




Exploring senior education specialists' roles in developing educators at secondary schools in the Gert Sibande education district

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Abstract—Since 1994, the South African education system has been on the pedestal of a transformational trajectory. New curricula, policies, management, and control systems emerged. They heralded a fundamental change in the education system. The education system thus adopted a different outlook, with transformative aims and objectives. In line with this change, the previous school inspectors were renamed Senior Education Specialists (SESs). They were assigned a development role, unlike their predecessors, who were known for coercion, subjugation, dismissiveness, and a tendency to use judgmental approaches in support of schools. This study explores the roles of SESs in developing educators, identifies factors that impede their effectiveness in this development, and suggests strategies they could use to achieve educator development and attain educational goals. It employed a qualitative Case study research design, through which a sample of SESs was interviewed and observed. It employed documents that SESs use in the performance of its developmental support service to educators. The findings revealed that the concept of a supervisor is referred to differently across countries. Whether they are called supervisors or inspectors, it does not matter. What matters is the effectiveness with which they perform their roles and functions. Significantly, the political system in each country can shape people's perceptions of education authorities. Negative perceptions of the political system may affect the performance of education authorities, leading to poor performance across the entire system. This study recommends that SESs develop lethargy, which does not help the system, as SESs' lethargy is frustrated by the lack of demonstration of appropriate teaching methods for teachers to use. It reports that SESs leaving schools are not acted upon, but that SESs have no authority to require schools to consider such recommendations.

Keywords: Senior education specialists, Educators, Secondary schools

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I. INTRODUCTION

THE advent of democracy brought about changes in the way the curriculum is implemented in South Africa. This is evident in the doctrine that the constitution underpins all reforms in South Africa, ensuring they align with democratic values (Department of Basic Education [DBE], 1996a). For instance, the preamble to the South African constitution envisions "... healing the divisions of the past and establishing a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights" (DBE, 1996a). This is contrary to the way the then-apartheid government managed and delivered the curriculum. Under apartheid, the curriculum was managed and implemented in line with the apartheid doctrine. This doctrine was fraught with subjugation, coercion, undemocratic practices, and had the potential to instill fear and uncertainty on the part of educators and, to a lesser extent, officials of the department (DBE, 2002)

It is important to note that the advent of the National policy on whole school evaluation in South Africa changed the entire department's work. For example, this policy envisages interactive, transparent, and democratic processes to monitor and support schools in the performance of their educative functions (DBE, 2002). It premises education delivery and monitoring on democratic values that promote continuous development and support for the most vulnerable aspects of

education delivery. To fulfill its monitoring and evaluation role, as outlined in the National Education Policy Act, the DBE provides for the monitoring and evaluation of the education system to improve performance (DBE, 1996a). This policy views the monitoring and evaluation of education delivery as a pivotal vehicle for enhancing performance. Similarly, the provisions of the National Policy on whole school evaluation aim to monitor the support, development, and scaffolding for education practitioners, which are paramount for improved performance and accountability in the delivery of education in South African schools (DBE, 2002, p. 1).

The DBE, in its Public Administrative Measures of 1996, allocates functions of monitoring and support to Office-Based Educators to fulfill the dictates of the National Education Policy Act. According to DBE (1996b), office-based educators, among other functions, are supposed to "... facilitate curriculum delivery through various ways". This support includes but is not limited to "... subject advisory service" (DBE, 1996b). The office-based educators play an essential role in monitoring, evaluating, advising, and developing educators to improve their performance. These advisory functions are intended to enhance the operational capacity of educators, department heads, principals, and their deputies. These advisory functions touch on every aspect of educators' development. For instance, DBE (1996b), among others, provides for continuous and sustained educator development on classroom practice, staff development, research and development, strategic planning, and transformation.

To this effect, the DBE introduced Senior Education Specialists (SEs) as advisors at the school levels. The introduction of SEs was intended to replace the then-apartheid concept of school inspectors, as it had a negative connotation in its operationalisation (DBE, 2002, p. 1). In its correspondence, the DBE uses the terms District Officials, Curriculum Advisors, Subject Advisors, and/or Curriculum Implementers in reference to SEs. For purposes of this study, the researcher will, preferably, use the concept of SEs. According to the Eastern Cape Department of Education (2007, p. 4), SEs are institutions established "...to deal with intervention strategies for school support (demonstration of lessons, co-operative planning, team teaching, mediating reflection, whole school workshop and lesson observation) and district curriculum school-based planning (data gathering for support, and managing school support)".

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The adoption of the outcomes-based education approach required changes in how education is delivered in South Africa. This is seen by the type of learners the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements envisions. According to the DBE (2011a), the South African curriculum must produce a learner, amongst other competencies, who can "identify and solve problems and make decisions using critical and creative thinking; work effectively as individuals and with others as members of a team; organise and manage themselves and their activities responsibly and effectively; collect, analyse, organise and critically evaluate information; communicate effectively using visual, symbolic and/or language skills in various modes; use science and technology effectively and critically showing responsibility towards the environment and the health of others; and demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognising that problem solving contexts do not exist in isolation". These competencies resonate with the type of educators the system should have. Essentially, these competencies represent a fundamental shift from the rote learning espoused by the previous curriculum.

To effect changes in the way educators taught during the apartheid era, ongoing educators' development had to be a prominent feature. This has been the case since the advent of Curriculum 2005, during which a shift from content-based to outcomes-based education was observed (Vermeulen, 2002). Educators have been trained to stay up to date with the latest developments in the curriculum and to enhance their capacity to teach in line with it. SEs have been used to train, monitor, and support educators in implementing the new curriculum for improved performance. This training had to be augmented with ongoing capacity-building for educators at the implementation site. Ongoing support, capacity building, monitoring, and evaluation of the implementation featured prominently. However, reports such as those of the ANA results demonstrate the dire state of educator development in the implementation of curriculum in South Africa (DBE, 2013a; DBE, 2015a; DBE, 2014; DBE, 2016; National Education Evaluation and Development Unit [NEEDU], 2013; Reddy et al., 2012).

If the educator development endeavours implemented since the introduction of the new curriculum had been satisfactorily implemented, the system would be yielding the desired results as outlined in the Action Plan to 2014: Towards the realisation of schooling 2025 (DBE, 2012a). However, all the above reports paint a negative picture of education in South Africa and attribute poor performance to capacity issues, insufficient monitoring, and inadequate support for educators in schools. This suggests that effective monitoring and support of educators could enhance the system's performance. To this effect, SEs are crucial in achieving this goal. This study, therefore, focused on the role of SEs in the development of educators to better implement the curriculum in selected secondary schools in the Gert Sibande education district in Mpumalanga province.

III. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE FOR SEs IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

General advisory role of SEs

According to the DBE (1998), SEs are charged, among other things, with supporting schools by providing expertise in implementing curriculum, administering assessments, and developing and mentoring educators to deliver the required curriculum. In line with this, the National Strategy for Learner Attainment of 2016 further elaborates on and underscores these roles and functions by charging SEs, among other things, with the responsibility to ensure that teaching time is protected. Value for money is attained through the judicious use of teaching and learning time, ascertain the educators plan for the different lessons, to monitor and support educators in the implementation of curriculum, to intensify the management of continuous assessment, to develop language proficiency in learners so that all the subjects are better understood, to assist educators with the process of identifying learners for the diverse career fields, and to ensure that schools account for their performance (DBE, 2016, p. 4).

In carrying out the above functions, the DBE, through the Provincial Education Departments, has different districts. Each district has a different configuration of how the SEs are distributed for their advisory functions (DBE, 2012b, p. 7). According to the DBE (2012b, p. 7), district offices, under the stewardship of the district director, have the responsibility to, among other things, plan for the running of the district, employ staff and personnel, appoint education specialists, budget for its operations, provide the necessary resources for the running and manning of the district, deploy the required human resources to areas of need, manage the running of the schools under its control, make schools account for their performance, assists schools with the development of rescue plans in the event a school performs below the Provincial and or the district average performance, and to cause the principals of schools to account for the manner in which they run schools. Therefore, the role of SEs is central to the district's heartbeat because it is through them that the system is monitored, supported, developed, and funded. Their duties, however, depend, among other things, on how schools view, perceive, and utilise them.

The DBE understands this prestigious role and function. That is why all provincial education departments are obliged to have SEs. Therefore, all schools in South Africa, from General Education and Training (GET) to Further Education and Training (FET), must benefit from the envisaged roles and functions of SEs. These SEs are appointed in accordance with the provisions of the EEA Act 76 of 1996 (DBE, 1996c). Notably, SEs are supposed to be educators who have demonstrated a greater understanding of the roles and functions of ordinary educators, determined through a selection process involving representatives of the provincial DoE and teacher unions (DBE, 1996b). It is therefore imperative that the selection panel be composed of knowledgeable representatives so that whoever is appointed has undergone a series of tests. That could ensure that the incumbent is knowledgeable and has the requisite skills to perform the expected functions. Appointing an unsuitable candidate, as expected, may jeopardise the realisation of the founding principles of SEs, as per the EEA read in conjunction with the Public Administrative Measures document. Essentially, it may hinder the successful implementation of some SE functions, potentially leading to underperformance.

According to DBE (1996b), SEs are the foot soldiers of the district, and it is upon them that performance could be achieved. They are the ones who understand how schools conduct their business. They could easily tell when nothing was happening at any school. In this way, the district's upper echelons rely on them for information on the health of the education system. For example, the district director would not know which academic challenges schools face if SEs do not report them. To that effect, the National Strategy for Learner Attainment expects regular meetings held with SEs so that the District Management Team constituted by the district director, Chief Education Specialists for GET and FET, Deputy Chief Education Specialists for GET and FET, Deputy

Director for labor related issues, Deputy Director for finance and associated Assistant Directors, could be informed of what is going on in the teaching field and for remediation to be done where such is warranted (DBE, 2016, p. 10).

Provinces in South Africa have their own arrangements for districts, and the way they operate differs from one province to another. The same is true for districts in a province. Below, we will examine the challenges of SESs in Gert Sibande, enabling a better understanding of their roles.

Current model of SESs in the Gert Sibande education district

To carry out its supportive and oversight functions, the Gert Sibande education district has two divisions: the GET, with 387 schools, and the FET, with 122 secondary schools. Evidently, there are many primary schools compared to secondary schools. There could be three primary schools for every secondary school, depending on factors such as population density in each area. The South African Schools Acts refer to primary schools (grades 1-9) as feeder schools for high schools (DBE, 1996a). In other words, when learners leave grade nine (9), the exit grade of the GET band, they are enrolled in Grade 10, the reception grade of FET. Primary schools are divided into three categories: foundation (Grades 1-3), intermediate (Grades 4-6), and senior phase (Grades 7-9) (DBE, 1996b). This arrangement accounts for the many primary schools in each geographic area compared to secondary FET schools. Literally, the foundation and the senior phase schools could be in the same proximity as the FET school. Thus, there could be three to four primary schools for one FET school. By that line of thought, there would be more SESs in the GET than in the FET band.

According to the National Policy Pertaining Program and Promotion Requirements for Grade R-12 of the NCS of 2011, the foundation phase, i.e., Grade 1-3, could offer four subjects, the intermediate phase, six subjects, the senior phase offering seven subjects, and the FET could deliver a minimum of seven subjects per learner (DBE, 2011b, p. 28). All these subjects are supposed to have SESs for continuous support. However, since the onset of the global economic crisis, most posts vacated due to attrition, resignations, disciplinary outcomes, etc., have not been filled (Mpumalanga Provincial Legislature, 2015). According to the Mpumalanga Provincial Legislature (2015), all non-critical posts in the province should not be filled until the economic situation improves. This decision has affected the provision of SESs across the province, and many subjects are suffering as a result. For instance, almost all vacant posts in the Mpumalanga Department of Education remain unfilled, leaving the affected subjects without a mentor. To fulfill the objectives of the cost-cutting measures, rationalisation, in the sense that available human resources are given additional work to keep the system afloat, has been adopted.

Therefore, some SES posts are vacant, and the available SESs need to do more to serve the schools. For instance, SESs who serve five circuits will be required to service an additional three circuits. This may affect the performance of the SESs and may jeopardise the nature of support that could be given. Usually, SESs are required to visit schools more than once per term (DBE, 2011b, p. 29). The aim is to ensure that effective follow-up and feedback are provided to correct any errors identified during earlier visits (DBE, 2013b). It does not make sense for schools to be visited and for no follow-up to occur; educators would not know the findings. The findings and recommendations must be followed through for schools to benefit from the intervention made by SESs. In the Gert Sibande district, the FET phase, with fewer schools than the GET, is set to benefit from follow-ups. The extent to which SESs assist FET schools is the subject of this study.

The diagnostic reports outlined above highlight several challenges that SESs and other units are encountering in their monitoring and supportive roles. Seemingly, there are still hurdles hindering the success of SESs in their educational functions. The fact that specific subjects are still performing below the Provincial and National averages demonstrates the extent of the challenge. This study, therefore, seeks to unravel the role of SES in the development of educators in selected

secondary schools in the Gert Sibande district. The rationale is that a better-equipped educator would be able to deliver the content confidently, and learners may perform accordingly. For that to happen, knowledgeable and well-equipped SESs are needed to assist educators in providing content appropriately and acceptably.

To better understand the role of SESs in the education sector, we must investigate how other countries utilise institutions such as SESs in delivering effective curricula in their schools. This understanding would help the researcher gain a broader understanding of the factors involved in the monitoring and support processes.

IV. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

This study explores the roles of senior education specialists in developing educators at secondary schools in the Gert Sibande education district.

V. METHODS

Research approach and paradigm

This study used an interpretive paradigm. However, the interpretivists believed that actual feelings, perspectives, views, attitudes, and perceptions of SESs were important in the educator development in this study. This paradigm was relevant to identifying the most useful angle for understanding the role of SESs in educator development.

Research design

A research design is a comprehensive plan for data collection. It serves as a blueprint for answering specific research questions and or hypotheses (Bhattacharjee, 2012, p. 35). For Kothari (2004, p. 34), a research design is a conceptual framework that dictates how data can be collected, analysed, and interpreted to make sense of the aims and objectives of the research study and to answer the research question or hypothesis. A research design is a general strategy or process by which the researcher attempts to solve a research problem or answer a research question, and it informs how the whole enquiry is conducted (Welman et al., 2007; Leedy & Ormrod, 2013; Creswell, 2014).

This study used a case study research design. This research design is relevant because it helps the researcher examine the role of SESs in educator development and interprets their supervisory role, drawing on the interpretivism paradigm. Therefore, the researcher focused on the individuals involved in that programme, the activities they engage in, and how SESs experience the intervention. In other words, the researcher aimed to unravel how the developmental programme, supervisory services, and monitoring are carried out by SESs and experienced by educators over a particular period in the study area.

Data collection tools

Semi-structured interviews

This study used semi-structured interview questions. The interview questions were based on the study's aims and objectives. The main and sub-questions also informed the development of the interview questions. This was made so that the survey treats what it is meant to interrogate. For that to happen, each SES was interviewed for approximately 1.5 hours. Interviews spanning 60 to 90 minutes are acceptable and reasonable because the interviewer and interviewee are unlikely to lose concentration (Laforest, 2009). According to Laforest (2009), prolonged interviews can be tedious, which may jeopardise the study's outcome; if that happens, the validity and reliability of the collected data are compromised. So, interviews that last a reasonable time are appropriate for collecting verifiable, valid data. One advantage of semi-structured interviews is that the researcher uses individualised, flexible questions that allow follow-up questions to elicit responses.

Observations

Observation is a method of data collection in qualitative research, in which the researcher observes participants in their natural setting as they go about their daily activities (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013, p. 141). To ensure that the observation exercise did not stray from the research

framework, the researcher used the study's central questions, sub-questions, aims, and objectives as a springboard for developing the observation cues. The observation cues are developed so that the observation process yields no outcomes, but outcomes are based on the statement of the problem (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013, p. 141). To that end, specific observation criteria were formulated as a guide towards real observation. The observations were, therefore, guided, and the focus was enhanced on specific and helpful cues for the work of SESs. To better manage the observation exercise, a particular schedule was developed. An arrangement was made with the affected SESs and schools so that the schools' schedules would not be disrupted.

Document analysis

Document analysis provides context for how the research participants operate. In this regard, data on the history of supervision by SESs could be collected, which may provide context for interpreting interview and observation data. Data contained in documents can suggest some questions that need to be asked and situations that need to be observed as part of the research. For example, this could include data on the impact each SES has had on their duties and how the subject has performed over time. Documents provide supplementary research data and insights on the nature of the phenomenon being studied. Data that may not have been collected through interviews and observations can be easily gathered from documents related to the phenomenon being studied. For instance, data on how often SESs visit and support the school could not be collected through interviews and observations, but could be obtained by analysing documents that contain this information.

Participants

In this study, SESs at the FET phase were studied. Therefore, SESs that support secondary schools in the FET phase of the Gert Sibande education district were considered. Additionally, the number of subjects served by these SESs helped the researcher identify which SESs were available for the study. The Gert Sibande education district maintains a list of all available SESs; however, not all subjects have SESs, as some have since left the district.

To ensure gender issues were considered, the researcher used quota sampling to include both males and females. This study uses previously known information about the population to divide it into categories from which the sample is derived. Thus, the researcher attempted to balance the gender of the sample; however, the employment process provided what the researcher worked on.

In line with the study's delimitation, the sample comprised SESs in the Ermelo sub-district of the Gert Sibande education district. As a result, the sample comprised two SESs in each of the four circuits in the Ermelo sub-district. Eight SESs were, therefore, selected to be part of the sample. Four of those samples were female participants, and the remainder were males.

Data analysis

The researcher used triangulation methods to analyse the collected data. In triangulation, the researcher uses themes and categories to classify data based on common aspects revealed during operationalisation (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013, p. 102). In this study, data were collected through semi-structured interviews, observation cues, and document analysis. These are three different data collection mechanisms, and the data derived from these were processed in various categories in line with the aims and objectives of the study. To identify the data, common themes were used (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013, p. 142). In identifying common themes, the researcher identified statements related to the topic, grouped them, identified different or opposing arguments, and eventually developed a picture of the phenomenon (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013, p. 145). Practically, the responses to the interview questions, findings from observation, and those from document analysis were analysed for common themes from which conclusions were reached. The researcher grouped statements that have common themes. Those who had opposing views were put aside. These statements were drawn from the researcher's findings from interviews,

observations, and document analysis. In other words, common themes coalesce into a pattern from which the researcher drew his conclusion.

Ethical considerations

The researcher treated the information collected from the participants confidentially. To do that, the researcher signed a confidentiality form, and the collected data were used solely for the study. All participants were withheld, and the results were used for the research's aim. The researcher also sought participants' consent to use audiotapes and to take notes during interviews, observations, and document analysis. For that, the participants were assured of the confidentiality of such materials. The material was intended for data collection, and no sinister intentions were designed for the collected data.

Moreover, permission was sought from the Acting Director of the Gert Sibande education district. Such a letter was used to reassure participants of the study's intentions and to solicit their cooperation. It also sought to assure participants that the applicable laws, as provided for in the South African Constitution, protect their participation. Participants were informed that they reserved the right to withdraw from the process if they felt uncomfortable and that the information gathered would be used for the study.

The researcher also sought a clearance certificate from the university. Permission to conduct the study was also requested from the university's Ethics Committee. A language expert edited the work. See the annexures for these letters.

VI. RESULTS

Observations

SESs mentor and coach educators in their daily teaching activities

The results showed that a few participants acknowledged that they coached and mentored educators during their visits. They went a step further by visiting educators in their classrooms to observe their teaching practices. These visits were followed by reflection sessions based on their findings. Moreover, these SESs profiled the schools that they visited. The profiling was based on schools' performance in the 2015 National Senior Certificate examination.

Additionally, these SES, in varying degrees, used the monitoring template for supervision. Their visits lasted for approximately five hours. After their visits, they gave the Head of Departments (HoDs) and the principals written reports. Such reports were used to support and monitor educators. They used their laptops to explain the Annual Teaching Plans, diagnostic reports, assessment guidelines, and the table for setting quality tasks, including formal and informal tasks.

In contrast, six SESs were not thorough in their supervision. The following characterised their approaches:

- They used the supervisory tool without delving into the content.
- They asked educators questions without verifying the veracity of the responses.
- They did not visit the educators in class.
- They spent approximately two (2) hours in schools.
- They submitted the report for copies and never discussed it with either the HoDs or the principals.
- The principals stamped the reports
- Thereafter, copies were made, and the SESs left the schools.
- They left a disc with the Annual Teaching Plans, policy documents, assessment guidelines, and tables for consideration when developing formal and informal assessment activities.

It seems that only a few SESs adequately mentor and support educators during their visits. It appears that most SESs do not perform the monitoring and support function effectively. They just go there for compliance, and that is not helping the system.

Educators relate to the content being delivered by the SESs

A few SESs interrogated the content. Educators were included as the

challenging content was explained, and they showed some understanding. They demonstrated knowledge by further discussing the content's salient features.

However, most SESs did not address the content in a way that sparked a reaction from the educators they were supervising. They merely completed the monitoring instrument without initiating any discussion whatsoever. There was a need to complete the instrument with minimal engagement with the content. As indicated in the first queue, these SESs were casual and had no meaningful engagement with either the educators or the content.

From the above data, it is evident that a few SESs adequately interrogate the content to enrich educators for teaching. Moreover, it seems the majority did not sufficiently engage educators on the breadth and depth of the content. Seemingly, most SESs do not effectively engage educators on content.

Teaching and learning resources that SESs use in training educators, and whether they are helpful

All the SESs use the basic resources for educators' training. They all have teaching and learning resources, but they differ in how they use them. As indicated above, a few educators found the material beneficial and engaged with it. In contrast, 6 out of 8 educators left the materials for their own use. No explanation or development took place.

Seemingly, all SESs are aware of the requisite learning resources, but only a few can make sense of them. Therefore, the majority do not use the resources beneficially.

SESs use content-based resources to inspire interaction with educators

Flowing from the first cue, two out of eight SESs used the material knowledgeably, and educators interacted with it. An educational and pedagogical environment prevailed during the explanation of the materials. The educators even made a meaningful contribution to the discussions. However, most SESs did not elicit any interaction from the educators. Their interactions were limited to questions in line with the monitoring tool.

It appears that few SESs use content-based resources to inspire interaction with educators. Most SESs, however, do not use content-based resources to inspire interaction. Apparently, most SESs use the monitoring (supervisory) tools to fulfill the requirement.

SESs use mock lessons to involve educators

Two of the eight SESs submitted exemplary lesson plans for implementation. The lessons that they observed were based on such lesson plans. They used the Annual Teaching Plans (ATPs), which divide the content into teaching weeks. In other words, whatever is happening in schools must align with such ATPs. Their use of the lesson plans did not amount to mock lessons. It was merely an explanation of how the lesson could be planned and implemented. Generally, not all SESs used mock lessons to involve the educators.

It therefore seems that not all SESs use mock lessons to involve educators in preparation for actual teaching. It appears that the lesson plans are an end in themselves, and SESs do not use mock lessons to apply them.

Curriculum management mechanisms do SESs parade for educators

Except for the ATPs, no specific curriculum management mechanisms were paraded by all the SESs.

It therefore seems that not all SESs develop educators in curriculum management. Apparently, this is left to HoDs and school principals.

SESs extract content from the ATPs to inform the lessons

Two out of eight SESs effectively use the Lesson Plans (LPs) to amplify the content in the ATPs. They used pockets of content enriched with textbook knowledge to supplement the LPs. However, the 6 SESs did not go that far. They merely checked the LPs that educators presented. Their checking was not meant to expand or extricate content. Seemingly, they were doing it for compliance.

SESs use diagnostic reports to inform remedial action for improved performance in the respective subjects

As stated above, a few SESs made sense of the Diagnostic reports.

They demonstrated a need to build into their daily teaching plans. Some SESs did not delve much into the Diagnostic reports. They merely alluded to them without getting into details about their value in teaching and planning.

According to the above data, most SESs do not use diagnostic reports in their supervision. Referring to something does not raise its importance. Probably, they referred to it because the tool requires them to discuss it.

SESs use previous reports to inform current interventions

The monitoring instrument requires, among other things, that the action plan agreed upon in earlier visits be implemented. All 8 SESs, however, did not dwell much on the action plan. It was merely asked and browsed over for the completion of the monitoring tool.

It therefore seems that SESs do not effectively use previous school visit reports to inform ongoing visits. They treat them in passing and do not base their current intervention on this. Their focus is on what they could do on the current visit without basing it on previous diagnoses.

SESs advise educators on workable and beneficial ways of incorporating assessment in learning

In support, a few SESs handled the assessment. They encouraged educators to propose appropriate and feasible assessment activities for specific content areas. Engagement ensued, and educators were able to motivate students regarding the nature and types of informal assessment activities. They even provided examples based on content from previous year's examination question papers. The sessions became interactive as educators engaged in SESs.

However, the other six SESs did not attempt to address assessment in practical ways. They just alluded to the need for appropriate assessment activities. The diagnostic report and the examination guidelines were not reviewed.

It seems that a few SESs effectively use assessment as part and parcel of the Key Performance Indicators they use when educators are supervised. The majority is aware of assessment, but does not adequately encourage or equip educators to use it.

Advice is given on how to accommodate learners with learning challenges

Not all SESs addressed learners with learning barriers. Their approach was designed for typical classroom learners. Even the educators did not raise questions on how to accommodate this category of learners. The curriculum implementation instruments that SESs brought were not accommodating learners with learning barriers.

It appears that SESs do not address differentiation in their support to schools. They focus solely on the content, without adapting it to learners' diverse needs. Educators, therefore, are not being developed by curriculum SESs to deal with multiple intelligences.

SESs help the developed educators sustain elevated levels of content mastery

A few SESs encouraged and supported educators in sustaining higher levels of academic performance. Their approaches were developmental, and educators interacted with the content. Degrees of confidence were inculcated in educators as they interacted freely with the content, indicative of the depth of their content mastery.

As indicated above, most SESs did not convincingly address this aspect. Thiers was monitoring for compliance. The development of skills and knowledge was left to educators' concern.

Only a few SESs help educators develop and sustain higher levels of content mastery. Most SESs do not support educators in that regard.

Below is a discussion of the implications of data collected through semi-structured interview questions.

The approach that SESs use to mentor and coach educators during their weekly visits to schools

Participants provided the guidelines as contained in the Manual for monitoring of schools. They explained their role efficiently and with confidence.

It seems that all SESs know their roles and functions. This is the case even though only a few do as they intend. Seemingly, knowing

something does not translate to doing it. There may be factors that impede them from fulfilling their function as described in the book.

Mention and explain how SESs use the teaching and learning resources to support educators

All the SESs mentioned and explained how they are supposed to use the teaching and learning resources to support educators. Again, this is contrary to the findings made through observations. Only a few effectively used the teaching and learning resources to support educators.

It seems all SESs are aware of the importance of teaching and learning materials in enriching educators' teaching. However, few have practically used them during their support to educators. Again, knowing how to do something does not necessarily translate to its actual implementation. They may talk about the learning and teaching support materials, but do not use them in their actual support to educators.

Using mock lessons for the development of educators

All SESs valued mock lesson presentation as an ideal way to ensure effective teaching and learning. They went on to speak about the importance of planning if such lessons were to be delivered. They lamented the logistical arrangements that come with planning and executing mock lessons. Notably, they complained about time and resources. However, none of them use mock lessons to empower educators in their teaching practice.

Clearly, all the SESs have some knowledge of the use and importance of mock lessons for educator empowerment, but none of them use them to develop such educators.

SESs advise educators to extricate content from the ATPs to inform the lessons

Some participants clearly indicated that they usually use available textbooks and other teaching and learning materials to broaden the content presented in ATPs. They also confirmed that the content in ATPs is concise and needs more detail to make sense. Additionally, they spoke about using electronic media to come to grips with recent information on the content of the ATPs and lesson plans.

Some participants had a hazy idea of how to extricate the content from the ATPs to inform lessons. However, references to textbooks were made, but the question of how they are used was not adequately addressed. They believed that educators are experts in their subjects and, therefore, should be able to teach the content with the aid of any available resource.

It seems that most SESs do not pay much attention to how educators broaden the content to inform lesson plans. They just assume that educators, given the ATPs and lesson plans, would teach. Another assumption is that educators are experts who can easily make sense of content and prepare for it.

Value and importance of the diagnostic reports for teaching

All participants explained the value and importance of the diagnostic reports. They viewed the reports as important documents that educators should use when planning instruction.

It therefore seems that all the SESs recognise the importance of diagnostic reports. Its use, however, is a different aspect. From the above observation, only 2 were effective in encouraging educators to use them.

SESs' views on using previous school support reports to inform ongoing support

All the SESs explained their views on the use of the previous reports for planning. They viewed the reports as necessary, as HoDs and school principals need to use them to further monitor and develop educators across different subjects.

It seems all the SESs understand the importance of the school support reports for the further development and monitoring of educators.

SESs' views on assessment for learning and educators' assistance

All the participants flagged interesting views on assessment. They even suggested ways and means for educators to use assessment for learning.

It therefore seems that all SESs understand assessment as a vehicle for teaching and learning.

Advising educators to accommodate multiple intelligences in their classrooms

The results demonstrated an understanding of the policy that drives inclusive education in schools. They also referred to the provisions in the Curriculum and Assessment Policy on inclusive education. However, they decried that schools are working under challenging conditions to implement inclusive education effectively. Some participants said little about the use of inclusive education for multiple intelligences.

Seemingly, SESs recognise the importance of inclusive education, but the conditions create barriers to its effective implementation. Thus, most of them do not pay attention to it.

Document analysis

Schools' visit reports by SESs

It therefore seems that the SESs have inadequately utilised the schools' visit report forms. Alarming, the classroom observation part of the forms is never attempted or used by SESs.

Pre and Post-tests and evaluation reports

Pre- and Post-test reports are analysed during workshops, and educators receive feedback before they depart. The summary of scores is maintained, and recommendations are made for key areas of focus. Specific subjects, however, do not use pre- and post-tests. They, instead, use evaluation forms to assess the workshops. The assessment reports are acted upon as summaries are compiled at the end of the workshops. These mechanisms are used to inform further interventions, as evident in the Monthly plans.

It therefore seems that pre- and post-tests and evaluation reports are analysed for further intervention. Evidently, workshop reports and evaluation reports are used efficiently.

Agenda and minutes of cluster meetings

SESs' monthly meetings precede the agenda for cluster meetings. These meetings address expectations for the month and quarter. All SESs carry out this mandate. In carrying out the mandate, the Cluster Leaders are engaged for their buy-in. There is a paper trail to that effect, showing the communication flow from SESs to Cluster Leaders. Thus, cluster meetings essentially execute the decisions of the SESs and Cluster Leaders. This arrangement leaves a little room for educators to inform the processes.

It therefore seems that district-level processes inform the agenda for cluster meetings. Furthermore, Cluster Leaders play an essential role in the whole affair. However, educators are not given the latitude to initiate the process during planning.

Schools' journals

All visiting officials fill schools' journals. They indicate their particulars and the purpose of the visit. To authenticate the process, they sign and indicate the visit date. Further than that, no additional information about their findings and recommendations. That information is contained in the school's visit report forms.

Apparently, all SESs use the journal to record their school visits. Schools could then use that information to interact with the SESs' concerns when a need arises.

SESs' monthly reports

A template for monthly reports is used. The key performance areas in that template are informed by the provisions of the Learner Performance Improvement Plans (LPIPs) by both DBE and the Mpumalanga DoE. Each subject's Provincial curriculum coordinator is required to develop subject-specific LPIPs for use in that given year. Therefore, the monthly reports are based on the LPIPs, and each SES must provide the reporting template.

Moreover, the agenda for the FET curriculum meetings is based on the requirements of the LPIPs, and the Deputy Chief Education Specialist makes a summary of the findings for the monthly FET meetings. Such meetings reflect on what SES has found during its visits.

Reports of the Performance Management and Development System on SESs

According to the Performance Management and Development System (PMDS) reports, all SESs are performing. The PMDS enables an

individual to conduct self-reflection based on key performance areas derived from the LPIPs. The Deputy Chief Education Specialist (DCES) then evaluates the claims against the evidence the SESs need to furnish. Upon analysing the evidence, the DCES either agrees with or disagrees with the claims. If the DCES agrees, the scores are accepted. On the contrary, the scores are lowered unless the SES provides additional evidence to support the claims. Seemingly, there is a process of engagement between the DCES and the SESs regarding the PMDS.

VII. DISCUSSION

Data collected through observation indicate that the SESs provide ineffective mentoring and support. This clearly shows that most SESs have developed a degree of exhaustion, as they have minimal impact due to contextual factors. In addition, the analysis of the school journals indicates, among other things, that SESs visit the schools. However, they do not reveal the findings of their visits in the school journal. Such findings are found in the school visit report that SESs leave behind. It would seem, therefore, that School Management Teams do not actually read or act upon the school visit reports. They rely on the journal, which contains little information about the findings.

According to the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (2014, p. 12), supervision is ineffective if the stages of development and support are not followed. For instance, during the action stage, the educator is required to agree on the action plan, and progress is monitored during subsequent visits. The model for SESs in South Africa leaves it to them to determine their approach to educator development. Therefore, the ineffectiveness stems from a lack of positive feedback from such supervision and the fact that their immediate supervisors do not do effective onsite monitoring of SESs.

Content understanding and demonstration: Mock lesson demonstration

While most SESs demonstrated a deeper understanding of the content, they could not effectively use demonstrations to illustrate it to the educators. They often deal with Pedagogical Content Knowledge, and issues of didactics are left to chance. In addition, a few of them demonstrated that they rarely used the accompanying and necessary Teaching and Learning Resources during their supervision. This leaves educators with a scant understanding of how the Teaching and Learning Materials are incorporated into teaching. This situation demonstrates the level of apathy on the side of SESs. Educators, consequently, are not well developed to teach the various subjects. Therefore, the underperformance of most schools is related to the work of SESs.

According to Kennedy (1995, p. 121), supervisors need enthusiasm and knowledge of the content and its teaching. That is why schools in the UK are subject to a group of specialised officials who have excelled in their subjects to monitor and supervise schools. It is believed that an educator who excels in their subject is better positioned to assist others. Therefore, a well-prepared and efficient SES will not shy away from conducting mock lessons to demonstrate how the teaching practice should be performed.

Dependency on mere inspection of class activities and the educator's files does not give adequate information for intervention. Therefore, the intervention by SESs is inadequate and ineffective because they do not establish a habit of conducting classroom observations.

The Irish education system succeeds because it conducts classroom observations and shares its findings with school authorities, thereby holding educators accountable for their performance (Business Tech, 2015, p. 3). In South Africa, provisions are made for classroom observation, but this depends on the SESs concerned at the time (DBE, 2013b, p. 12). Therefore, most SESs in South Africa engage in what is called "compliance monitoring," in which monitoring is conducted to ensure compliance with requirements (Willms, 2003, p. 14).

Factors that impact the adequate supervision of schools

Countries such as Ireland, the United Kingdom, and Ghana demonstrate a clear understanding of the role of school supervisors,

providing them with opportunities for growth and development. A process of accreditation follows this before a supervisor can practice. In South Africa, the recruitment process is open to anyone who could perform in interviews. A background check is not particularly important, which leaves the system open to manipulation. As a result, irrelevant supervisors are hired, contributing to the system's ineffectiveness. For example, in the UK, accreditation of practising supervisors is compulsory, which instills some sense of responsibility and accountability on their part (National Union of Teachers, 2007, p. 14).

The interviews above also revealed the fact that SESs fend for themselves when they join the system. There is no programme in place to develop capacity and knowledge among SESs. The orientation is informal and does not hold SESs accountable. DCES does not build SESs' capacity. Their development depends on the expected submissions, which are due every week. The impact of SESs is not determined. Schools are the only ones who account for their performance. In other words, schools in South Africa can operate without SESs, as their impact is not felt.

According to observations of SES during their development of educators, few SESs demonstrate how teaching should take place. They merely look for compliance with the ATPs. They rely heavily on previous question papers and diagnostic reports. It appears that their intervention is based on strategies designed to help learners understand the questions. It does not necessarily deal with the content areas. This acts as an impediment to the effective development of educators. If that is the case, educators will not appreciate them.

Use of previous reports for further development of educators.

Interviews have shown that SESs do not necessarily hold schools accountable because they fail to use previous reports effectively. One SES has the following to say about the reports: "I compile the report on my findings, and it is up to the school to implement them." This response clearly indicates the fact that SESs in South Africa pass the buck to schools. Their role is reduced to compiling reports that are not implemented, rendering them ineffective in their supervision. In the UK education system, reports compiled by SESs are highly regarded, and schools rely on their implementation. If there is no accountability for monitoring the implementation of reports, the supervisory role of school supervisors is rendered ineffective (Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills, 2014, p. 15).

Knowledgeability of SESs

During the interviews, it became clear that the majority of SES are knowledgeable but do not effectively convey this knowledge to educators. This makes it difficult to develop the workforce effectively. Knowing something and being unable to impart it does not help the one who is helped. Moreover, being knowledgeable does not necessarily mean that one can transfer or cultivate such knowledge in others. The majority of SES, therefore, requires further development in how educators are prepared and equipped to teach effectively. The findings of the observation have shown that most SESs are inclined to monitor compliance, but this is ineffective. Performing countries focus on the effectiveness of their supervisory services, which help improve school performance in their jurisdictions.

VIII. CONCLUSION

This study sought to investigate the role of SESs in the development of educators in selected secondary schools in the Gert Sibande district, Mpumalanga Province. In doing so, the researcher attempted to identify and discuss factors that hinder the effective development of educators by SES, determine the procedures that the SESs in Gert Sibande district are using to service schools, and develop strategies that the Gert Sibande education district could employ to turn the situation around. As a result, the problems stated in chapter 1 were deliberated upon in both chapters 4 and 5. The aims and objectives of this study informed the processes involved in the inquiry.

This study indicates that SESs are very important for the performance

of an education system. Their supportive role is of cardinal importance towards the development of educators in the realisation of educational goals. Many countries have one form or another of SESs, but the way they are utilised and serviced differs from one context to another. For example, the literature review revealed, among other essential aspects, that SESs need to be adequately trained and accredited to perform. Progressive countries such as the United Kingdom and Ireland have some form of SESs or supervisors. Their supervisors are adequately trained to operate, and this contributes to the performance of their respective education systems.

It has also been proven that South African supervisors lack precise accounting mechanisms to monitor their work for ongoing support and development. Progressive countries have these mechanisms, which help develop educators for higher performance. Additionally, SESs in South Africa are free to conduct classroom observations. In progressive countries, classroom observation and support are part and parcel of educators' development. At the school level, it emerged that SESs are not well equipped to perform their functions, which contributes to poor performance across subjects. The SESs find it challenging to develop educators who are not effectively monitored and produced at the school level. Therefore, the support that SESs provide lacks an anchor on which further monitoring, support, and development could be based. These are some of the issues DBE should consider when revamping the system. This study will therefore contribute significantly to the DBE's efforts to develop alternative models for managing the work of SESs. It could thus inform policymakers on the best approaches for SESs to use in developing educators in South Africa.

IX. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

There are no conflicts of interest in this study.

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