Curriculum Leadership Training Modalities for Departmental Heads: Perceptions from South African

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative interpretative study explores the modalities of curriculum leadership training and development for departmental heads. Participant sampling was purposeful, and data were generated through semi-structured questions. Twelve department head (DH) participants were purposefully selected from six secondary schools. The participants had three or more years of experience in their positions. The theory of adult learning supported by principles of adult learning anchored the arguments in the article, supported the literature review, and assisted in answering the research questions. The literature review revealed that training and development vary from country to country. The findings showed that induction, professional support forums, modules and short learning programmes are the primary modalities used to train and develop DHs in South Africa.

KEYWORDS

Curriculum leadership; training and development; departmental head; training programmes; adult learning; training modalities.

INTRODUCTION

Department heads (DHs) are members of the middle leadership of schools, between the school management teams (SMT) at the managerial level and the teachers beneath them (Skerritt et al., 2023). This paper will demonstrate that middle leaders lead from the middle (Grootenboer, 2018). This cohort of leaders is also responsible for teaching one or more subjects or programmes in an allocated department. It is challenging to describe their responsibilities because they transcend numerous roles and positions depending on the size of the school, specifications by the education department and legislative requirements (Grootenboer, 2023). According to the Performance Administrative Measures (Department of Basic Education, 2016), South African schools can be assigned one to four DHs based on the size of the institution and the subject choices offered if it is a secondary school. As administrators and leaders of their departments, DHs are critical in schools (Chun & Evans, 2023; Leithwood, 2016). Moreover, it is crucial to remember that they guide the principal and SMT regarding teacher placement. Most importantly, they are educators and subject-matter experts in the areas they oversee. Therefore, they are resource teachers essential for policy dissemination across the school. However, note that no standardised modalities of training middle leaders exist in South Africa, and here lies the challenge. The research questions (RQs) guiding this study thus are as follows: What modalities of curriculum leadership training do DHs receive for their development and support, and what are the perceptions of DHs regarding the effectiveness of these types of professional development support?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Countries differ in where, how long, who the provider is and what modalities they use to train their DHs. In some countries, DH training takes an on-the-job approach using mentoring and coaching for support (Bush, 2018; Hasan & Hamdan, 2023). In others, DH training employs short courses and workshops, stressing practicality information and skills development. Elsewhere, training is provided through a blend of in-person instruction and online learning, the length of which varies depending on who presents them: an external entity, the Ministry of Education or other internal parties, such as the school principal (Javadi et al., 2017; Kasim et al., 2015). Some countries offer informal, institutional and work-related development using workshops, induction, mentoring, seminars, staff meetings and continuing teacher professional development (CPTD) as training modalities. Others use short courses that lead to diploma or degree certification, available as formal qualifications (Corbett, 2023; Simkins et al., 2018). However, formal training provided for DHs is lacking in South Africa before and during their incumbency. Therefore, it is critical to research what modalities of curriculum leadership training DHs receive for their development and support and their perceptions regarding the effectiveness of these types of professional development support.

Training vs. development

"Training and development are labels used to define those educational activities implemented in organizations to empower employees', and managers' competences in the lifelong learning perspective of improving their performance" (Sartori et al., 2018, p. 1). According to Hammond and Churchill (2018), training and development primarily seek to improve the performance of individuals and groups within organisations, including the schools that DHs are a part of.

Sartori et al. (2018) explain that training is characterised as systematic, organised activities to gain information, capabilities and attitudes. Furthermore, Salas et al. (2012) state that training should be purposefully planned, be diagnostic and offer trainee feedback. Kulkarni (2013) avows that raining entails positive growth in such organisational goals for the best possible improvement of the employee's quality of work life. (p. 136).

Training encompasses raising employee productivity. It improves teams and organisational effectiveness. Furthermore, training is the systematic process of influencing people's knowledge, abilities and attitudes to increase individual, team and organisational success (Oppenauer & Van de Voorde, 2018) and is crucial for achieving an organisation's goals, such as those of a school. Trained and adequately developed DHs will accomplish better results in their leadership positions and improve the efficacy of their divisions and the school. Continuous, purposeful and valuable training should be provided to the targeted audience. Salas et al. (2012) state that it should alter how trainees conduct themselves.

Development is intended for persons in leadership roles; it is proactive, anticipating a need, and attempts to develop the leader fully. It is ongoing (Chiu et al., 2023). The process primarily intends to satisfy the employee's future needs and is self-initiated. The DH requires the latter because it is continuous and forms the basis for lifelong learning.

Formal and informal settings are used for teacher training and development (Lai et al., 2016; Liu et al., 2016; Timperly, 2011). Formal training is based, among other principles, on the following. The training needs and problems of the target group must be assessed and identified. The issues must be analysed, and solutions should be determined. The next logical step is to set training priorities and goals. Then, appropriate instructional and assessment methods must be chosen, and the training must be implemented and evaluated. At the tail-end of the process, training reinforcement must occur. The training and development cycle is continual for the target group, such as middle managers (Blanchard & Thacker, 2023). However, informal training and learning are based on the needs and aspirations of the target group or participants and are linked to self-education or self-directed learning and inspired by the quest for personal development. It is based on gaining new insights through life experiences. Informal education programmes focus on student-focused teaching and learning methods (Lee et al., 2022).

Lifelong learning

This article adopted the definition of Dosunmu and Adeyemo (2018, p. 193), who postulate lifelong learning as an opportunity for inclusive education that supports each person's rights and values. Lifelong learning is a method of learning new things, developing skills and

knowledge, adapting to new and demanding circumstances, expanding in the job and adapting to new methods (Zhang et al., 2022). Lifelong learning gained popularity in the 1970s due to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (UNESCO, 2006). By fusing formal education with informal learning, UNESCO wanted to emphasise personal growth and achievement. The benefit of lifelong learning for job progression is that it allows for ongoing skill development, promoting professional advancement. Dosunmu and Adeyemo (2018) propose that workers grow in their chosen careers because of workplace learning. For this article, it is crucial to remember that lifelong learning is essential for DHs' professional improvement and personal growth through the experiences and educational opportunities gained at work (Dosunmu & Adeyemo, 2018). Lifelong learning can be internal or external, formal or informal. Professional development programmes are primarily used to deliver adult learning in institutions, such as schools, and for adult learners, such as DHs.

Programmes for professional development

Advancing the profession is obligatory to improve the output of organisations, such as schools (Oppenauer & Van de Voorde, 2018), which is the fundamental task of management and leadership (Bush, 2023). School leadership and organisations should invest time, materials and energy in the development and capacitation of others (Cardno, 2012), such as DHs. According to Cardno (2012), successful leadership development is a specialised method of personal development, enabling leaders at all levels to grow their skills and talents.

A person gains the competence necessary to perform well as a leader through leadership development. School principals should plan the succession of middle leaders, such as DHs, by identifying potential leaders, cultivating new talent and supporting the development of leadership skills at all levels (Cardno, 2012; Mense et al., 2018). Bush (2008) claims that all educational systems worldwide should provide leadership development programmes that produce the desired outcomes of the evolution from classroom to school leadership. Professional development programmes (PDPs) should provide employees with a set of skills (Jackson et al., 2023) that they can apply in the workplace (Gagnon & Collinson, 2014; Santos et al., 2015). Based on the demands of the business and the priorities and requirements of the individual or groups, organisations decide who, what, when, how, and why to train. DHs must advance in their jobs, just like any other employee. They must receive training to assume the subsequent leadership degree or develop into the following group of school leaders (Mense et al., 2018).

DHs must receive training in supervisory positions and be equipped, whether they oversee individuals or teams (Mense et al., 2018). Leadership is a complex trait that must be created to meet the organisation's context and potential leadership situations. Training programmes in multiple leadership philosophies should be made available for future leaders. Adequate PDPs must be put in place to reach such intentions. DHs should be given access to PDP opportunities to upskill and acquire new work-related information while assisting the overall company expansion. Gagnon and Collinson (2014) and Santos et al. (2015) state that

PDPs are implemented for organisational development and career advancement, whereas Satiani et al., 2014) argue that it is for leadership and supervisory development, all areas where the DHs operate within the school. Various modalities (formal or informal) are followed to train DHs.

Modalities of training for departmental heads

Teacher development is uneven and disjointed (Chen & Chang, 2006). Professional support forums (PSFs), continuing professional teacher development (CPTD) (Taylor, 2023), and quality management systems (QMSs) (Shongwe, 2023) are among the prerequisites for annual in-service teacher professional development training in South Africa. According to Bush and Glover (2016) and Msila (2014), these training opportunities are minimal, inconsistent and poorly managed. PSFs help teachers and DHs strengthen their leadership skills and subject-matter competence. They occur after work for two hours, limiting their ability to acquire new competence because they are drained after a long day's work. Various countries have different approaches or modalities of training their middle leaders.

An international look at modalities for DH leadership training programmes

Training is conducted over a specific period at multiple locations using various modalities. On-the-job training in the United Kingdom (UK) addresses the difficulties DHs confront, draws on mentorship and coaching for assistance, gives DHs access to top-notch resources, and helps them use the most recent research (Corbett, 2023). Additionally, it offers chances for organised introspection (Simkins et al., 2018). Middle leaders in the UK obtain a formal qualification from the Department for Education (Simkins et al., 2018).

Australia offers unaccredited short courses and workshops focusing on practical knowledge and abilities (Thorpe & Bennet-Powell, 2014). Higher education institutes also provide accredited long-term external courses. Leadership development programmes are available for educators aspiring to become principals (Bush & Glover, 2016). In Malaysia, training combines in-person instruction and online study (Javadi et al., 2017). Following completion, continuing professional development is used to advance and promote excellence (Kasim et al., 2015). The programme does not guarantee that one will become a DH. In Kenya, in-service training can include seminars, inductions, workshops, full-staff sessions, mentorship, or CPTD. Following their appointment to the position of DH, the Ministry of Education provides DHs with continuous in-service training and development (Atebe, 2009). Instead of emphasising teacher resource management, innovation and management, in-service training opportunities concentrate on curriculum implementation, monitoring, teaching techniques and evaluating students' work (Maingi, 2015). Furthermore, in-service education and training only occur when instructors are elevated to the position of DH (Maingi, 2015). Training is provided for DHs in Trinidad and Tobago through training programmes, curriculum assistance and workshops. Additionally, training is provided through higher education institutions supported by the Ministry of Education under the Strategic Plan 2011–2015. Teachers and DHs interested in leadership positions can access training and development opportunities (Bissessar, 2017;

Ministry of Education, 2012). Short courses that lead to certification are also provided in Canada to facilitate DH growth (Simkins et al., 2018). Formal certifications, degrees and diplomas are available for DH development. The Ministry of Education created the teacher performance appraisal, which falls under the informal category and is managed locally by the principals. The South African context of DH training is discussed in the succeeding section.

Modalities of DHs' training for curriculum leadership in South Africa

The widely used form of development in South Africa is a once-off induction (Bush, 2018). Malinga (2016, p. 88) states that DHs are trained as teachers but have not received management or leadership training. The evidence gathered from the in-depth interviews confirms that DHs receive insufficient training, particularly regarding building leaders (Bush & Glover, 2016).

Several individual DHs use higher education institutions to pursue self-initiated studies. According to Reichard et al. (2017), DHs embark on, keep track of, and evaluate their personal growth as leaders instead of relying on their organisation to build a development plan (p. 137). This training can be completed by enrolling in courses, completing homework, creating a portfolio or taking tests abroad (Flückiger et al., 2015; SACE, 2013; Simkins et al., 2018; Thorpe & Bennet-Powell, 2014).

Teachers and school leaders also use short learning programmes (SLPs) for training and development. SLPs do not carry credit (SACE, 2013). Universities offer high-quality SLPs, which can benefit individuals significantly. They are available to refresh or expand knowledge and abilities in particular fields.

In summarising, except for South Africa and Kenya, countries such as Canada, the UK, Malaysia, Australia, Trinidad and Tobago provide DHs with official and informal training and development opportunities through licensed service providers and institutions of higher learning, such as universities. The newly introduced Advanced Diploma in Education in South Africa is meant to be a stepping stone to principalship, not becoming a DH. The DH incumbents are only given access to training after being promoted.

Adults learn differently than young ones, and specific approaches should be followed to make their learning successful. This study was anchored on the adult learning theory.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Merriam (2004, p. 199) states that adult learning is the binding agent for a field that would otherwise be extremely diverse, encompassing everything from educational gerontology to human resource development, adult basic education, and continuing professional education. Adult learning theory concerns what and how adults learn, which can be formal or informal learning or activities involving participating in management sessions at work or learning communication skills. In any way, the adult will be involved in learning. Adults, like children, learn in diverse ways and paces. Of significance for adult learners is understanding their abilities and shortcomings for learning to be effective (Caffarella, 2002). Adults are motivated by the desire to increase their knowledge and skills and gain employment commensurate (Knowles et

al., 2020). Adult learning has its advantages, such as wanting to self-preserve in the workspace; it has the potential to create personal, economic and social value, motivation for prestige and success, staying with the times or possessing current knowledge in the field, the ability to share acquired expertise, and the security of learning within a group (Schuller & Desjardins, 2011). However, adult learning has disadvantages, such as the interest and willingness to learn, time availability, competing priorities and learning opportunities (Baharudin et al., 2013). The research methodology for this study followed a qualitative approach.

METHODOLOGY

This article used an interpretive paradigm and a qualitative methodology (Creswell, 2013). By exploiting the interpretation paradigm, researchers can examine phenomena at remarkable depths, leading to a high level of validity due to trustworthiness, which determines the accuracy and honesty of the findings generated. Denzin and Lincoln (2013) argue that data collection using the qualitative approach is versatile and is interested in gaining insight into the investigated phenomenon from the participating DHs' viewpoints. Compared to the UK, Australia and Malaysia, South Africa has no standardised modalities for training middle leaders. This research aimed to investigate which modalities of curriculum leadership training DHs receive for their development and support and establish the perceptions of DHs regarding the effectiveness of professional development support (Cohen et al., 2011) while generating data from the interviewees' encounters in their day-to-day lives and their interpretations of them (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Ogina, 2017).

Data from face-to-face interviews was generated from 12 DHs from six schools in an education district in a province of South Africa. Six male and six female practising DHs were selected. Two DHs were selected from each school. Equally, there were six DHs each from rural and township schools. The equal representation was deliberate to be consistent with gender equality and representability. The sampled DHs had three or more years of experience in their positions and leadership and management experience as middle leaders. Intentional sampling was used for convenience (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Participating DHs had experience and information on training and training modalities they experienced and could share. All had experience of over three years. Data were transcribed, cross-checked against field notes and referred to the participants for verification and validation to ensure trustworthiness and validity. Authorisation to conduct the research in schools was sought from the Provincial Department of Education, school governing bodies and principals. Participants were asked to sign consent forms, which allowed them to withdraw from participation in the study should they feel like doing so. The Faculty of Education Sciences (ESREC) Ethics Committee of North-West University also issued an ethical clearance certificate (NWU-00274-16-A). Pseudonyms were given to the DHs. Text transcriptions were created from notes and audio recordings. Patterns and themes appearing from the transcripts and the literature were documented. After connecting the patterns found across several data sources and methodologies, the researcher investigated how

the categories or concepts connected to the study objectives. Further analysis was done during the discussion, which assisted in drawing the conclusions of the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The data analysis highlighted presentations, PSFs, modular approaches and SLPs as the modalities of training and development for DHs. In this way, RQ1, which sought to identify what modalities of leadership training DHs received for development and support, and RQ2, which looked at the DHs' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of these types of professional development support, were answered. Furthermore, links between the RQs and the six principles of adult learning identified by Knowles et al. (2020) were established. It also confirmed the need for specialised training programmes for DHs.

Presentations

Most training activities, such as induction, are offered orally through presentations. Many interviewees acknowledged participating in the induction procedure when they began working as DHs. The DHs bemoaned that the induction was a one-time event over a few days at an identified location involving newly promoted SMT members, such as deputy principals and principals. Even though induction is a critical part of appointing new employees, unaccredited and uncertified training education department personnel mostly do it unofficially. Sometimes, SMT members from various schools, who should share good practices with the newly promoted DHs and SMTs, present it. DH nine (DH9) from school five (S5) summarises their experiences with the presentations in this manner:

> *We were given induction, in two days. I think it must be ongoing. The presented information was too much, cramped into one day, or two days. Someone was presenting, yes. A number of them were coming one after the other presenting about what to expect as DHs. Some were deputies and some principals. (DH9, S5)*

In this response, the DH responded to RQ1 and RQ2. They also directly linked this response to Knowles et al.'s (2020) aspects of learning. The response specifically addressed point two, which is the significance of learners' experiences, which they bring to the learning environment, and aspect five, which points to learning orientation. The latter aspect emphasises that adults are life-centred in their learning, meaning they want to know what and why they are learning. Both RQs were answered as the DH mentioned what was presented and their feeling about it.

Sharing the same sentiment, DH2 from S1, DH3 from S2, and DH5 from S3 stated the following:

> *They are doing this for the new DHs, these inductions are training. People will tell you (present to you) that deputy principals and DHs are inducted in one group in a day or two, yeah, and it does not cater for those who have been in the system. (DH2, S1)*

Here, the DH's response can be associated with aspect three, which is geared towards specific DH experiences.

The induction was one day for teachers who became DHs. It was offered (presented) by the department (of education). I think it should happen frequently; it shouldn't be a once-off thing. So, to cultivate knowledge and understanding of our duties as DHs it should be an ongoing process. I think follow-up should be done; we need more training. It was presented for the new principals, the new DHs and new deputies. (DH3, S2)

The response of DH3 might be connected to aspect five, as it indicates the need to link with real DH tasks over time.

I received induction with the SMTs. It was general. There were DHs, deputy principals and principals for two days and there was a presentation. (DH5, S3)

This response from DH5 can be linked to aspect three, as it indicates the need for focus on specific DH experiences.

It is crucial to remember that all the quoted DHs agree that the inductions were always for the entire group of SMTs, not only for DHs. The inductions followed a presenter–audience mode. The DHs are neither given time to interact with the presenters' content nor with one another. The short period afforded to the induction does not help the situation. Ideally, the induction should be over a period where there will be an opportunity to provide the DHs with mentoring and coaching to ease them into their position (Bush, 2018). One to three days of once-off induction is not enough for a fruitful induction. Additionally, DHs mentioned that they participated in PSFs as part of their regular Department of Education training.

PSFs

PSFs are collaborative and group based. Most interviewed DHs confused the PSFs with workshops. PSFs are forums where the subject-matter teachers, DHs and senior education specialists (SES) for a particular subject congregate to discuss changes and barriers of teachers, analyse results, discuss related matters, such as how to improve in the subject and share good practices (Tapala et al., 2020). They occur twice or three times each term. Teachers also attend the PSFs; they are not only for DHs. They last from one to three hours and are held after school. Discussions regarding the topic at hand are held at PSFs, and ideas and best practices are exchanged. Moderation by peers of learner performance from various schools is performed, and discussions about the best way to address challenges occur. PSFs are not formal learning platforms but more peer- and school-level development. PSFs are held at neighbourhood schools under the direction of the SES. In their response, DH8 had this to say:

We attended the PSF, the workshops so that is where I got training. Maybe in a term it may come (take place) twice or three times. At the PSF we talk (interactively in conversation) about the content, but we also look at the challenges. (DH8, S4)

The response of DH8 can be tied to aspect two on learner self-concept, internal motivation and self-directed learning, as Knowles et al. (2020) postulated on aspects of learning and aspect three on learner experiences, which DHs can share with peers and learn from them simultaneously. This response can also be associated with aspect four, which speaks to the readiness to learn when they can benefit from what they are about to learn.

Referring to what the SESs are doing for their training, DH4 from S2 raised the following:

"What they normally do is to conduct PSF for DHs for every particular subject. This is for the teachers who teach a certain subject. They just advise in a professional way for two hours and it was only (for) one day" (DH4, S2).

When training is offered, there is a larger likelihood that the participants will better understand what they are dealing with when there is an interaction where attendees communicate and assist one another and when the instructors deliver professionally. Interaction motivates attendees to exchange knowledge and benefit from each other.

In this response, the DHs link their experience to aspect one, which is about the reasons individuals should learn something. Of course, there were some positive responses on the use of PSFs for DH training, as attested to by the response from DH4, who mentioned:

PSFs-the professional support forums, that's where DHs are capacitated. (DH4, S3)

In this quote, the DH responded to RQ1, which can also be linked to aspect six, as it points to internal motivation to learn, leading to increased happiness at work, improved quality of life and higher self-esteem. The quote is also in response to RQ2 on the DHs' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of the modalities of professional development support. The response can be linked to aspect four, which is the readiness of adults to learn things that would assist them in doing things right in the future. DHs must develop their management and leadership skills to benefit the departments under their supervision. They should be ready to learn new skills and knowledge, even from their peers, as is done during PSFs. DHs are also involved in self-development, where they enrol for specific modules, building to a certified course or programme, with higher education institutions (HEIs), such as universities.

Modules

Some training is presented via modules or courses. The modular or course mode primarily applies to instances where individual teachers, such as DHs, are enrolled for courses or programmes with HEIs, e.g., private colleges or universities. According to Reichard et al. (2017), during their self-development, those in leadership positions, such as DHs, "initiate, monitor, and evaluate their own leadership development instead of relying on their organization to construct a development plan for them" (p. 137). Developing oneself is the responsibility of those who want to stay current and have the necessary skills and information. It is also crucial to organisations, such as schools, because they stand to gain much from a competent and informed DH. The individual starts the training to advance their abilities and understanding of the profession they conduct. Not all interviewed DHs mentioned that they are enrolled for a module or course for self-upskilling. DH8 and DH9 from S5 mentioned they were enrolled with a specific HEI for self-development. DH9 claimed they had enrolled in a university to study history because it is a subject they cover as part of their teaching load. The DH enrolled before being promoted to the position of DH. The two DHs said it was advantageous to prepare and obtain information and abilities regarding the subject(s) they were to lead, as it is one of the requirements to become a DH in South Africa. The above was clear in their respective responses.

I'm not well equipped with the skill (of heading the subjects) but I'm studying, I'm going through some of the literature, because I cannot lead if I don't know anything. I did History 1, 2, 3 with UNISA (University of South Africa). I (also) did ACE (Advanced Certificate in Education) in LO (Life Orientation) with the North-West University. (DH9, S5)

The response of DH9 can be linked to RQ1. The DH knew beforehand which mode to use to self-improve and be ready for a future DH position. This response relates to component four, which is about being willing to learn new information that will assist them in attaining goals now or later.

I am attending (classes at) the university of UNISA and I'm doing honours in management … Education Management. It is general (for SMTs, not specific for DHs). (S4, DH8)

Here, the DH's response can be linked to aspect five, orientation to learning. The DH knew they wanted a promotion, so they enrolled in a management-orientated programme. They were task-focused on their approach.

Positively, DH4 from S2 indicated the following:

I look forward to enrolling for another course in English teaching. It will help me with skills and knowledge for my subject. It will also make me a better teacher and manager. The last one did. (DH4, S2)

The DH's response is tied to RQ2 on DHs' perceptions regarding the efficacy of the career development they acquire in its various forms. The response connects to all the aspects of learning, as espoused by Knowles et al. (2020). The DHs know why they must learn, they have experience in what they want to learn, they are ready to learn and orientated towards what they must learn and are highly motivated to do so.

Although the modules and courses the DHs enrol for individually are good for personal and professional development, there should be guidance on which ones are crucial for curriculum leadership. They should address the DHs' specific subject knowledge in a phase or grade. They should also upskill the DHs' teaching methods and assessment techniques specific to that subject, grade or phase. Those enrolled for leadership and management modules should also be guided so that the modules are fruitful for the DH level.

DHs also mentioned that they attend SLPs for training and development.

SLPs

SLPs are brief courses that do not count towards credits but involve completing homework and tests for summative evaluation. SLPs can last from two days to a week, as in Australia (Rosenfeld et al., 2008). Summative evaluation provides the participants with certificates to verify their participation in such programmes. The Higher Education Qualification Sub-framework is not used to display them (SACE, 2013). Several SLPs do not lead to recognised qualifications that follow the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) (SACE, 2013). SLPs do not occur in structured, official undergraduate or graduate programmes, but they can still count towards CPTD credits for teachers. Numerous HEIs provide high-quality SLPs in conformity with the Council for Higher Education. SLPs address specific learning requirements identified by society,

organisations or individuals. They are provided solely to enhance lifelong learning by upgrading or expanding knowledge and abilities in a particular field, such as curricular or educational leadership (Hu & Randel, 2014). Attendees of SLPs are motivated to advance their professional growth by learning more about their area of expertise. In their comments, two DHs who are colleagues said they participated in SLPs. The other DHs have not encountered or heard of SLPs.

> *No, we attended some lecture. It was some few days. We had to write some assignment and test (exam) … the period was too short. It was for newly appointed DHs … Yeah, we got certificates. (DH1, S1)*

DH2 from S1 stated that they attended the same SLP but could not complete it. DH2 emphasised that the SLP was intended for principals, and of significance in their response was that an external service provider (North-West University) presented it. They also mentioned that they did not know how it was organised or how they ended up participating there.

At the end of the day, I just ran away (sic). It was meant for principals. That's why I said it is organised by outsiders, people from the North-West University, but I don't know how it comes to us (how it was organised), I cannot (don't) know if the Department (of Basic Education) arranged it or is it the university on its own coming to us as teachers. (DH2, S2)

In response to RQ2, the DH demonstrated their attitude towards some development opportunities. In the same breath, aspect one on relevance and the need to know why one is learning came into play (Knowles et al., 2020).

SLPs are available to all SMT members and are not reserved for DHs (a frequently arising theme in this article). Therefore, DHs are never equipped independently of SMTs and other instructors. External service providers, notably universities, provide the SLPs. Consequently, most participants did not mention the SLPs. The DHs are unaware of how or who organised the SLPs because they do not happen frequently. Therefore, it is crucial to develop standard SLPs for the DHs nationally, although they might be presented to suit the context of the school, e.g., rural-urban, previously disadvantaged schools and schools found in developed communities.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This article aimed to establish the training modalities used to develop DHs by establishing the practice and applicability in other countries. Four modalities, including presentations, PSFs, modules or courses and SLPs, were discovered to be primarily used for DH development in the Bojanala Education District. First, the presentation mode was primarily used in the induction process immediately after appointing the DH. Second, PSFs are meant for peer learning and guidance, but the article reveals they are not appropriately managed. In the third mode, DHs are active in self-development, as they enrol for courses with HEIs to broaden their knowledge and skills in the subjects they head and in curriculum leadership. Lastly, some DHs mentioned that they participated in SLPs, although they could not finish the programme because they felt it was beyond their scope and understanding. It was also clear that the DHs do not know who

organises the SLPs. Aspects of learning by Knowles et al. (2020) were also brought into perspective to answer the RQs and link the outcomes to the reviewed literature and theoretical framework used in this article. The paper then urges the creation of an intentional training and development programme for aspiring and practising DHs. The human resource development division of the DBE at the province and district levels should manage the envisaged programme from a central place. It must consider the contextual needs of DHs and their schools; hence, an in-depth needs analysis of all DHs should be conducted before its development and implementation. It is also recommended that principals, as they are more familiar with what the DH does than any other training official, be at the forefront of driving the programme and overseeing the DHs' lifelong learning.

Limitations and delimitations

The study was conducted on a small scale and with a smaller sample. It would be interesting to see what results a bigger sample would yield. A much bigger sample drawn from a bigger population is recommended to generalise the results better.

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