

Probing the level of support schools receive from education districts: a case study of Limpopo Province, South Africa

Abstract

Schools must get full support from education districts in management and governance as well as curriculum provisioning to ensure that all schools provide quality basic education across the province. This is according to the Annual Performance Plan 2019 – 2020 of the Limpopo Department of Education. This support is meant to provide principals with a support they need to make sure the schools are effective in areas of management, curriculum delivery and financial management. On the other hand, it has been realized that there are some principals who because of lack of support find themselves in difficult conditions. Schools around the province and the country often experience violence and poor management which can be attributed to lack of support to principals who are left handling school matters haphazardly.

This study adopted the techniques of qualitative methodology where self-administered questionnaire was used on face-to-face basis to probe the level of satisfaction principals derive from the support they receive from their district offices which includes their circuit offices. It was found that in general there are principals who are not satisfied with the support and this is believed to contribute on dysfunctionality of such schools. This study provides ways to deal with identified support gaps.

Keywords: schools dysfunctionality, schools' governing bodies, effectiveness of schools, governance, satisfaction of principals

Volume 3 Issue 6 - 2019

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Received: November 04, 2019 | **Published:** December 19, 2019

Introduction

As adopted from National level, all schools are expected to be supported at all times by their district offices. The support will be on management, curriculum delivery, finance management and governance to name a few. This is to make sure school principals are well equipped to deliver in their schools.

Poorly managed schools are characterized by levels of poor performance. There are also challenges of acts of violence in schools around the whole country in South Africa which also at times attributed to ineffective management in schools. These are mostly depicted in media with special focus on social media. They range from educators and learners involved in physical fights to the disregard of rules by both educators and learners. Some parents also use schools as battle grounds when fighting for other needs that are not even education related.¹ The 2018 Limpopo Annual statistics report² indicated that although number of learners falling pregnant has dropped in 2017, a total of 384 fell pregnant. This is attributed to different reasons including learners having affairs with educators.

On the other hand, some educators blame lack of support to principals by both the districts and circuit officials in terms of clarifying how matters such as those of management, Governance and safety are to be handled. All the Provincial Education Departments have to conduct the study based on the Programme Performance Measure (PPM) 107. The Provincial departments are expected to report annually. With the introduction of the effective monitoring and evaluation systems, education departments are therefore expected to introduce or develop improvement plans following the results of the study which was introduced in 2018.

The Limpopo Department of Education also indulged in the study and the findings indicated that the districts are doing well in supporting the schools. This is because over 55% of sampled principals rated the support as useful. However, just like in other provinces there are concerns over some areas that needed more support.

Literature review

Conducting literature review is a very important step as it is the most effective way of becoming familiar with previous findings.³ As indicated, there is a lot of coverage on media focusing on what happens in schools. This part of the article will focus more on media coverage trend on matters of violence happening in schools. This part of the article will also focus on what the SASA indicates in terms of handling violence in the school and other management matters.

a. Programme Performance Measure (PPM) 107

The PPM 107: Percentage of school principals rating the support services of districts as being satisfactory. This is an evaluation task which is to measure the impact of the support provided to the schools by their district offices. According to the National Evaluation Policy Framework,⁴ impact evaluation focusses on the overall benefit from a policy, programme or project measures at long term basis. It seeks to measure changes in outcome and the wellbeing of the target population) that are attributed to a specific intervention (Pg 9).

The PPM 107 is linked to the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 and district policies. It is also linked to the Medium Term Strategic Framework of current South African Government which will be in power from 2019 – 2025. It is believed that well supported schools perform well as they are effectively managed. On the other hand, some

schools around the country experience disturbance, some attributed to poor management resulting in principals that are demoralized due to lack of effective support. In Limpopo, the Premier has put education target of 80% pass for Grade 12, the basic education exit point.⁵ This needs well supported schools.

b. Examples of acts of violence in South African Schools that call for effective schools support

In 2018 September News 24,⁶ one of the news sources in South Africa reported that violence in schools is a societal problem that needs all stakeholders to work together. This was said by Ms Phumla Williams, Acting Head of Government Communication. She cited stabbing, rock throwing, assault, bullying, sexual assault and killings as disturbing in South African Schools.

Other reported incidents by the News 24 are as follows:

- A Northwest High School pupil stabbed a 7 years old grade 1 to death in Makapanstad in November 2018.
- Also in same month, Kimberly Boys High School pupil was seen throwing water to a lady teacher in face.
- Grade 11 pupil at Fumani High School in Katlehong was arrested on October 24th for trying to stab fellow learner.
- In September 2018, a pupil in Mpumalanga was filmed assaulting school bus driver full of learners.
- On the 13th September same year, a 17 years old boy in Zeerust, North West was arrested for stabbing a teacher to death.
- In August 2018, classes were suspended at the Kwamasakheni High School in Kwazulu Natala Province after two pupils were stabbed to death.
- In mid- 2019, a principal of Bopedi Bapedi in Limpopo was caught in social media beating learners in class.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the performance of districts/circuit offices on their school monitoring and support services across curriculum, governance and management matters. The schools' principals rating their level of satisfaction on the support services received is a key determinant factor of the extent of the performance of the districts/circuits on this performance measure. It however should be indicated that it is expected that all schools are maximally supported.⁷ Following a number of incidences of drug abuse and lack of discipline in schools, Limpopo Department of Education had to strengthen the school safety programme and trained officials in governance programme training on school safety policy.⁸

Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study were:

- I. To probe levels in percentages of satisfaction of principals in terms of monitoring and support they receive from districts. (Districts including circuit offices)
- II. To assess the extent of monitoring and support services principals receive from districts.
- III. To establish ways to strengthen levels of support provided to school principals by the districts, and recommend them for future improvement.

Methodology

This section focusses on the methodology used in this study. Hoofstee⁹ describes research methodology as a blue print to be followed when carrying out the study. The choice of a methodology is based on the topic and the targeted subject with the aim of deriving more insight from the subject which will assist in coming up with conclusions that are have characteristics of being reliable and valid.

c. Method of data collection

The study adopted the techniques of qualitative methodology where much of the information is based on the personal feelings/opinion principals used to rate their level of satisfaction regarding the monitoring & support they receive from districts.

d. Data collection techniques

Data collection was based mainly on interaction through self-administered questionnaire, though all sampled principals were to convene in one hall, but per district, in the presence of the researcher. Each principals was then required to respond to the questionnaire and immediately, upon completion, submit to the researcher. They were all allowed to ask clarity seeking questions so that they respond with full understanding.

e. Reliability and validity matters

The tool provided by the Department of Basic Education was also implemented as a survey. Tools were sent to sample schools different from the ones sampled before for them to respond on the tool and e-mail back. This is in line with the notion of triangulation. According to The tool provided by the Department of Basic Education was also implemented as a survey. Tools were sent to sample schools different from the ones sampled before for them to respond on the tool and e-mail back. This is in line with the notion of triangulation. According to Bakewell, Adams and Pratt,¹⁰ triangulation is the way researchers use different methods to gather data from different target audience on the same topic. This gives variety of data that assist in enriching the findings.

f. Population and sampling procedures

There are more than 3500 public schools in Limpopo (SA-SAMS 2019). The number keeps shrinking following the programme to merge some of the schools due to dysfunctionality state caused amongst others by having less number of learners which affects teachers' allocation. A total of sixty schools across all districts were sampled for this study constituting face-to-face engagement using self-administered interviews. This was the first group to be interviewed in their different districts.

There was however a need to triangulate the study. Triangulation involve getting data from different people and using different methods to gather the data.¹⁰ During triangulation, the number of sampled schools was increased to 100 as compared to the first 60. However these were different principals from the ones exposed to face-to-face interaction.

General findings

g. General questions

Schools opening monitoring: When principals were asked to rate the value of school's readiness monitoring that takes place at the beginning of the year, 85% of respondents said it is important, while

5% do not see it necessary as they receive no assistance from both politicians and top managers who visit the schools. This group argues the visit is purely public relation exercise with little to do with learning and teaching processes.

Visits by Circuit managers: The graph below indicates the 55% of principals reporting an acceptable frequency (at least once a month) of subject advisors' support visits, while 28% declare to have not yet

received any visit since the beginning of 2018 academic year.(Study was conducted for financial year 2018-2019) (Figure 1).

The total of 85% of respondents confirm to have been visited by the circuit manager at least one or two times since re-opening of schools in 2018 until August 2018, while 30% received same visits three to four times and 21% received it more than four times. Only 5% had not yet been visited at the time of the survey.

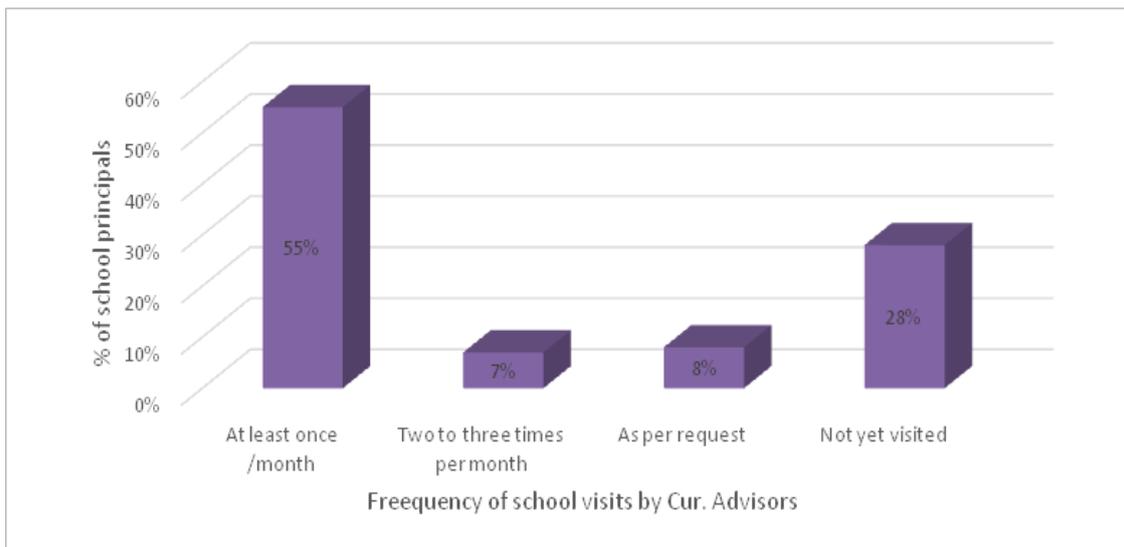


Figure 1 Percentage of principals' responses on the frequency of visits to schools by curriculum advisors to advice on subject matter since January 2018.

Training on governance matters: 86.7% of principals confirmed to have received training on matters of governance, management and curriculum, from the district and circuit offices in 2017/18 financial year, while 12% have partially received it and only 2% never received any assistance. However, when asked to rate the departmental in-

house capacity building or training for teachers, the results on the pie graph below reveals the perception, where 50% rate the trainings on average, 23.3% rating them poor, 25% rating them good and only 1.7% rate them as excellent (Figure 2).

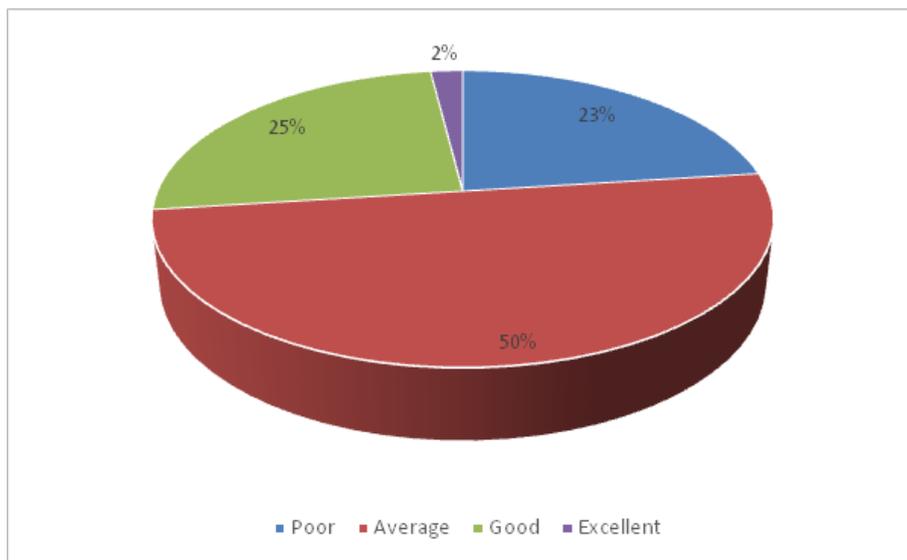


Figure 2 % of respondents on how good do they rate the departmental in-house capacity building training for teachers.

Educators Capacity building: Specifically on subject capacity building programmes provided by the province/district/circuit is rated as follows: 70% of principals value them good, though 18.3% view those poor and only 3.3% see them excellent.

Interpersonal skills: In checking how good do they value the interpersonal relations skills of districts/circuit officials when they interact with them, 75% of respondents rate them good, 15% rate them poor, 8.3% rate them excellent while 1.7% rate them very poor.

Principals have reported vast ways of communicating with districts/circuits, and 61% confirmed to be using more than one method. The graph below reflects percentage of principals' methods of communication they frequently use (Figure 3). Principals have different planning styles in their schools. While 50% plan quarterly with their staff members, 30% does it monthly, 23% does it weekly and only 3.3% plan ones in a year.

h. Management matters

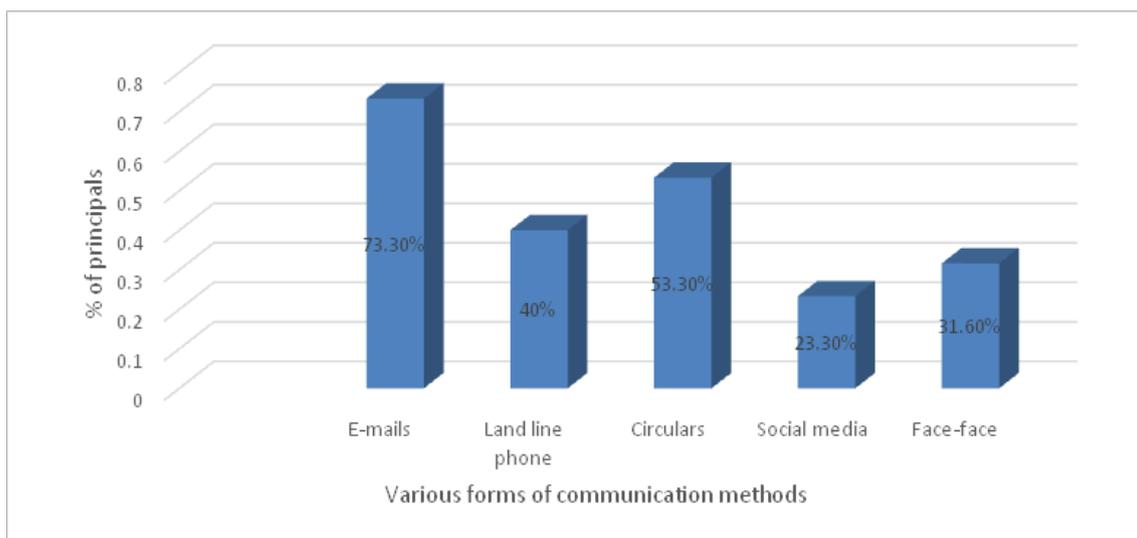


Figure 3 % of principals indicating their frequent channel of communication with districts and circuits.

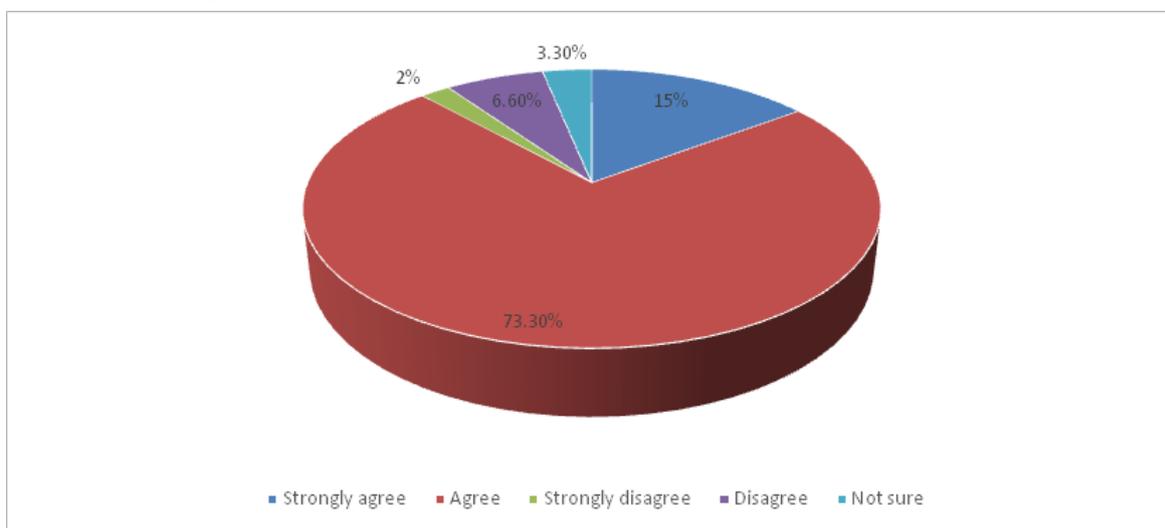


Figure 4 The % of school principals' view if district/circuit support them on management matters.

Assistance at beginning of teaching: When principals were asked if they were assisted by the district/circuit officials at the beginning of the year, with the monitoring tool where assistance was needed, 61.6% agreed to have been assisted, though 20% disagreed, but 8.3 strongly disagree while 3.3% is not sure whether they received same assistance or not (Figure 6).

Assistance on financial documents: When asked whether they were inducted by the district/circuit officials in consolidating their school financial statements, only 13.3% of respondents strongly disagreed and 58% agreed. However, 25% disagreed, while 1.6% strongly disagreed. The remaining 1.6% is not sure (Figure 7).

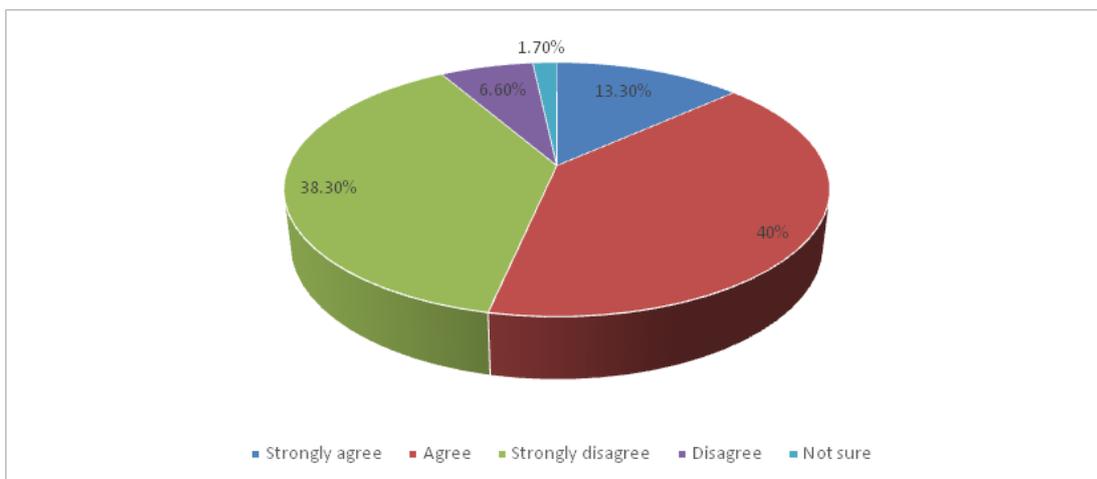


Figure 5 % of principals who received assistance in developing basic documents for beginning of teaching at beginning of each year.

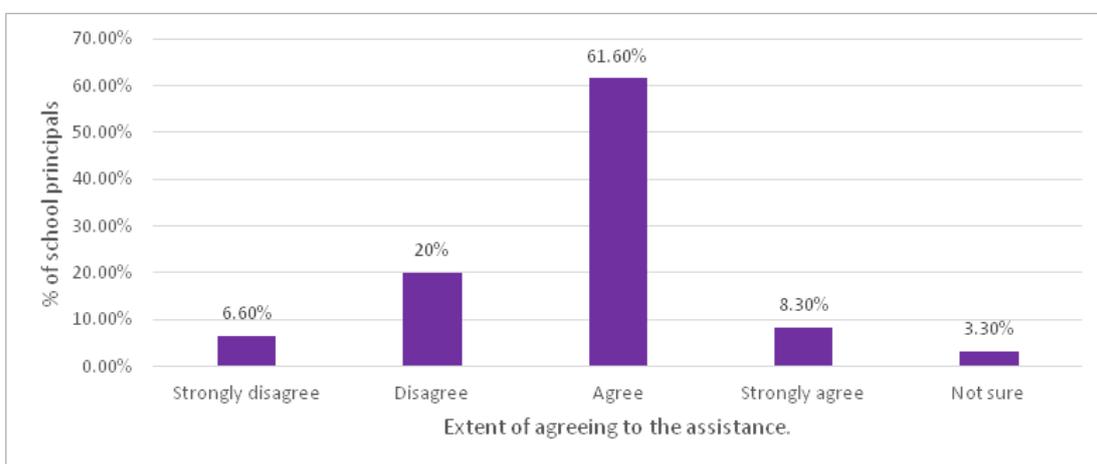


Figure 6 % of principals agreeing to have been assisted each year with the management and monitoring tool where schools needed assistance.

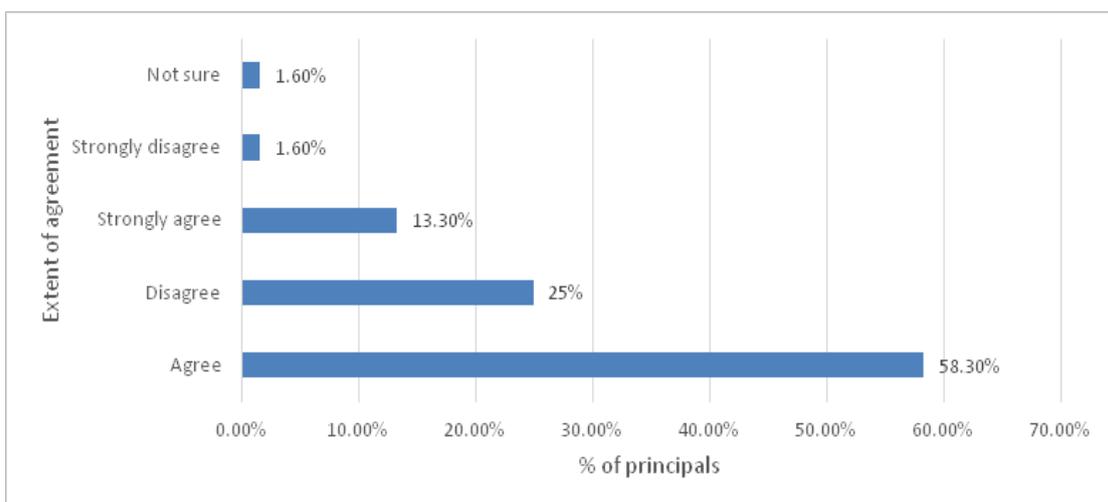


Figure 7 % of principals agreeing to have received induction by district/circuit in consolidating financial statements.

On management matters: 50% of respondents disagreed that at least once per month, the district/circuit officials do monitor and support their schools, though 46.6% agreed. On the same matter, 48.3% disagreed and 6.6% strongly disagreed to have been trained by district/circuit officials in managing teachers' absenteeism in 2018,

though 31.6% agreed and 10% strongly agreed. Principals were also asked to give their general view on the management support they receive from district/circuit officials and the table below reflects the principals' responses: (Table 1)

Table 1 Principals' responses

General views from principals and % measure	% agreeing with statement
Management support is excellent, generally good, satisfactory, quarterly visits, etc	31.60%
Support is there, but insufficient, only when schools re-open, only in secondary schools more than in primary, only to principals than to whole SMT	35%
We receive support in the form of workshops for School Management Team (SMT) & Schools Governing Bodies (SGB)	8.30%
The circuit managers keep us updated with new information, we hold regular meetings including, quarterly performance review sessions and monthly management meetings.	13.30%
Their support is when they do monthly audit on curriculum support coverage.	1.6
The school visits are actually not support. They are used to show you where you committed mistakes/blunders. They visit to complain, shout at SMT instead of supporting them. They are more fault finders than supportive. Yes we call them support because there is a tool to complete as they ask questions.	6.6
They visit only if there is a crisis or urgency. This is not support.	5
District/circuits should give more support through regular visits. They can improve on what they currently are doing.	13.3
Increase personnel to cover us all during school support visits.	10
Districts and circuits delay in resolving management issues in our schools."	1.6

i. Governance matters

Table 2 The level of assistance schools receive from circuit/district officials in resolving challenges on matters of Schools Governing Bodies (SGB).

The opinion of principals and % of ranking	% of principals agreeing
The level of assistance is excellent, satisfactory, good, and acceptable.	33.3
Trainings, workshops and meetings to guide and advice	21.6
Average, insufficient, occasionally, quarterly, only on request or when there is a challenge, mostly due to insufficient personnel. Assistance has no impact.	31.6
No support, support is very poor, no need as we never had that kind of a challenge, circuit is afraid of taking decisions and always referring us to district."	20

Table 3 Assistance received in administering learners' code of conduct

The opinion	% of Principals agreeing
Workshops, training, guidance on how to formulate the policy and advocate it.	25
No support/assistance. Only told to go do the policy. Learners' rights far surpasses those of ours so it is useless to have their code of conduct.	46%
We received relevant material to use as guidelines as well as monitoring tools to monitor implementation.	11.6
We are required to submit monthly incident report for the intervention by the circuit. We receive reminders in the form of a circular. We get assistance upon request.	10
We call parents meetings to talk about it so that they advise their children.	1.6
Excellent assistance	5
Not sure. Not involved in this exercise".	3.3

Table 4 Assistance in resolving challenges emanating from recruitment and placement

The opinion	% agreeing
No assistance, or too minimal. Submissions take extremely long to be approved. District is reluctant to move processes with speed. HRM does not care about our children, they don't support curriculum. Lots of confusion and frustration, "we are told to prefer Fundza Lushaka bursary holders, but we are also told to follow gender, contrary we are also told not to give too big/low marks.	35
Workshops/meetings are being held to discuss collective agreements, processes and procedures and advice to follow them before processes start.	21.6
Well interventions. Cases are being speedily resolved. Submissions are being processed on time. Circuit send observers from the circuit. Involvement of stakeholders and social partners together with aggrieved party when there is a crisis.	30
Recently (2018) there is improvement than in previous years".	1.6

Table 5 Assistance on infrastructure maintenance plan

The opinion	% Agreeing
Effort is there with no desired results. Circuit requires us to assess and give out a report. Only a questionnaire is received from the circuit to complete and send back with no results. DMGs and some other officials just come and visit, assess and promise to bring back response but it never happens.	18.3
Advice / workshop is given on how to develop the maintenance plan, how to budget for it, how to implement and monitor the plan. Advise us to use norms and standards funds. Advise us to have committee responsible. Only on call, one would be advised.	25
No assistance is received on this matter. It's a provincial matter. No follow-up on implementation. This is the least visible unit in our schools. I hardly see it. We don't even have infrastructure maintenance plan. We are on our own, and the school asks for donations. Schools with high enrolment are not given priority, but priority is given by connections.	48.3
Where there is a need, there is provision of infrastructure. Assistance is excellently provided.	3.3
Please give schools more funds to build more blocks, staff-room, library, also in primary schools."	1.6.

Table 6 Assistance in the development and adherence to religious policy

The opinion from Principals	% Agreeing
In the form of workshops, o how to draw policy, advising us to recognize diversity, comply with the constitution and SASA. That we should advocate the policy and ensure we all adhere to it. Adherence is monitored quarterly.	36.6
No assistance is given. The responsibility is left with schools to do it without advice or guidance. It is the matter of the SGB and the Principal. Circuit will just ask for a copy, but never bring a feedback. We are still using old one, because we have no assistance. No one cares about adherence neither.	60
We are provided with some materials and framework to assist us develop it."	5

Table 6 Are you trained to develop code of conduct in your school?

The opinion from principals	% agreeing
YES: We were workshoped, more than ones, and they are regularly still being conducted, and we developed one and it has been adopted. We even received guiding documents to guide us. But it was long time ago. Especially SMT members.	30
NO: There is a huge need due to learners' misbehaviour. We only read documents such as government gazettes & SASA on our own. We only struggle on our own. We just outsource from internet.'	46.6

Table 7 Any wellness assistance to your school between 2017/2018 to limit teachers' absenteeism?

The opinion	%
NO: It's a matter of an individual educator to consult their office. This is worse, employees wellness programme never visited our school. It's only a workshop that was given. However it will be good to be done.	68.3
YES: We are visited by the unit, and has helped in reducing teacher absenteeism. One teacher removed from our school to H/O due to illness. Once a year we send one educator to employee wellness sessions. Though it was in a strategic plan session organized by the circuit, not at the school."	31.7

j. Curriculum support matters

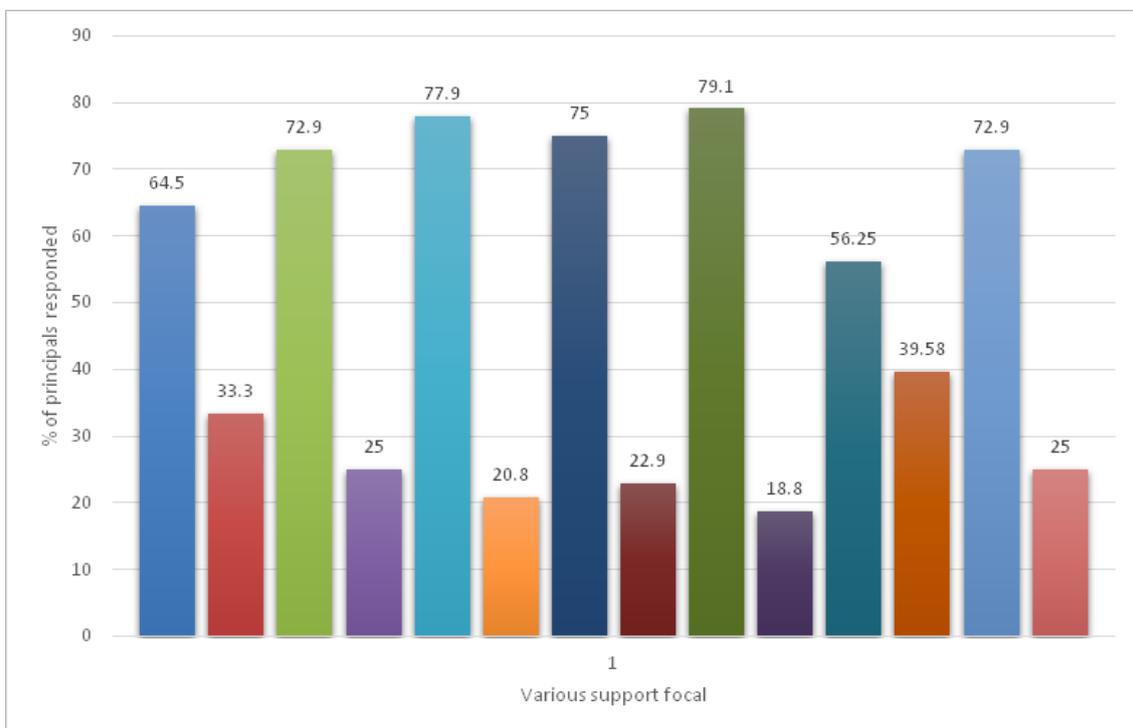


Figure 8 % of principals' agreeing/ not agreeing to receive support in various focal point.

SGB's inductions: 64.5% of principals agreed that their SGBs are inducted to support processes of management and general provisioning on curriculum, while 33.3% does not. **Academic improvement plan implementation:** On the development of and implementation of academic improvement plan, 72.9% of principals agree to be assisted, while 25% do not agree. As supported by the district/circuit officials, 77.9% of principals agreed that they and their teachers understand and implement school performance development plan, though 20.8% does not agree. In addition, 75% of principals agree that the district/circuit officials support them and their plans to improve on 2018 pass rate, but 22.9% does not agree.

Preparation for final examinations (November/December 2018): When asked whether the district/circuit officials are continuously monitoring their performance process and supporting them to improve in the next final examination, 79.1% agreed, while 18.8% disagreed. 56.25% of principals do agree to be benefiting from Saturday schools joint venture project, while 39.58% does not.

Curriculum coverage: Only 72.9% of principals agreed to be receiving assistance in developing monitoring plan/tool to monitor curriculum coverage, assessment and classroom practice, while 25% does not. (Table 8)

Table 8 Opinion of how principals think district/circuit can improve in supporting on improvement of curriculum provision for their schools to increase performance to higher levels

Opinion	% agreeing to statement
Conduct regular workshops. Curriculum advisors should teach teachers content & methodology as teachers only teach what & how they know. They should also have regular contact sessions with them. Do not only focus in high schools, the notion that every educator in primary school can teach mathematics is misleading.	25
District should not neglect lower grades. Good teachers are only given to grade 12 classes. Specialists should be available for learners who are unable to read.	20.8
Amend some guidelines. E.g. District should not interfere with how learners are being progressed. Imposing progression of learners by age will not improve performance. Extra classes for grade 12 learners should be compulsory. Minimize movements to meetings so that teachers and principals are at school most of the time. Reduce teacher- learner ratio. Teachers are less paid officials in government, please revisit salary scales for teachers.	14.5
Arrange twinning of schools, and intensify on team teaching.	4.1
We need more resources, especially staffing, curriculum advisors for all subjects, in all circuits. Re-visit post establishment in high schools, to provide enough educators. Each schools needs support staff (administrators/teacher assistants) & cleaners. Teachers' vacancies should be filled with speed. Give more funding to learner camps.	33.3
Have proper planning and implementation of programmes. Pacesetters do not align with examination time tables, and even policy documents. Can examination people and those dealing with curriculum please work together when setting exam dates? Identify underperforming schools, give them more support, motivation through workshops. Develop accountability sessions. Final catch-up camp before examination may help improve results. Put educators in one central venue to set question papers, decide on common time table and monitor them. Induct & orientate newly appointed educators. Motivate teachers with incentives. Promote principals to circuit level when they release good results.	25
Curriculum Advisors should use a proper approach of providing support to schools. Let them not come to find faults. They also must have a clear knowledge of the kind of support they are bringing to schools".	8.3

Interpretations and analysis

It is encouraging to notice 85% of respondents valuing the school's readiness monitoring that takes place at the beginning of the year as important and that 61.6% agree that they have been assisted with areas that they needed assistance on, on same tool. However, more than 26% that disagreed, 6.6% who strongly disagreed and 20% who disagreed as per the graph below, reveal a need for improvement (Figure 9).

Support on management matters: The 15% of respondents on the pie graph below, who strongly agree that the circuit/ districts support them on management issues, confirms the 85% of respondents revealing to have been visited by the circuit manager at least one or two times only, since re-opening of schools in 2018 (in 8months), and only 30% received same visits three to four times and 21% received it more than four times. The 5% that had not yet been visited at the time of the survey must be talking to more than 10% on the pie graph, that disagree, strongly disagree and not sure that they were supported on management matters. This informs a serious need to accelerate principal's support on management matters, hence a preference of a visit at least once a quarter (Figure 10).

Visits by districts/Circuits: The 50% of respondents that disagreed that at least once per month, the district/circuit officials monitor and support their schools, is revealing insufficient monitoring and support to principals.

Training in managing teachers' absenteeism: This insufficient support is further confirmed by 48.3% who disagreed and 6.6% who strongly disagreed to have been trained by district/circuit in managing teachers' absenteeism in 2018. Same with induction in consolidating financial statements, only 13.3% strongly agree, and 58.3% just agreeing, as in the graph below. This means, majority of respondents are not certain of their competence after they underwent the induction.

Support on matters of SGB's: It is gratefully noticeable through 33% of respondents who agree that the level of assistance they receive from circuit/districts in resolving challenges on matters of SGB. However, most of principals indicates that the support on dealing with matters of SGB's is minimal.

Code of conduct: 46.6 % of respondents who confirm that they were never trained in developing code of conduct for learners, as well,

does not only reveals another insufficient support by districts, but also frustrations the school managers have on this matter. The current learner conduct in schools, and incapacity of teachers and principals in applying acceptable disciplinary strategies pose a frustrating situation

to school managers. Assistance is extremely urgent. The statement below indicates the extent of frustrations schools are facing: (Figure 11)

No support/assistance is provided. We are only told to go do the policy. Learners' rights far surpasses those of educators so it is useless to have code of conduct." 46%

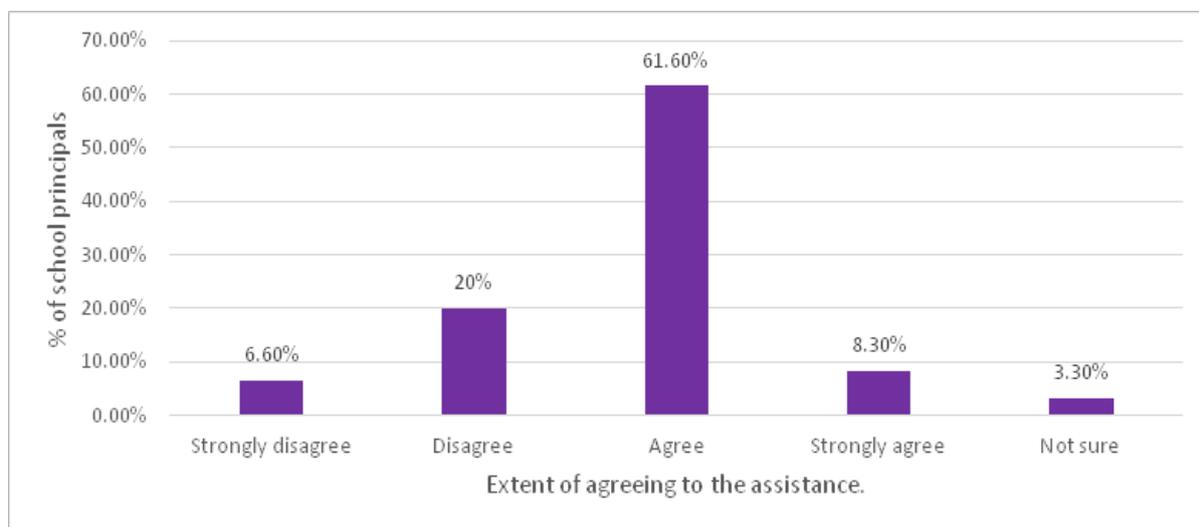


Figure 9 % of principals agreeing to have been assisted each year with the management and monitoring tool where schools needed assistance.

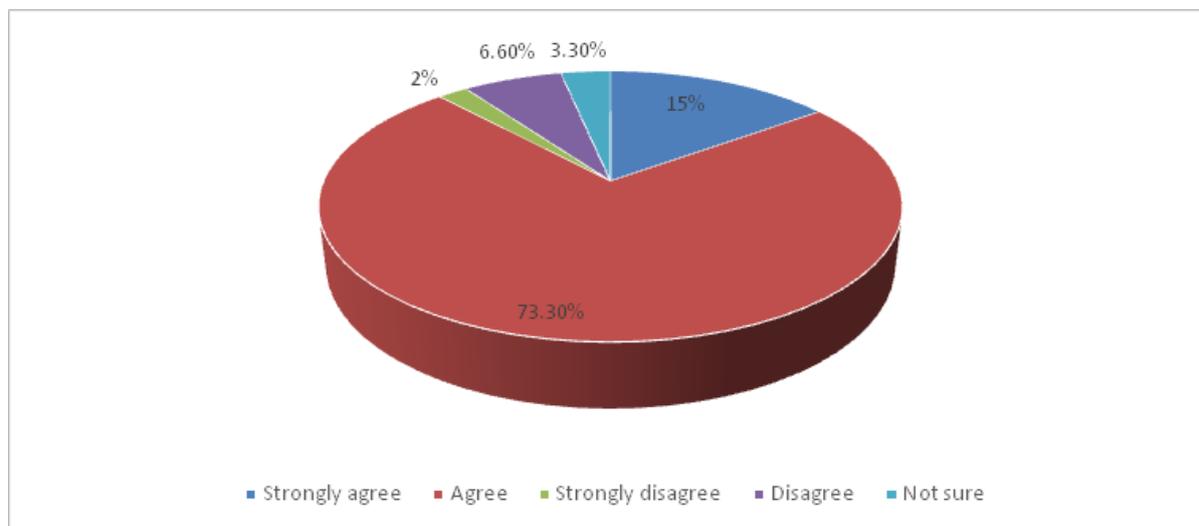


Figure 10 The % of school principals' view if district/circuit support them on management matters.

Important curriculum documents: Coming to readiness to start the academic year annually, important curriculum documents should be provided to schools well in advance, and assistance is necessary for principals to be able to develop documents to guide teaching and learning. Now the only 13.3% of principals who strongly agreed to have received it, and 40% who just agreed that they received such assistance reveal also that the effort is taken, though not sufficient. This could be the reason why 35% of respondents indicate that "support is there, but insufficient, only when schools re-open, only in secondary schools more than in primary" (Figure 12).

Support by subject advisers: It feels positive to notice 55% of principals reporting an acceptable frequency (at least once a month) of

subject advisers' support visits, though worrying to find 28% having not yet received any visit since the beginning of 2018 academic year, while this study was conducted between July and August 2018. This suggests either, that, some circuits are not supporting schools on subject matter, or there are vacancies not filled for subject advisors in 28% of circuits. Perhaps it makes more sense to see 33% of respondents declaring "We need more resources, especially staffing, curriculum advisors for all subjects, in all circuits". It would be more satisfactory if the 7% who receive this support two to three times per month could rise higher.

Training in governance matters: Very exciting to notice is also 86.7% of principals confirming to have received training on matters

of governance, management and curriculum, from the district/circuits in 2017/18 financial year, with 70% rating subject-specific capacity building programmes provided by the province/district/circuits good.

On the other hand, it is questionable to get only 2% rating governance and management trainings as excellent. Why not same 86.7%? (Figure 13).

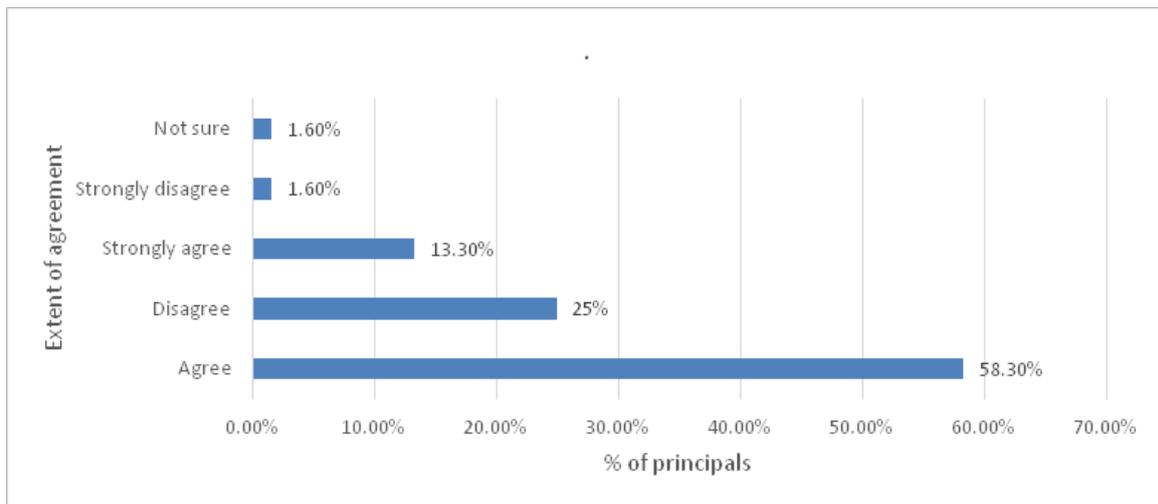


Figure 11 % of principals agreeing to have received induction by district/circuit in consolidating financial statements.

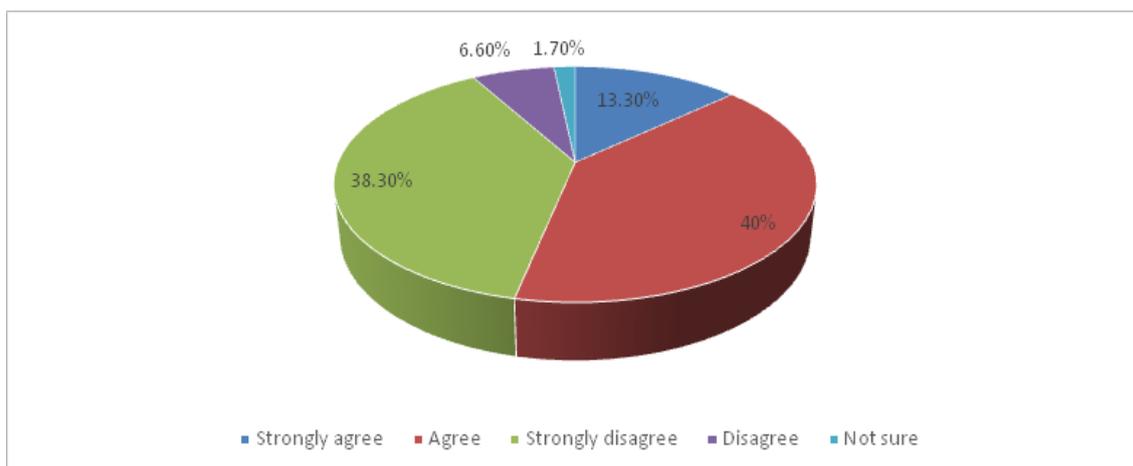


Figure 12 % of principals who received assistance in developing basic documents for beginning of teaching at beginning of each year.

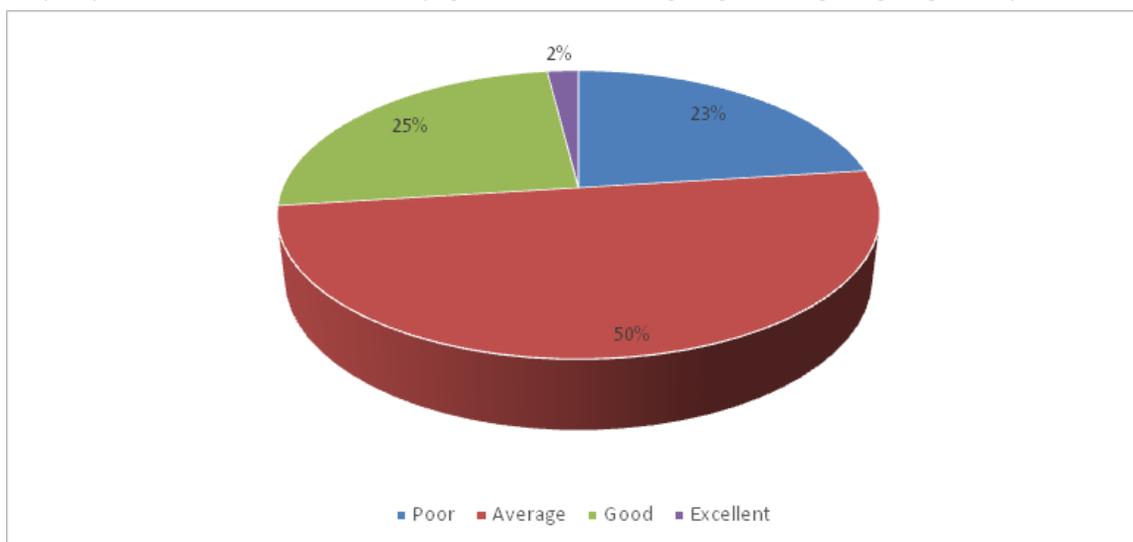


Figure 13 % of respondents on how good do they rate the departmental in-house capacity building training for teachers.

Competent personnel: This suggests a need for capacity building on governance trainers and/or appointment of highly experienced officials. Perhaps a reason why 14.5% of respondents calls “*Political deployments is killing our education system*”; and 16.6% suggests “*the Deputy Manager Governance (DMGs) must be well trained and be able to plan and work according to the scheduled plan and not wait to be told by the Circuit Manager what to do*”.

Planning systems in schools: This study goes on revealing that schools have no standardized planning system in place, a system that is critical because to inform monitoring and support of planned projects, processes and procedures. While 50% of schools plan quarterly with their staff members, 30% does it monthly, 23% does it weekly and only 3.3% plan ones in a year. This suggests a need for governance to standardize its work across the province, so that proper monitoring and support be conducted, where progress becomes traced.

Use of e-mails: Information Technology (IT) should be encouraged to network more schools and circuit offices. A total of 70% of participants confirmed the use of e-mails as their regular communication channel. However, many are using personal e-mails. This means departmental records are not well-managed.

Conclusion and general recommendations

Schools re-opening monitoring: School re-opening monitoring should continue, but schools need to be assisted on areas that they need help on. Officials should not just identified mistakes and bring no feedback. On the same note, the 50% of respondents that disagreed that at least once per month, the district/circuit officials monitor and support their schools, suggests that circuit managers should improve on their school visits, at least ones per month. The only 15% of respondents who strongly agree that the circuit/ district support them on management issues is worrying. Politicians and top managers who go to schools during re-opening in January of each year should be inducted so that they know what to look for when getting to schools. Governance should develop a tool, induct monitors and have mechanism to get the tools after the visit. They then should analyse the tools and compile a consolidated report which will be used in addressing the observed gaps. Evidence decision making should be made based on the findings.

Subject advisory support: Schools will be satisfied if Subject-specific curriculum advisors do monitoring and support their schools, fortnightly, or monthly at most. The 55% who are satisfied with monthly curriculum support is better than 28% that say since the beginning of 2018, they have never got any support visit.

Provision of subject advisors in all circuits, and for all subjects is recommended to impact to the 36% of respondents who expressed dissatisfaction on the support they needed since the beginning of 2018, where 28% was never supported and 8% was visited only per request.

Disciplinary measures: Districts need to provide capacity building to principals on acceptable strategies of keeping discipline in schools without compromising the laws of the country. Learners’ conducts these days are uncontrollable as observed by media and the general community. 46% of respondents feel that learners’ rights far surpasses those of teachers and therefore no need for code of conduct. This is despite the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 outlining what need to be implemented.¹¹

Experience necessity: At the same time, it is recommended that

experience, education level and competency be used to guide the appointment of personnel who will be required to support principals on curriculum management, SMT and SGB on governance matters. The 14.6% of respondents who are concerned about political deployments being disastrous of education system, and 16.6% that suggest employment of well trained personnel are evident enough that somehow when filling vacancies, the department is not objective.

Planning sessions/strategizing sessions: The governance directorate should standardise planning approaches by schools, so that monitoring and support becomes informed, progress be traced, and areas of a need are well noticed. Currently it is noticed that 50% of respondents planning quarterly, 30%, monthly, 23%, weekly and 3.3% annual in preparation for next coming year.

Teachers’ absenteeism: Little seems to be done on training in managing teachers’ absenteeism, with 54.9% of principals who never had any training in this regard. Employees Wellness directorate/unit needs to expand its services to all education institutions, especially schools. There is a need to reduce the 68% of school principals that say they never received any support from the directorate, to less than 40% in coming years. There are some principals that indicated that there must be a deliberate move to involve relevant department and also observe mental health of educators as there are many behave strange in many schools. This they argue, hampers service delivery.

Training of SGB members: The SGB trainings must not be a once-off event per year. They need more empowerment as many of the members lack necessary skills to comprehend policies and procedures. In rural area schools there is often lack of competent people to serve in the SGB’s as in most cases parents of learners are away for economic reasons. These learners are remaining with elders who are unable to interpret regulations. The few young people remaining in villages are also not as helpful in matters of governance as they also need to be capacitated.

Capacity building: In-house training is rated well by only 1.7%. A study is recommended to evaluate these trainings using impact assessment. The study will assist in enriching both the content and methodology of these trainings.

Religious matters in schools: Training in religious policy matters is lacking in many schools. This is important to be emphasised in line with the constitution. The constitution Of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996, Chapter 2, section 15(1) state that everyone has the right to freedom of conscience, religion, thought, belief and opinion. Section 2 allows for religious observance to be conducted in state institutions as long as they are conducted on equitable basis and attendance is not compulsory.¹² However, it seems the schools have decided to abandon religious observations in the schools even if learners and teachers would not have challenges in observing. A total of 60% indicated that they have never been assisted in handling religious matters in schools.

Acknowledgments

None.

Conflicts of interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

Funding

None.

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