five percent (75%) of the principals; sixty percent (60%) of the educators; forty percent (40%) of the district personnel, concerning lack of funds at schools for payment of essential services like the purchase of teaching and learning devices which cannot be covered by the allocated departmental funds.

The results of the absence of fund raising programmes are that educators will find it difficult to illustrate some of the lessons which need practicals with instruments to show how the processes unfold. This failure will lead to lack of thorough understanding of some topics, by the learners, which will result in learning and teaching not being effective.

Again it would seem that the district office has a major challenge in ensuring capacity-building among School Governing Bodies (SGB's), with improving their fund-raising skills as a priority.

#### 4.4.9 THE COMMUNITY OFFERS INSUFFICIENT SUPPORT TO SCHOOLS

The respondents, eighty eight percent (88%) principals; fifty seven percent (57%) educators; and eighty seven percent (87%) district personnel, considered the insufficient support to schools by the community as also problematic. This means that schools are not considered as community centers and would thus be the sole responsibility of the principal and educators, and learners to a certain extent.

Given the above situation it is obvious that meetings convened by the School Governing Body to address pertinent issues relating to the development of the school, like insufficient accommodation, vandalism at school, etc. would not be discussed by parents if they absent themselves from such meetings. This would lead to the problems continuing and reaching advanced levels where teaching and learning would ultimately suffer. The way the community and school relates to each other is crucial if the school is really to meet social needs, and if the community is to support the school in accomplishing this. It is self-evident therefore, that schools exist within particular community contexts, and that these contexts form part of what shapes the school and gives it its identity.

The study also focused on the attempts of the National Department of Education, through the District Improvement Project within the Policy Reserve Fund instituted in 1996, in order to address the imbalances of the past and to transform schools into effective teaching and learning organisations. This was to be achieved by transforming education districts through capacitating them to support schools since they are in a strategic position to offer maximum support to schools.

The overall aim of the study was to analyse the notion of district support services to schools from the perspective of disadvantaged rural communities in order to provide

## CHAPTER 5

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 SUMMARY

The specific focus of this study was to establish the nature, role and functions of the education districts in supporting the curriculum at school level. The context within which the objective was carried out was that of an education system which is in the process of overhauling and transforming the culture of teaching and learning; where school management and administration is undertaken by unskilled, poorly qualified principals who did not possess appropriate management and leadership skills, the above scenario was due to the apartheid ideology which fragmented education with the result of deep-rooted effects on support services to the Black schools and how they were managed.

The extent to which educators and principals receive support from the district for effective teaching and learning; together with the determination of the kind of professional support services schools needed in order to transform into effective teaching and learning organizations, were also determined by this study.

The study also focused on the attempts of the National Department of Education, through the District Improvement Project within the Policy Reserve Fund instituted in 1998, in order to address the imbalances of the past and to transform schools into effective teaching and learning organisations. This was to be achieved by transforming education districts, through capacitating them to support schools since they are in a strategic position to offer maximum support to schools.

The overall aim of the study was to analyse the notion of district support services to schools from the perspective of disadvantaged rural communities in order to provide

guidelines that could be used for the education district in offering services that will transform schools into effective teaching and learning organisations. The main questions covered to achieve these objectives included those around the background of key stakeholders involved in district support services, those around the notion of how district support services is to be interpreted and understood according to what the education policy says; and those around support services within Sekgose District as it prevails.

The study was conducted in Sekgose educational district and involved district office personnel, circuit managers, principals and educators.

The research design was quantitative because of the nature of the data that was collected.

The data collected was organised into three major sections. Each section reflected the responses in the form of a table which indicates the item under discussion together with the responses of the respondents according to different categories.

Several conclusions and recommendations were made. The major ones covered include the gender imbalances, underqualified staff, lack of proper communication, and lack of decision-making powers.

The major conclusions centre around principles relating to district support services which include good leadership, schools as centres of educational improvement, the adequate supply of resources, a holistic approach to district support services, and effective communication and funding. Also made are recommendations on the objectives of an education district which include the creation of an achievement climate, developing self-reliance, infra-structure and safety, authority and discipline; conclusions also related to major strategic components which include office- and

district-based support services, school-based supervision and professional development and networking.

## 5.2 CONCLUSIONS

It has been established in this study that there are more male than female employees and also that males outnumber females in the category of principals and district officers. The low academic qualifications at all levels still exist while the problems of very few principals and educators taking interest in upgrading their qualifications on the latest professional practices were encountered. At district level the same problem also exists concerning low qualifications, even though it is minimal while the majority of the respondents are better equipped to deal with the challenges of the new curriculum.

Another finding is that of the work-force that has above ten years experience as they have problems in adjusting to the new developments of the Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) curriculum in some instances.

The study has also revealed that all the principals, educators and district personnel are in agreement concerning the impact of distance between the schools and the district office. Respondents agreed about the provision of resources as highly critical in determining the role and nature of an education district. Equally important is also the communication factor between the institutions and the district office which impact heavily on the successful implementation of the national policy on district support services to schools for effective teaching and learning.

Concerning the constraints of Sekgose Education District, it was found that there is a great deal of commonality among respondents' opinions. The respondents reflected a great deal of common ground in explaining their responses as many of them, in each group, pointed out similar constraints.

Decision-making was pointed out as being lacking at district level over crucial issues while the break-down in communication between the district office and schools was seen as seriously hampering processes relating to teaching and learning. The issue of staff at district office level who are insufficient and under-qualified featured as a deterrent to the smooth running of, for example, workshops and meetings; while the insufficient resources are said to be very glaring and impacting very negatively on the implementation of the national policy of district support. The development of staff was seen by the majority of the respondents as critical and requiring to be addressed urgently. A similar point also covered the training of the School Governing Body members in their duties to include the ability to raise funds for schools and also the training of the community to realise that their participation in matters relating to schools is crucial for their children's education.

The report also found that gender equity and representivity has not been fully realized in the district and females are not sufficiently empowered to take leadership positions. Another issue that came out was that principals and district personnel will experience problems in giving support to educators when these sectors are on the same level of academic attainment since one needs to be an authority in a field in which support is to be given to schools. Sufficient experience in the field may not necessarily mean sufficient experience in the new curriculum policy was another point.

Respondents further seem to be saying that the distance travelled by principals and educators to the district office impacts on the finances and the time of the school negatively. District offices carry the responsibility of ensuring that adequate resources are availed to schools which should receive directives timeously so that implementation can be effected.

Lastly, the message from the respondents seems to express that the centralised decision-making system existing in the district needs to be reviewed; that when the flow of information is hampered by poor communication then it means principals and

educators will lack behind with some policy issues, and will also not know what is going on within the Department. In addition district personnel who are under-qualified would feel wanting and therefore not be able to speak with authority in front of principals and educators; that insufficient resources would render support from district offices to schools impossible. Finally that the training of staff at district and school levels would help those educators who still have to adjust to the new approach of teaching which is learner-centred. This would also assist principals and district personnel to manage and administer the curriculum efficiently. The School Governing Bodies (SGBs) and the community need to be empowered, by training, to support schools so that teaching and learning will end up being effective.

### **5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS**

The recommendations emanating from this study seek to reconcile the national and provincial education policies in fostering the achievement of national goals and identity while recognising cultural (local) diversity. The objective is to achieve comprehensive and effective teaching and learning at school level, especially in rural areas. The recommendations that will be put forward in this research, it is believed, will provide valuable contributions and guidelines to those responsible for development of policies.

The notion of an education district is still a new phenomenon in the country; Sekgosese being a remote district, the results of the study show that somehow Sekgosese continues to exist in the traditional structure of education. The objectives of the National Policy on district support services are not quite happening, the district is not quite conversant with the policy on the new notion of the district. Much still has to be improved in terms of understanding the policy and therefore the following recommendations are made to make the district to revisit its role in terms of the new notion of the district.

### 5.3.1 RECOMMENDATIONS PERTAINING TO THE PRINCIPLES OF THE DISTRICT SUPPORT SERVICES

The following recommendations pertaining to the principles of the district support services are based on the new policy and are meant to alert the district to revisit its role in supporting schools especially on the following issues which are vital to the achievement of the outcomes of the new policy:

#### \* **Good Leadership**

Leadership in this context is regarded as a continuous process through which members of the district are co-ordinated and their resources utilised in order to fulfil their tasks efficiently. The notion of District Support Services requires an understanding of the interplay of leadership theory, local politics and government, provincial and national politics, organisational theory and change theory. The effective education district needs to have a sense of purpose and direction and an ability to inspire key role players in the district. It is essentially an activity involving responsibility for getting things done through other people.

#### \* **Schools are centres of educational improvement**

To maintain the school as the site of educational improvement and to involve educators in the process, policy makers at district level need to learn what the values, interests and knowledge of the schools are in order to develop a clear understanding of what schools need for effective curriculum implementation.

#### \* **Adequate supply of resources**

Educators and learners need to be adequately resourced in order to do what they are meant to be doing, namely attending school, focusing on the primary goals of

teaching and learning, participating fully in the activities of school and caring for each other.

### \* **Identifying appropriate intervention strategies**

The district should identify intervention strategies with clear management plans, outcomes and clear expectations. These intervention strategies should take into account the nature of change and the context of specific schools and the ability to balance the tension between system expectations and school variability. It is important to note that these interventions should provide a coherent meaning to national and provincial policy and directives, and that they should reflect a long-term sustainable perspective. Further, it will promote educational resource and human resource development that is indispensable for the full understanding of economic, social and cultural activities.

### \* **Holistic approach to District Support Services**

The level of success in district support services is influenced by the operation of a wide variety of factors. No single factor should be identified as necessary or sufficient to provide success. Personal, environmental, and situational factors interact as they influence the services of a district to schools.

### \* **Empowering district personnel**

The district personnel must be empowered with knowledge on the district which they serve, in order to bring about school developments. Included here are knowledge of pupils, schools and the community for which educational development programmes are to be carried out; the technical knowledge and understanding of how to develop and implement effective programmes in a range of different areas of schooling; resource knowledge that can be used in effective practices in different areas;

knowledge of how to organise groups, work with people, facilitate meetings, resolve conflicts and lead to improved effort at school level; how to establish and manage the institutions that promote school improvement; and how to bring together all the necessary information, organise activities, and manage resources at the school level.

\* **Effective communication structures and mechanisms**

The notion of distance between the district office and schools needs to be addressed. Communication facilities in the form of telephones, faxes, e-mail and computers are a compelling necessity which, when provided, will enhance the teaching and learning processes. This study therefore recommends that : districts should ensure that an effective communication system is in place within the district which, amongst others disseminates important documents timeously and to all concerned, facilitates the sharing of information and expertise among users within the district, and collaborates with all stakeholders outside the schools and the district.

\* **Funding**

The district should operate on a budget that is sufficient to meet costs incurred in the running and supporting of the schools.

### 5.3.2 RECOMMENDATIONS PERTAINING TO THE OBJECTIVES OF AN EDUCATION DISTRICT

#### 5.3.3 RECOMMENDATIONS RELATING TO MAJOR STRATEGIC COMPONENTS OF

District support services was treated as something simple and more inclined to judging the performance of the principal and educators rather than offering support to them by the district. The National Policy on district support services has new expectations from all the role players and at all levels there is a struggle to make the issues a success. In the process nobody can categorise and give weighting to the various issues with which the district is grappling. The study has categorised these issues in order to allow for more focus on the objectives of the education district which are outlined below:

- \* To create a sense of responsibility in the district which includes a willingness and ability on the part of the schools to be self-reliant;
- \* To develop and broaden good leadership in the district which includes at least some degree of qualified staff, consultation, participation, adaptability and flexibility;
- \* To create a climate in the district which puts teaching and learning at the centre of the school's activities, focusing on better student achievement and higher teacher motivation;
- \* To promote safety, security and order in schools which are important factors in supporting teaching and learning;
- \* To ensure that authority and discipline are applied in a consistent way to support the focus of the school and
- \* To create and maintain the necessary infrastructure, equipment and other

resources that support schools for effective teaching and learning.

### 5.3.3 RECOMMENDATIONS RELATING TO MAJOR STRATEGIC COMPONENTS OF DISTRICT SUPPORT SERVICES

For the education district to achieve the objectives set, support services need to be conducted under the categories which according to this study, are in agreement with the expectation of the new policy which challenges the traditional structures which will not enhance the implementation of the new shift in offering support to schools by the district; particularly in connection with enabling schools to be self-reliant and productive. The following categories of major strategic components of district support services are therefore recommended:

#### \* **Office-based District Support Service**

Qualified personnel at the academic and administrative level is crucial in the district to deal with departmental policy on teaching and learning and district support for teaching and learning, together with its implementation at school level.

#### \* **School-based District Support Services**

Structures at school level should be conducive to effective curriculum implementation by making teaching and learning the central purpose of the school. The district should provide time for educators and schools to deal with implementation issues ensuring an enabling environment for the implementation of policies.

#### \* **Supervision, Monitoring and Evaluation Services**

The district needs to develop coherent plans incorporating improved and strengthened monitoring and evaluating activities. Personnel that is sufficiently qualified should be

responsible for planning, implementation and supervision of the curriculum in the form of conducting baseline assessment and analysing achievement and also rewarding good work. The district should evaluate the value of and assist with on-going improvement of performance management implementation through actions that include formal and informal assessment, analysis interpretation and feedback.

\* **Professional Development and Networking Services**

Workshops, conferences and seminars should be conducted by the district office. It should also establish partnerships between schools and offer exchange service for educators between schools in order to enrich the weaker ones.

#### 5.3.4 RECOMMENDATIONS PERTAINING TO FUTURE STUDIES

District support services has been broadly debated but not researched, particularly in South Africa. A great deal of research will have to be conducted relative to the dynamic nature of the South African educational transformation context. The multitude of elements related to the South African educational transformation process and its impact on school effectiveness need to be focused and directed through effective provision of district support services.

Since the research deals with a wide spectrum of district support services as an aspect of management and its implications for school effectiveness, further studies should be required as a response to the need to develop further proposals and strategies that will produce a new policy environment for district support services for effective teaching and learning in all schools.

In this study the focus was on the way the district is operating, which involves what actually happens on the ground, particularly in rural areas. Further studies could deal with the following aspects of district support services:

- \* Does teaching and learning improve as a result of the support of the district to schools?

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2.2 The Education

2.3 District Office

3. STRUCTURE

Part A: All respondents

Part B: All respondents

Part C: All respondents



**PART A : PERSONAL BACKGROUND**

**NB. :** *Mark with a cross where applicable*

1. Name (optional) or institution : .....

1.1 Gender : Male Female

1.2 Current Position

1.2.1 Educator :

1.2.2 Principal :

1.2.3 District Officer :

2. Highest Qualifications

2.1 Academic : .....

2.2 Professional : .....

2.3 Others if any : .....

3. Teaching/service experience in years : .....

4. Indicate the roles and functions assigned to you for your current position?  
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**PART B : THE NATURE AND ROLE OF AN EDUCATION DISTRICT**

1. What is an education district and what factors should be considered in determining a manageable district?

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**PART C : CONSTRAINTS OF SEKGOSESE EDUCATION DISTRICT**

2. What should be the link between an education district and other education levels? In your opinion, what do you consider to be the constraints of your Education District?

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3. Is an education district best located to provide education support services to schools? Why?

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4. What labour saving devices and other supplies do you consider lacking in your education district?

Enq. Masipa M.M

Cell. 822 241 8222

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.....

04 May 2001

**PART C : CONSTRAINTS OF SEKGOSESE EDUCATION DISTRICT**

In your opinion, what do you consider to be the constraints of your Education District?

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2. The questionnaire should also be completed by the principal and two educators on the staff at school level and by all district office personnel.

3. You are please requested to return the questionnaire to the head of the institution by 14/05/2001.

Thanking you in anticipation

MASIPA M.M



## ANNEXURE C

17 Letaba Avenue

Penina Park

PIETERSBURG

0699

The Regional Director  
Department of Education

Private Bag X2250

SIBASA

0970

### **APPLICATION FOR CONDUCTING RESEARCH ON DISTRICT SUPPORT SERVICES FOR EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING AT SCHOOL LEVEL IN SEKGOSESE EDUCATION DISTRICT.**

#### RESEARCHER

I, the undersigned, hereby humbly request for permission to conduct research as part of my study towards the doctorate degree.

The purpose of the study is to investigate support services at school level in the preparation for the implementation of Outcomes-based Education in the Sekgosese District. I am targeting educators, principals and district personnel who are in service of the Department of Education in the Limpopo Province. May I readily inform you that I do not intend to interfere with the normal school programme as the questionnaires may be answered at the participants own time. I also pledge to observe the rules and regulations of the school.

May I further assure you of my willingness to observe all ethical and legal considerations of the research. These will enhance the confidentiality of whatever

transpires between me and the research participants, their right to privacy, anonymity as well as their right to withdraw from the research process if they so deem it necessary, at whatever period they deem it fit.

I sincerely hope that my request will meet your favourable consideration as it is also my intention to furnish you and the Department of Education in the Limpopo Province with the results that will emerge from the study. Your co-operation will, therefore, be highly appreciated.

Thanking you in anticipation for your kindness.

Yours sincerely

**M.M MASIPA**  
**RESEARCHER**



# Northern Province

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
NORTHERN REGION



Private Bag X2250  
SIBASA  
VENDA  
0970  
Tel.: 015 962 1313  
015 962 1331  
Fax.: 015 962 6039  
015 962 3076

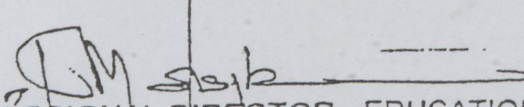
Ref: S3/5/P  
Enq: Mashau M.E.

REGIONAL OFFICE  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
ARTS, SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY  
SIBASA  
PRIVATE BAG X2250  
0970 SIBASA  
NORTHERN PROVINCE

Mrs Masipa M.M.  
Sekgosese Area Office  
Private Bag X1364  
SOEKMEKAAR  
0810

## RESEARCH STUDY: DISTRICT SUPPORT SERVICES FOR EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING: THE NORTHERN REGION

1. Your letter dated 2001 April 26 has reference.
2. This office inform you that your application for research study has been approved provided your leave days will remain the same. In circumstances where there will be need for change of leave days taken, inform this office before effecting such changes.

  
REGIONAL DIRECTOR: EDUCATION

NORTHERN PROVINCE  
REGISTRY SECTION  
RECEIVED  
2001-07-04  
SEKGOSESE DISTRICT OFFICE  
PRIVATE BAG X1364 SOEKMEKAAR

REGISTRY SECTION  
RECEIVED  
2001-06-13  
SOUTHERN DISTRICT AREA OFFICE  
SIBASA

