

Senior Managers' Perceptions of Executive Development in the Eastern Cape
Department of Education

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Management (in the field of Public and Development Sector Monitoring and Evaluation)

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Abstract

Organisations participate in executive development to improve the capabilities of senior managers to be more proficient in performing their responsibilities. This study examined the perceptions of senior managers in the Eastern Cape Department of Education in South Africa on the Executive Development Programme (EDP) they had participated in. This research is a qualitative, descriptive case study utilising semi-structured interviews to collect primary data from four categories of participants which included senior managers, their supervisors, programme coordinators and facilitators. Secondary data was also collected from the department's official documents. The findings of the study revealed that participants perceived the EDP as beneficial in as far as capacitating senior managers in their executive roles. The findings further provided the department deeper insight on how the EDP can enrich capacity development of senior managers and ultimately impacting the achievement of positive education outcomes in the department.

Keywords: executive development, senior managers, performance

Declaration

I, Nozibele Mtebele, student number: 1589023 hereby declare that this report is my own unaided work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Management (in the field of Public and Development Sector Monitoring & Evaluation) at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. This work has not been submitted before for any examination or degree to this or any other university. Where the ideas and work of others have been referred to, it has been referenced in accordance with the University requirements.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'NM', written over a horizontal line.

Nozibele Mtebele
signed on the August, 31 2021

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Dedication

I dedicate this research report to myself. All praise, honour and glory be to God who gave me strength and determination to finish this project.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

DBE	-	Department of Basic Education
DPSA	-	Department of Public Service and Administration
ECDOE	-	Eastern Cape Department of Education
ECOTP	-	Eastern Cape Office of the Premier
ECPA	-	Eastern Cape Provincial Administration
EDP	-	Executive Development Programme
HRD	-	Human Resource Development
ILDS	-	Integrated Leadership Development Strategy
NPC	-	National Planning Commission
NPM	-	New Public Management
NSDS	-	National Skills Development Strategy
NSG	-	National School of Government
OECD	-	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PDP	-	Personal Development Plan
SMS	-	Senior Management Service

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Chapter One: Introduction

To gain a competitive edge globally, it is necessary for organisations (both in the public and private sectors) to continuously equip their senior managers and executives with the relevant skills to effectively perform their management roles (Krishnan, 2012). As the management environment within the context of the global leadership space is not static, it is vital for senior managers to enhance their managerial skills to lead individuals, teams, and organisations with high impact on their performance and productivity. To achieve this, it is believed that senior managers should be undergoing continuous training and development to enhance their knowledge base and refine their skills and attitudes towards work related tasks. As defined by Jackson et al. (2003), executive development refers to education which is focused on acquiring skills that are essential for effective leadership and management. Jackson et al. (2003, p. 258) also indicated that executive development is intended to “address the needs of individuals at senior management, executive and director level”.

The researcher’s interest in selecting this area of study emanated from many influences. First, governments around the world are advocating efficient leadership and management development programmes which are critical towards achieving improved organisational performance (Krishnan, 2012; Preece & Iles, 2009). Second, the Eastern Cape Department of Education (ECDOE) has been experiencing “profound challenges and problems” (Eastern Cape Department of Education [ECDOE], 2017(a), p. 3), namely; (i) poor learning outcomes in the poorest quintiles of the public schooling system, (ii) adverse opinion reports from the Auditor-General, and (iii) systemic inefficiencies that have been left unattended to for long periods of time, including poor mechanisms for placing teachers in class faster and on scale. Third, the critical role that the ECDOE’s senior managers need

to play in addressing these challenges and the overall functioning and performance of the department.

This study was therefore conceptualised to measure the perceptions of senior managers concerning the implementation of the Executive Development Programme (EDP) in the ECDOE in South Africa. The EDP has been implemented as an opportunity to build on the critical leadership skills needed to impact organisational culture and navigate the challenges faced by the department. The ability of senior managers to address the ECDOE challenges would lead to better decision making, based on the department's strategy and planning rather than reacting to challenges. Understanding the views of senior managers on the EDP is therefore important because their attitude towards executive development influences their growth within the workplace as well as gaining confidence to broaden their impact on the organisation's performance (Aguinis & Kraiger, 2009; Amagoh, 2009; Blanchard, 2009; Krishnan, 2012; Preece & Iles, 2009).

The study focused on a group of participants within the senior management cohort in the ECDOE who had participated in and completed the EDP within the period from 2016 to 2017. This cohort of participants would be significant in providing an assessment of the programme to build on its strong implementation points whilst learning about areas that need improvement. This chapter introduces the study, provides an overview, and includes background information, the problem statement, objectives of the study, the scope of the study and the justification for conducting this study.

Background to the Study

Debates on the role of leadership and management in organisations have been ongoing since the 19th century (Dike et al., 2015). A specific focus on executive development training commenced nearly a century ago worldwide (Krishnan, 2012). It had a variety of approaches ranging from university degrees,

non-degree courses of different lengths and tailored institutional programmes (Jackson et al., 2003). Scholars such as Krishnan (2012) and Collins (2001) confirmed that the scope as well as the number of Executive Development Programmes have increased in recent years. In the same vein, Jackson et al. (2003) emphasised that the nature and purpose of Executive Development Programmes have lately improved significantly. The popularity of these programmes in the public sector relates to the need to strengthen leadership as a solution to national public challenges faced. The EDP for public sector managers provides senior managers with requisite skills that are aligned to the Senior Management Service (SMS) Competency Framework, elaborated more on in the next section.

The concept of executive development has also received increasing attention in SA as a component of building organisational capacity. Towards the end of the 19th century, it gained popularity and found expression in the corporate plans of organisations and companies. It was viewed as a mechanism that had the potential to empower private sector institutions to generate competitive benefits (Suutari & Viitala, 2008). This position was further adopted by public sector institutions through the advent of managerialism or New Public Management (NPM) which was aimed at increasing managerial capabilities (Lessing & de Witt, 2007). The concept of NPM is discussed in detail in following section, to illustrate the impact of its rising popularity on organisational development interventions such as capacity development programmes in the public sector.

The EDP in this study was a two-year development programme, to strengthen the strategic capabilities of senior managers in the ECDOE. The EDP has been implemented since 2014 by the ECDOE in partnership with two universities. It was envisaged that those who participated in the programme would be inspired to make a change in the department when they are back at work, for improved performance and management (Kojana, 2017). To this end, the study

provides insights into how senior managers perceive executive development and their perspectives around how their participation in the EDP translated into improved performance in the ECDOE. The ultimate benefit of this knowledge would be the understanding of both positive and negative outcomes needed for evidence based decisions. Additionally, this assessment would produce knowledge and value needed for improved service delivery. Therefore, the need for sound assessment of a programme is at the heart of policy making.

Emergence of Executive Development in the Public Service

Over the past several years, governments worldwide have undertaken various reform initiatives to advance the quality of services offered by government organisations as well as to improve the productivity of public sector employees. The reform initiatives started in the early 1980s with the NPM movement, which was later coined by Hood (1991) in the USA, Europe, and parts of Asia. NPM reforms were part of the determination for improving efficiency of public sector employees as they would implement their responsibilities by using private sector management models (Hope, 2001).

Significant efforts towards reform of public sector management were also made in the Sub-Saharan Africa since the early 1990s. In SA, the government also adopted the NPM model to transform the public sector. The potential outcome will likely to achieve improvement of the quality of services delivered in the country (Gruening, 2001). According to Ferlie (2017), NPM reforms include the following objectives:

- enabling a more effective public administration for service delivery
- emphasis on the centrality of the customer
- more accountability
- achieving high performance levels
- improved leadership principles and measurement capacity

In line with the efforts to achieve the objectives of the NPM and to make management more effective, executive development was introduced in SA. Scholars such as Gruening (2001) and Hope (2001) asserted that it is necessary to conduct development interventions for managers. Akrofi (2016) agrees and postulated that various public and private sector institutions invest huge amounts of resources to sharpen the skills of their managers. In these institutions, the implementation of executive development entails the development of public sector managers to provide them with tools meant to improve managerial efficiency in daily work operations (Hood, 1995). On the other hand, Akrofi (2016) indicated that organisations do not always perform better as a result of investing on employee development. In the same vein, Beer, Finnstrom and Schrader (2016) argued that learning does not always lead to improved organisational performance. The authors further posit that people often revert to their old ways of doing things. Even though many participants have indicated the programme as powerful, the context in which they work often makes it difficult to put into practice what was learned.

Brief overview of the Study Area - Eastern Cape Department of Education

The geographical focus of this study is the Eastern Cape Province in SA. Education in SA is divided into two ministries namely, the Department of Basic Education and the Department of Higher Education and Training. The Department of Basic Education (DBE) is responsible for developing and supporting the South African schooling system that is relevant to the 21st century (Department of Basic Education [DBE], 2015). The delivery of schooling is a provincial competency, subject to norms and standards as laid down by the Minister of Basic Education (DBE, 2015). Therefore, the administration and management of education take place through management structures that are positioned in the provincial Head Offices.

The mandate of the ECDOE is to “provide for a uniform system for the organisation, governance and funding of schools. It ensures that all learners have the right of access to quality education without discrimination” (ECDOE, 2017(b), p. 27). Senior managers play an important role in the development of strategies, appropriate policies, standard operating procedures and in the coordination of planning sessions to ensure the delivery of quality education in the Eastern Cape (EC) province. The ECDOE has a staff complement of 60 employees at senior management level. The ECDOE’s senior management team consists of Chief Directors and Directors (level 14 and level 13 respectively, in terms of the South African job grades for public sector officials) whose responsibility it is to implement the strategy of the department ultimately contributing to the execution of the education mandate of the country (ECDOE, 2015). Senior managers in the South African public sector system are expected to comply with certain Core Management Criteria (CMC) as per the Senior Management Service Handbook (DPSA, 2010). To mention a few, the CMCs include strategic capability and leadership, programme and project management as well as service delivery innovation (DPSA, 2010) which are discussed in further detail below.

The ECDOE Annual Performance Plan 2015 indicated that the department must also facilitate an environment which is appropriate for the delivery of effective teaching and learning to happen (ECDOE, 2015). It further indicated that the department relies on its human resources to translate its mandate into measurable activities. Contrary to this mandate, the analysis of the 2015/16 Auditor-General’s Report highlighted the following challenges:

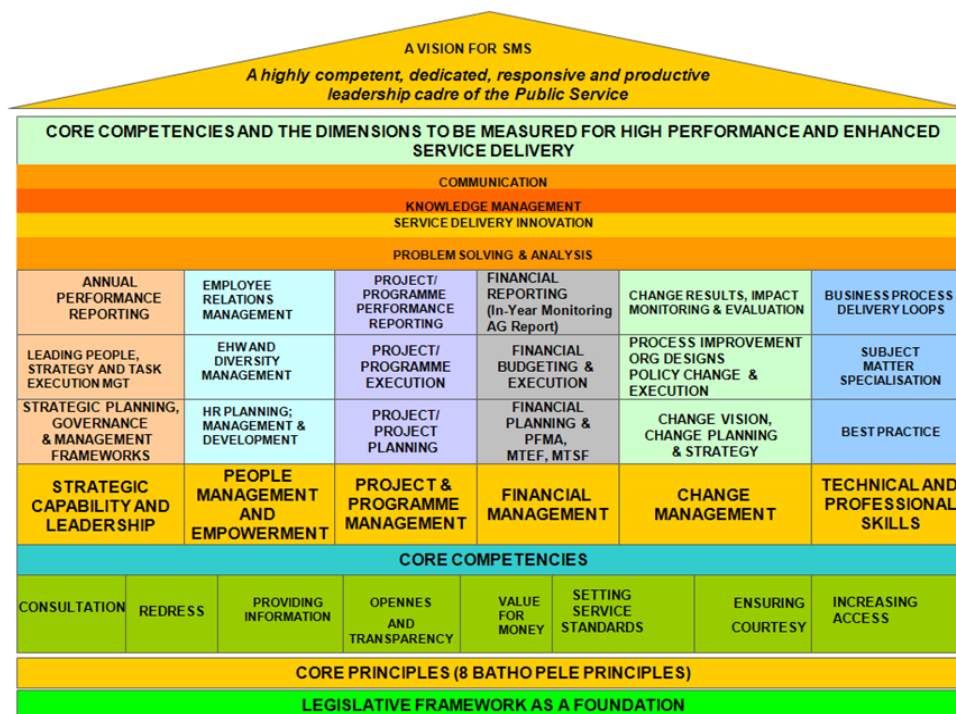
- no proper infrastructure, schools in poor state with dilapidated structures
- teacher shortages resulting in critical subjects not taught
- shortage of teacher and learner teaching materials

- low throughput rate to university
- breakdown of internal control systems
- lack of accountability

Building the capacity needed to address the challenges as highlighted above requires continuous investment in senior management training and development. In the recent years, the ECDOE formulated a range of policies and plans to guide the implementation of change initiatives. This was triggered by an alteration in its education system in order to provide quality education and establish sound leadership and management. As a crucial responsibility of the department to deliver quality education, its senior managers should be suitably qualified and supported to deliver on the mandate of the department. To achieve this, it is important to align the department's human capital with its mission and goals.

Background to the ECDOE Executive Development Programme

Government is committed to improving service delivery in the public sector through learning and development. Acknowledging the necessity for an ethos of service delivery, the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) launched development programmes aimed at improving efficiency and accountability (Franks, 2014). In the quest to equip managers with the appropriate skills set at executive level, the Senior Management Service was introduced in 2001. As indicated before, a handbook defining the SMS Competency Framework for senior managers in the public service was developed. Senior managers represent the coalface of government institutions where they are directly engaged with the operations of the institutions. The significance of the SMS Competency Framework is to define basic managerial competencies that SMS members are expected to possess to strengthen the capacity of the state. The SMS Competency Framework, shown in Figure 1 below, provides the base and guidance for performance improvement in the public service.

Figure 1*Senior Management Service Competency Framework*

Source: DPSA (2010)

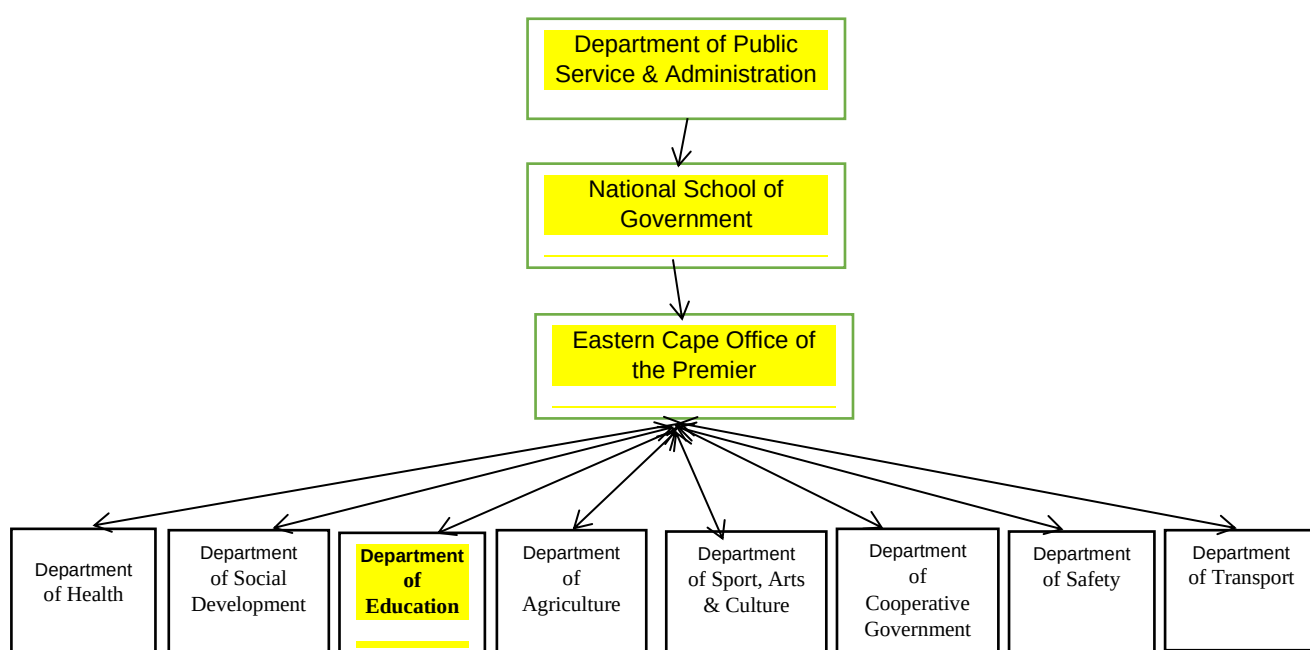
Figure 1 depicts an overview of the areas for senior management professional development. Professional development requires competency-based instructions aimed at increasing the abilities to address complex and challenging demands for quality services (Kim & McLean, 2015). The framework aimed at addressing critical skills and competencies of the senior management, including amongst others, strategic capability, change management and new technological development (Department of Public Service and Administration [DPSA], 2010). To be instrumental in improving service delivery, the framework relates to the adequacy of skills of public sector managers to cope with present and future challenges (Marijani, 2017). The DPSA provided compulsory and demand driven training and development focused on improving requisite skills and expertise in the leadership and management levels in the public service. The DPSA further pointed out that all senior managers are expected to participate in the Executive Development

Programmes for developing new skills and enhancing old skills in the many areas as portrayed in Figure 1 above.

To facilitate leadership and management development for the senior managers, the National School of Government (NSG), a state training institution, was mandated by the DPSA to work with higher education institutions in SA to deliver training and capacity building of employees at the SMS level (DPSA, 2010). Aligned with the public-sector SMS Competency Framework is a Professional Development Programme, the EDP. In the EC province, the implementation of EDP is coordinated through the Office of the Premier which is the executive leader in each province. Figure 2 maps out all relevant stakeholders involved in the coordination of the EDP.

Figure 2

EDP Coordinating Structure



Note. Student own source, 2020

In line with the proclamation of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, the executive authority of each province is vested in the Premier of that province (South Africa, 1996). In addition, the executive authority of each province

under the leadership of the Premier has the responsibility to coordinate the functions of the provincial administration and its departments (South Africa, 1996). As illustrated in Figure 2 above, the study is focused on one provincial department (Department of Education). In response to the challenges of underperformance experienced by the ECDOE, the department recognised that it needed to strengthen the leadership and management capabilities of its top management team. The Head of Department highlighted that there must be greater emphasis on continuous professional development to achieve efficiency and effectiveness (Kojana, 2017). Outlining the primary purpose of the EDP, Kojana (2017) alluded that its purpose is to equip senior managers with skills so that they can execute day-to-day operations effectively. This is in line with Marijana (2017) who posited that there is renewed and growing interest in improving the quality of leadership and management for significant changes in the performance of the institution. Therefore, the EDP was key in ensuring that there is sustained development of practice-based preparedness to contribute to the acquisition of leadership skills and competencies (Kim & McLean, 2015). There remains a question as to whether any positive outcomes obtained by the department were because of the implementation of the EDP. Against this background, the problem that this study aims to address is discussed in the next section.

Problem Statement

Day and Dragoni (2015) contended that executive development can lead to higher individual performance. They also claimed that executive development can increase the effectiveness of senior managers and help them to be more proficient in performing their responsibilities. Moreover, Naicker and Mestry (2016) argued that where the development of senior managers was strategically driven with strong links to the goals of the organisation, it resulted in significant impact on organisational performance. On the other hand, Rekalde et al. (2017) argued that despite greater

emphasis on continuous professional development to achieve efficiency and effectiveness, there were still doubts as to the benefits of Executive Development Programmes.

Education economist Dr Nic Spaull indicated that South Africa was a failed state when it comes to education (Spaull, 2013). Many scholars (Ncanywa, 2015; Ndlovu, 2016; Vena, 2018) and media have reported on this perceived crisis of poor management and inefficiency of the ECDOE. This crisis even led to the extent where the department was subjected to a national intervention programme in the 2011/12 and 2012/13 financial years respectively. Vena (2018) argued that leadership was one of the weaknesses in the management of the ECDOE. The author further indicated that “the department lacked strategic leadership and effective management to efficiently execute its strategy” (Vena, 2018, p. 64).

Although there is a considerable number of studies on employees’ perceptions relating to the Executive Development Programmes, this is not the case for the ECDOE where the perceptions of senior managers have not been well explored. It is important to also acknowledge that the literature does not provide any information relating to the EDP within the context of the ECDOE. This study aims to close this gap by presenting a first attempt to explore the perceptions of senior managers as regards to the implementation of the EDP offered to them. The task of acquiring such information will contribute to the existing body of knowledge by shedding light on whether the implementation of the EDP results in enhanced capabilities of senior managers and whether it leads to improved organisational effectiveness or not.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this research was to explore the perceptions of senior managers as regards to the implementation of the Executive Development

Programme in the Eastern Cape Department of Education and its contribution to their performance.

Research Objectives

The primary objective of the study was to investigate the perceptions of senior managers towards the implementation of the Executive Development Programme and its contribution to their performance.

In support of primary objective, the study had the following secondary objectives:

- a) To understand the implementation of the EDP in the ECDOE.
- b) To investigate the role of personal development plans as tools to guide the development needs of senior managers.
- c) To determine the contribution of the EDP towards senior managers' capacity.
- d) To assess the efficacy of the EDP to contribute towards the ECDOE performance.
- e) To determine factors that have the potential to enhance or hinder the implementation of the EDP and the achievement of its objectives.

Research Questions

- a) The *main research question* that the study sought to answer was:
What are the perceptions of senior managers participating in the Executive Development Programme, and its effect on their performance?
- b) The study was further informed by the following *research sub-questions*:
 - How do senior managers in the ECDOE perceive the overall concept of executive development?
 - How do personal development plans define development needs prior to participation in the EDP?

- How do senior managers perceive the extent to which the EDP has affected their capabilities?
- How do senior managers view the effect of the EDP on the performance of the ECDOE?
- What are the senior managers' perceptions on the factors that facilitate or hinder the implementation of the EDP in the ECDOE, and the achievement of its objectives?

Significance of the Study

This study provides specific knowledge about the particular case of the EDP implementation in the ECDOE. This study is meant to provide rich description of senior managers' perceptions of the EDP and narrate how they perceive the programme, and in particular its effect on performance (both at the level of the individual employee, as well as the institution as a whole). Exploring senior managers' perceptions about their development programme can expand knowledge relevant to management theories in Human Resource Development.

This knowledge is anticipated to contribute to the body of knowledge towards the theory and practice of employee development. Good practices in management development indicate that high performing organisations continually assess the effect of their management development processes. In the same way this study sheds light on the extent that the EDP has contributed towards the improved performance of the senior managers as well as that of the department. Furthermore, a better understanding of senior managers' perceptions about their developmental needs can practically benefit both the department and employees. Lastly, the findings of this study will serve to offer meaningful suggestions for improvement of the implementation of the EDP if there are any obstacles.

Methodology

Applying the right methodology helps to guide the researcher to attain significant contribution to what they are exploring. Babbie and Mouton (2008) “distinguished between three levels of the methodological dimension of research, namely:

- methodological paradigms, the most abstract level which include the distinction between qualitative and quantitative research;
- research methods, which are those that are used in certain stages of the research process, for example sampling, data collection and data analysis;
- research techniques, which represent the most concrete level of the methodological dimension and include specific techniques related to sampling, data collection and data analysis”. (Babbie & Mouton, 2008, p. 28).

Toward this end, this study was informed by the interpretivist paradigm that is elaborated on in chapter three. Interpretivism emphasises the centrality of the individual in the research endeavour, and thus the aim is to understand the “subjective world of human experience” (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 22). In this study, the ‘human experience’ of senior managers was paramount. The researcher further chose a qualitative case study method. Primarily, the researcher aimed to explore the perceptions of senior managers of the ECDOE on the implementation of the EDP which they had participated in. The choice of this method was justified by its richness and fullness with getting individuals' accounts when reporting their perspectives and feelings. According to Merriam (2009), the needs of qualitative research are best met by nonprobability sampling. This study employed a nonprobability, purposive sampling technique. The reason for this sampling was to explore from the senior managers' point of view, directly round their perceptions of

their development needs, the effect of the EDP on their performance, the factors that facilitate or hinder the implementation of the EDP in the ECDOE, and the achievement of its objectives.

Presenting new information to a new area requires methodology, i.e. tools and techniques for analysing collected data. As such, much of the researcher's time was spent accumulating and analysing data. The data collection in this study was gathered in the form of both primary and secondary data (Kumar, 2014). Primary data collection was conducted by means of semi-structured interviews with a sample of participants while document analysis was the second data collection technique used in this study. Neuman (2011, p. 322) defined document analysis as "an approach to the analysis of documents in a detailed and systematic manner that seeks to identify patterns and themes from the contents of a particular body of documents". The collected data was analysed through thematic content analysis.

Ethical research practices were also fundamental to this study. The main ethical issues considered in this study were to assure the research participants of confidentiality and the protection of their identity prior to their participation. This is supported by Creswell (2012, p. 174) who postulated that "the researcher has an ethical obligation to protect participants within all possible reasonable limits from any form of physical discomfort that may emerge from the research project". Additionally, as part of observing research ethics, the researcher sought permission to conduct this study and interact with the participants from the ECDOE and the ECOTP. Both requests were accordingly approved. This was important because departmental documents and personnel would be used mostly as sources of data and reference during this study. All these preceding aspects in this section are described and elaborated more on in chapter three.

Scope and Delimitations

This research study was limited to the research area comprising of the provincial Head Office and Districts of the ECDOE. It specifically dealt with the EDP at the level of senior management in the ECDOE. It further focused on the group of participants within the ECDOE senior management cohort who have been exposed to the EDP between January 2016 to December 2017 and whose development programme had been completed.

Limitations of the Study

De Vos (2005) notes that every study has limitations, and that the researcher must be mindful of all those potential weaknesses. Critical limitations of this study were:

- The inability to generalise its findings to the broader ECPA. The study was delineated to the research area comprising of the provincial Head Office and Districts of the ECDOE. The sampling size of the study was limited to 16 participants selected through nonprobability sampling. The findings can therefore not be extrapolated to the broader department as a whole. However, the findings provide rich insights into some issues that may allow for further empirical exploration in the future.
- As an official in the ECDOE, the researcher could elicit bias, which may have prompted some participants not to speak freely. The researcher applied bracketing out own beliefs and experiences, and also assured the participants not to disclose their personal details in the final report.

Despite these limitations, a transparent research process was undertaken through systematic methods of data collection and analysis to gain generous description and richer insight into participants and their experiences. This qualitative study instead focused on providing a rich, contextualised understanding of

employees' feelings and perceptions of the executive development in the ECDOE, as opposed to a generalised account by participants to the programme.

Research Outline

This section provides the outline of the structure of the study and its various components.

Chapter One: Introduction

Chapter one introduces the research and sets the contextual background for the implementation of the Executive Development Programme. The chapter further outlines the background to the research problem and provides the rationale for the study. In this chapter, the objectives of the study are discussed and the research questions that guide the study are outlined. The chapter concludes by describing the research limitations.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Chapter two conceptualises and explores the existing body of knowledge in relation to the implementation of the Executive Development Programme. The chapter focuses on gaining deeper understanding on the manner which scholars examine the structure, delivery and value associated with employee perceptions undergoing executive development.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

This chapter focuses on the methodology applied in the research. In particular, the chapter describes the research design framework and methods on how the research is operationalised. In this chapter the reasons for the choice of methodology and methods employed are explained.

Chapter Four: Presentation and analysis of the findings

Chapter four provides the first observation of the data collected. In presenting the analysis of the findings, the data collected is then discussed against the literature review presented in chapter two.

Chapter Five: Summary, conclusion and recommendations

This chapter concludes the research study by presenting a summary of the main findings. It further outlines the conclusions that are drawn from the results of the research. Chapter five also provides recommendations. The chapter finally offers suggestions for further research.

Conclusion

Chapter one outlined the introduction to the research study by providing a background to the study. The researcher presented the problem statement and the primary and secondary research questions. They were followed by an introductory description of the research methodology (see chapter three for the details) that included a brief discussion of the research design and methods used during the research. The chapter outlined furthermore the ethical issues that were considered during the data collection phase of study. A brief discussion on the limitations and delimitations of the study was also presented. Finally, a brief outline of the research report was presented.

Chapter two is dedicated towards presenting the literature review and the theoretical framework.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Chapter two consists of a literature review presenting a critical examination of scholarly contributions which are related to this research. The literature review contextualises the study as it critically conveys ideas and views that have already been established by international and national scholars on executive development.

The chapter begins by defining the research topic to provide focus and mastery of the topic's theory and knowledge base by defining the key terms within the research topic. To this extent, the first part of this chapter defines perception as a subject that the researcher is interested in when conducting this study. The second part explores conceptualisation and operationalisation of executive development as a lens through which senior managers view their development. This part also explains and elaborates on various concepts identified by the researcher which are concerned with developing professional managers in leadership and management and in making them acquire skill and insight in day-to-day operations and decision making.

The last part of the chapter examines the theoretical framework with specific focus on the Human Capital theory and the Human Capabilities approach that provided the framework for the study and their use in this study added value by helping the researcher to better understand executive development for senior managers.

Defining the Research Topic

The specific topic that the researcher pursued was that of senior managers' perceptions of executive development. This section provides a definition and discussion on perception. Perception is defined as a uniquely individualised experience which involves the way one sees the world (Mcdonald, 2011). Thus, linked to this study, the researcher adopted Mcdonald's (2011) definition of perception which refers to the unique way individuals or groups view a

phenomenon. To add to this, Panimalar and Kannan (2013) indicated that perception involves how we give meaning to that experience. The researcher believes that there is value in knowing and understanding how employees feel about the quality of development initiatives they participate in. Further, the researcher notes that it is the employees' perception that ultimately defines the need for improvement in the implementation process. Alongside this, Mtsweni (2016) stressed the importance of employee perception by indicating that perception may not necessarily be based on truth, but it can be an individual's perspective of a specific situation. In a similar vein, Panimalar and Kannan (2013) noted that perception may not necessarily be based on reality, but it is a perspective of how a situation is viewed by a particular individual. Mtsweni (2016) further went on to point out that perception influences how individuals see and understand the circumstances around them.

The basic assertion the authors appeared to be making, is that for the organisation to attain the desired output and successful results, employee perception is required (Mtsweni, 2016; Panimalar & Kannan, 2013; Otara, 2011). The growth and performance of an organisation is dependent on its employee perceptions of human resources development practices, including the EDP. In fact, employee perception of what they see as reality is an aspect that modern organisations should not ignore. Otara (2011, pg. 21) concurs and pointed out that in organisation's perception of leaders and managers "shape the climate and effectiveness of the working environment". Also supporting this argument is Seale (2015), who proposed that leadership and management effectiveness in organisations is mainly based on perception. Panimalar and Kannan (2013) went on to state that individual perceptions of effectiveness relate either directly or indirectly to the understanding, accomplishments and experiences of leadership and

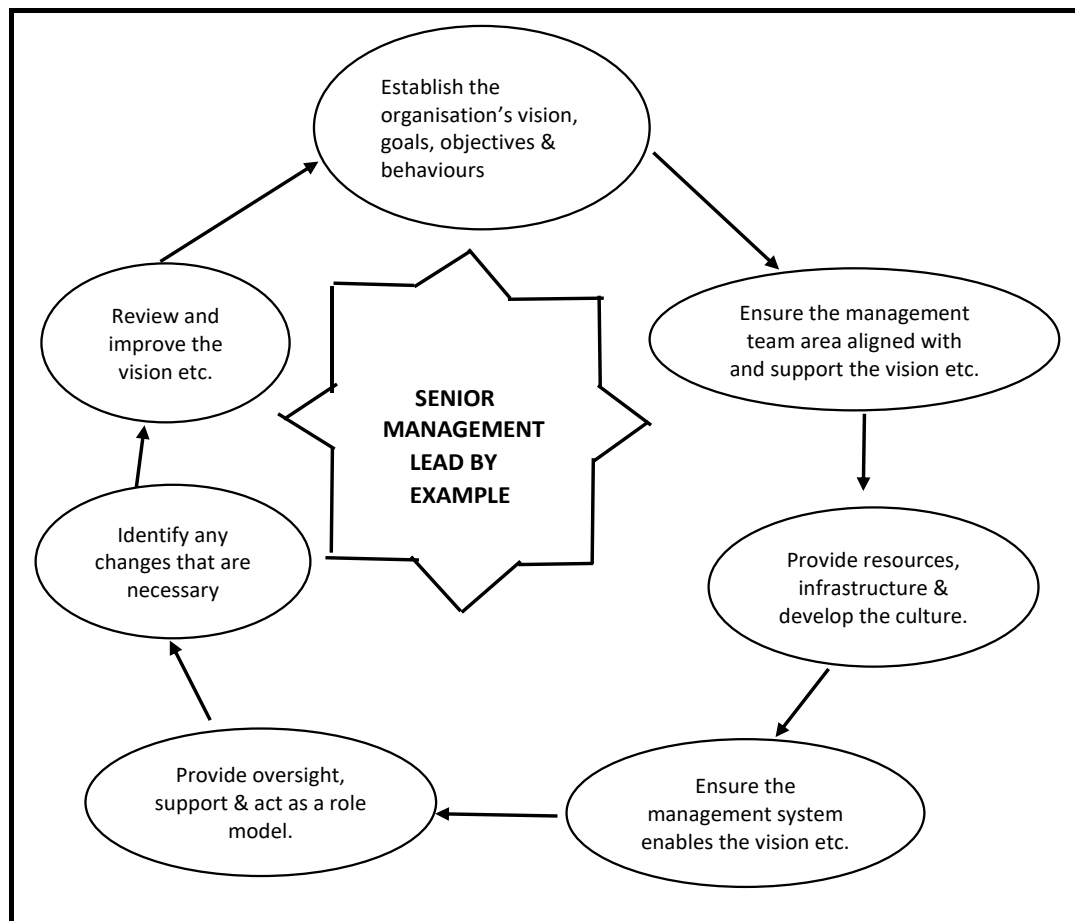
management. These perceptions determine the viability of the leader's position within the organisation.

Otara (2011) further maintained that it is essential for the organisation to ensure that its management team is knowledgeable and educated aimed at their effective performance and behaviour. It is believed that perception has an influence on how people see and understand the situations around them and their decision-making processes. Understanding the views of senior managers is essential in that the attitude of senior managers towards their development influences their performance as well as on the performance of the organisation generally. Thus, the senior managers' perceptions on executive development are central to the practice of Human Resource Development.

The Role of Senior Managers in an Organisation

Senior management is the top level in the hierarchy of management in public sector organisations and comprises various levels of seniority. Hutchinson (2013) argued that for the success of the management system and implementation of continual improvement throughout the organisation, it is fundamental that senior managers provide strong leadership and management. Similarly, Suutari and Viitala (2008) appear to concur and argued that a senior manager must be able to lead. Additionally, Ducker (1993) asserted senior managers must be able to manage the implementation of their vision into activities. As can be seen in Figure 3, senior managers are responsible for the overall operations of an organisation.

The primary role of the senior management team, or the top-level managers is to derive broad strategic plans and long term priorities for the organisation (Naicker & Mestry, 2016; Pearce, 2007). Their goal is to maximise the organisation's efficiency, productivity and performance by making sure all operations are running smoothly (Schwella & Rossouw, 2005).

Figure 3*Management Cycle*

Source: Redman (undated, p.8)

In line with the management cycle in Figure 3 above, the literature revealed that a senior manager has the responsibility and authority that is broader in scope and success and these depends on personality and skills (Ducker, 1993). This claim could also be true for the ECDOE. The researcher therefore asserts that the position of senior managers incorporates the skills and abilities which are generally associated with individuals at the highest levels of an organisation. As already pointed out in chapter one, senior managers usually specialise in a particular area or field such as finance, human resource, etc. On the other hand, Naidoo (2006) argued that should senior managers' leadership and management expertise be less than their job requires, some development interventions are possible.

Conceptualisation and Operationalisation

Ravitch and Riggan (2017) explained the conceptual framework using three central ideas. First, a conceptual framework is a lens or a set of lenses that help the researcher make sense of everything related. Second, a conceptual framework is related pieces that build coherence around the research topic. Third, a conceptual framework is an ongoing framework of ideas. Likewise, this section provides a framework of ideas through identified concepts in an attempt to position the study within the theories discussed in the previous section. This section further provides an analysis and description of key concepts used in this study.

Executive Development

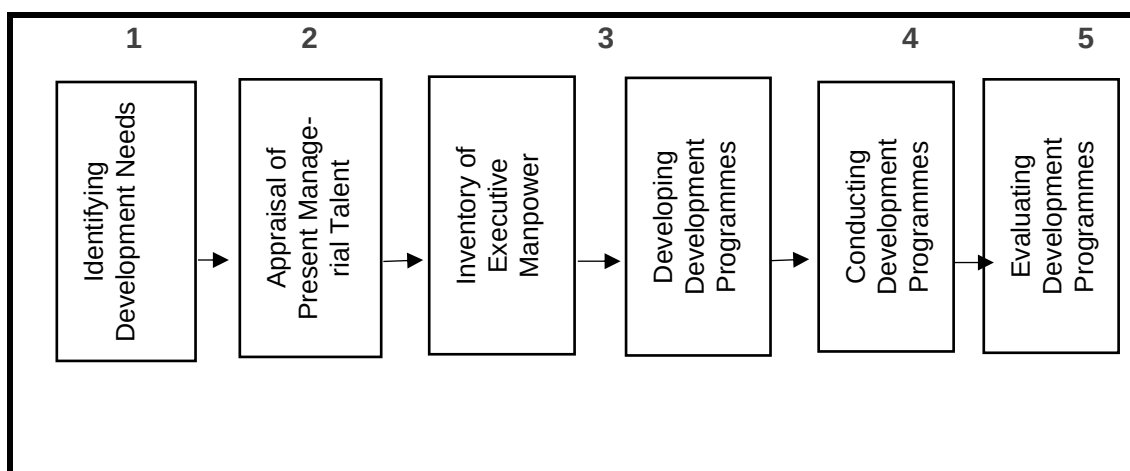
Executive development refers to a set of processes used by the organisation for the individual development of capabilities that can assist in propelling the organisation into the future (Suutari & Viitala, 2008). Taking it further, Day and Dragoni (2015) asserted that executive development is intended to address the needs of the individuals who are appointed in positions at the executive, senior management, and director level. These needs may include management and leadership skills including new technological developments. Executive development is meant to provide advanced leadership and management development training to managers at the executive level either for acquiring new knowledge, skills and technologies or in preparation for future positions. Therefore, there exists a need for the development of high level managers to lead change in organisations (Preece & Iles, 2009). As such, organisations have been using Executive Development Programmes dating back to the late 19th and early 20th centuries, for development of individuals.

For the purposes of this study, executive development focuses on the development of senior managers within an organisation, i.e. ECDOE. Drucker (1993) contended that executive development consists of two related tasks which

mutually affect each other, namely developing management and manager development. According to Drucker (1993) management development is a function and activity of the organisation, while manager development is the responsibility of the individual. Predominantly being an educational process, executive development involves various steps as shown by the figure below:

Figure 4

Executive Development Process



Source: Jackson et al. (2003)

The first step of the process of executive development, as illustrated in Figure 4, begins with the identification of development needs concerning the organisation in the context of both the organisation as well as the individual manager. Development needs may be identified through organisational analysis of its strategies and growth plan. On the other hand, individual needs may be identified through appraisal and the individual's career plan. Complete information about each manager is compiled in a register and later analysed to show strengths, deficiencies, and weaknesses. The development programme is therefore put in place which is tailored to address these shortcomings and weaknesses.

The concept of executive development involves leadership and management as matters at the heart of any organisational life (Akrofi, 2016). These are perhaps the most critical capabilities that are required by top teams (Jackson et al., 2003).

Although the terms leadership and management are used interchangeably by many writers, according to von Holtz (2013), senior managers in organisations must be able to perform both roles – to manage and to display leadership. This claim also resonates with Sharma and Jain (2013) who argued that leadership and management must go hand in hand. Kakabadse (2011) is in agreement and further added that both are necessary for organisational success, and today's leaders are required to have a good grasp of both.

Leadership is one of the key factors in improving organisational performance. Leaders, as the key decision makers, play a vital role in acquiring and distributing the organisation's resources as well as the delivery of value to the organisation's stakeholders. The focus of modern-day leadership development is generally on individual-based knowledge, skills and abilities associated with formal leadership roles (Bolden, 2011). The emphasis in this context is for the individual to build competence, develop a positive attitude and to perform effectively in any number of organisational roles. Leadership development also enables and empowers the individual and the organisation (Bolden, 2011) to address the complexities of change, and focus on improved performance.

Dike et al. (2015) indicated that good managers and leaders are imperative in order to effectively and efficiently run 21st century organisations. Akrofi (2016) concurs and pointed out that management development remains an imperative in all organisations. Furthermore, Akrofi (2016) emphasised that the importance of management development for individual and institutional development cannot be underestimated. Hence, Executive Development Programmes have been prioritised in recent times. Northouse (2010) contended that fundamental to an appropriate management development programme is an understanding of the nature of the managerial job. Thus, there is a strong emphasis on the importance of good managers for the success of organisations. Similar sentiments are highlighted by

Seale (2015) who added that critical to the implementation of management development programmes, is the need to determine the skills requirements in the organisation. Further, knowledge and skills audits are conducted to identify certain skills requirement categories which are crucial for managerial success. The four categories are administrative, technical, interpersonal and personal skills. These categories are in line with what Figure 1 illustrates for the SMS Competency Framework.

Today, education and schooling demand a diversity of skills ranging from administrative, personal to interpersonal, in order to deal with the multiplicity of tasks expected from the senior manager in the education sector. Therefore, executive development comprises a broad range of training programmes covering topics concerned with helping senior managers to become more effective in their managerial or executive functions. Other leadership and management development forms taking place in organisations include executive coaching and mentoring. Dunnink (2017) identified coaching and mentoring as amongst the most prominent executive development techniques.

Executive Coaching. Organisations and managers are cognisant of the significance of managerial skills needed to execute the responsibilities of leadership and management effectively and efficiently. Coaching is a tool that contributes to and assists in developing the strategies for growth of managers personally and professionally (Rekalde et al., 2017). It involves a partnership in the form of a contract between an executive [senior manager] and a coach (Bozer et al., 2014). Thus, it is a one-on-one relationship between an executive and his/her professional coach. Its purpose is to improve the executive's behavioural changes through learning as well as contributing to the individual and organisational attainment in the long run. It is usually initiated by the organisation that wishes to "link the individual

goals of the managers and the strategic goals of their organisation” (Dunnink, 2017, p. 41).

To be successful in achieving its mission, an organisation should align individual and collective competencies of its staff to the organisation’s strategy. As a medium for stable growth and capacity building, both the coach and the coachee need to be mindful of the need for the implementation of continuous management training and development. Generally, it appears that managers who worked with coaches performed and accomplished greater results (Bozer et al., 2014). Therefore, Brown (2006) postulated that a positive relationship exists between strengthening of managers’ skills and contribution to organisational success.

Mentoring. Mentoring is another executive development technique which deals with tutoring and support. This technique involves guidance and orientation of a professional less experienced manager by a more senior executive (Rekalde et al., 2017). This method provides employees with structured opportunity to develop competencies through personal guidance by exemplary performers in an organisation. The mentor is usually a person with a history of personal learning as well as overall broad and relevant experience. Different training and development techniques are required for management competency development. In addition, there must be alignment between the strategic needs of the organisation and the interests of the executives.

The purpose of mentoring is to “achieve professional maturity and develop a set of specific competencies” that an organisation needs (Schwella & Rossouw, 2005, p. 2). In addition, mentoring takes on specific developmental projects that help to learn more about leadership and management. Through mentoring, the manager is exposed to understanding whole work operations of the organisation rather than their specific tasks only. Coaching and mentoring are classified as ‘parallel to the job

training and development, and although not necessarily part of the executives' day to day activities but nevertheless impact the overall job experience.

Importance of Executive Development. Organisations that devote enormous resources to identify and develop their senior managers tend to do so because executive development is a crucial part of their overall strategy. Executive Development Programmes intended for senior managers are considered to assist them in carrying out and implement their responsibilities effectively. Stevens (2013) posited that for one to function effectively as a professional, an individual's formal education must be reinforced with continuing learning experiences. Executive development therefore strives to enhance the senior managers' skillset.

According to Pearce (2007), executive development has far-reaching effects for users who occupy senior management positions. These effects include improved performance, enriched management effectiveness by better self-awareness, enhanced decision-making skills, attentiveness, compliance and managing change (Jackson et al., 2003; Suutari & Viitala, 2008). Additionally, Torraco (2016) argued that executive development aims to blend the vision, mission and values of an organisation in order to foster change in it.

To clarify the importance of executive development, von Holtz (2013) argued that executive development is, any endeavour to improve managerial performance by imparting knowledge and developing skills. Akrofi (2016) agrees, further noting that it was crucial for all managers to be furnished with management and leadership skills for understanding of management and leadership roles and processes and for setting direction. Thus, the goal for Executive Development Programmes is to increase management and leadership effectiveness to guide organisations during stages of insecurity and change.

Executive Development Programmes are compelled by a demand for renewed and high-level executive and managerial skills. Having said so, it cannot be

ignored that executive development faces contextual difficulties and challenges in the public sector. Amongst others are matters such as large numbers of senior managers who are in acting positions, large numbers of senior managers close to retirement age, excessive vacancies in the workplace, lack of coordination, lack of responsiveness and accountability, administration and politics mingling. These could greatly affect the sustainability of training as high turnover rates might be experienced.

Development Needs of Employees

The need to develop new skills amongst organisational managers has been increasing since the early 1990s. This need arose from the changes in the workplace environment associated with expectations of improved performance and quality service delivery (Viitala, 2005). This section reports on the requirements of organisations in identifying the development needs of its employees. Today's organisational managers need leadership and management skills to enhance high performance. The training and development needs of employees can best be determined by analysing the performance of the employees as well as of the effectiveness of specific systems in the organisation (Bolden, 2011). An analysis of the causes of unsatisfactory performance or of opportunities that could be taken advantaged of will indicate training and developmental needs as well as corresponding competencies required from the employees and in particular, senior managers heading specific areas in the organisations.

To maximize benefits obtained from the development programmes, these interventions should be targeted to the development needs of the individual manager (Viitala, 2005). All managers, even successful ones, have patterns of strengths and weaknesses (Viitala, 2005). It is therefore crucial that these development needs form part of the development process and builds on the managers' capability to achieve goals. The process should respond to the

development needs of senior managers which are linked to organisational and individual objectives (Bolden, 2011). In this process, the organisation should determine what competencies executives [senior managers] need in order to perform their duties effectively now and in the future.

In contrast, when the SMS was introduced, a handbook defining a Competency Framework for senior managers in the public service was developed. The Competency Framework identified core managerial competencies. The intention was to get all senior managers to participate in these development programmes. The competencies were cutting across all key performance indicators and of relevance to all senior managers.

Frost and Wallingford (2013) contended that continued learning and development is required to enhance senior managers' skills. The emphasis is for the individual to build the competence needed to form an accurate model of self, develop a positive attitude and identify their own professional development needs (Viitala, 2005). The development needs of all employees in the various departments in SA are addressed in the Workplace Skills Plan. The staff development policies developed by the organisation (Eastern Cape Department of Education), were a source of development needs and interventions for the senior managers. In line with the capacity development policies of the Department of Education at the national level, development needs are expected to be enablers of career advancement (Bolden, 2011). Related to the SMS Competency Framework pointed out earlier in chapter one of this report, some of the identified development needs may include leadership, performance management, team management, strategic and operational planning, amongst others.

Skills, Competence and Capabilities. Contrasting views exist as to how skills, competencies and capabilities differ from one another. However, many writers, regardless of the position they espouse, agree that there is a need for senior

managers to establish a balance of all three elements (Kakabadse, 2011). Brown (2006) concurs and posited that the success of an organisation is dependent on the senior managers possessing the optimal balance of all three elements. Moreover, the leadership skills approach implies that skills, knowledge and abilities are required for a manager to be effective (Jackson et al., 2003). The explanations of these elements are addressed below.

Skills can be acquired through education, training and experience that permit individuals to be more productive (Wu et al., 2015). The skills approach by Katz (1974) as cited in Northouse (2010) suggested that effective management is based on three skills. These are technical, human and conceptual skills. Of the three, the most essential for managers in top positions are the conceptual skills (Northouse, 2010) as they allow for thinking and working with ideas that form the vision of the organisation.

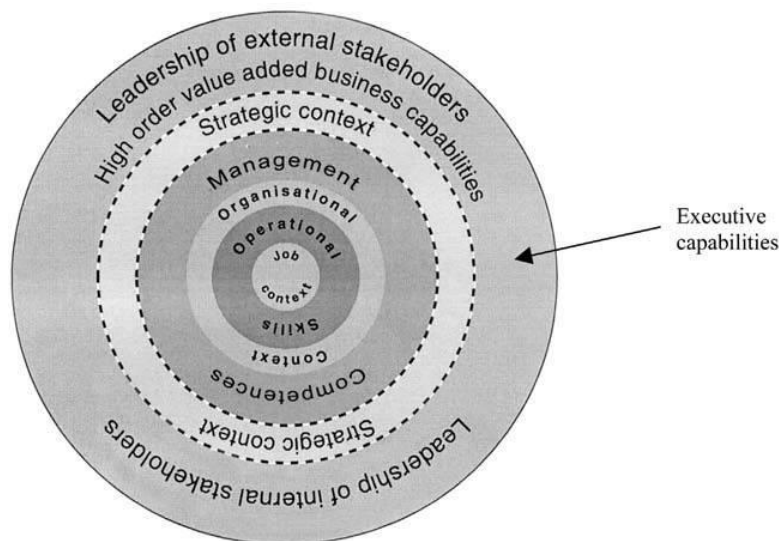
Yang (2015) defined competence as the integration of skills an individual possesses and is associated with the ability to master complex situations. The success of an organisation is predominantly indebted to the competencies of its senior managers. Executive competencies are required for successful leadership and management within the organisation. Developing management competencies encompasses improvement in wide-ranging knowledge and capacities through training and development initiatives. Hence, competence should be understood as a concept which offers a balance between a person's abilities and capabilities such as skills, attitudes and cognitive functions (Pikkarainen, 2014).

Furthermore, a capability is the collective skill of an organisation or system to carry out a particular function. In the same vein, Yang (2015) stated that capabilities involve bundles of skills which are associated with superior performance in organisations. Capabilities are explained as those competencies that provide the organisation with distinctive capability. They comprise higher order skills essential

for the attainment of the organisation's mission. The sustainability of an organisation depends on the management capabilities of its senior management team (Wu et al., 2015).

Figure 5

Work domains showing skills, competencies, and capabilities



Source: Jackson et al. (2003, p. 196)

As indicated in Figure 5 above, the three elements: skills, competencies and capabilities are regarded as measures of senior management performance. There is also an expectation that, as difficulties emerge in the organisation, managers should exhibit the skills and abilities to develop and implement proper interventions (Dike et al., 2015). In line with Figure 5, in their Capability approach which was discussed earlier in this chapter, Amartya Sen likewise places focus on empowering individuals in which he referred to skills, as capabilities. This is meaningful for this study as managers are expected to possess certain identified critical capabilities to be effective leaders. These capabilities are needed by executives and senior leaders to succeed in the changing and developing global workplace environments.

Capacity Building of Senior Managers

Baser and Morgan (2008) explained that capacity building is the process in which individuals and organisations reinforce their capability to perform functions

and attain desired outcomes over a period of time. Put differently, Onsomu et al. (2010) defined capacity building as any endeavour to improve managerial performance by imparting knowledge and developing skills. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development defines capacity building as the “process whereby people, organisations, and society as a whole unleash, strengthen, create, adapt, and maintain capacity over time” (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2006, p. 12). Further, Pollyn and Barinua (2016) indicated that capacity building aims at improving skills for carrying out key functions, building the individuals knowledge base, skills and competencies while expanding and strengthening the network of individuals.

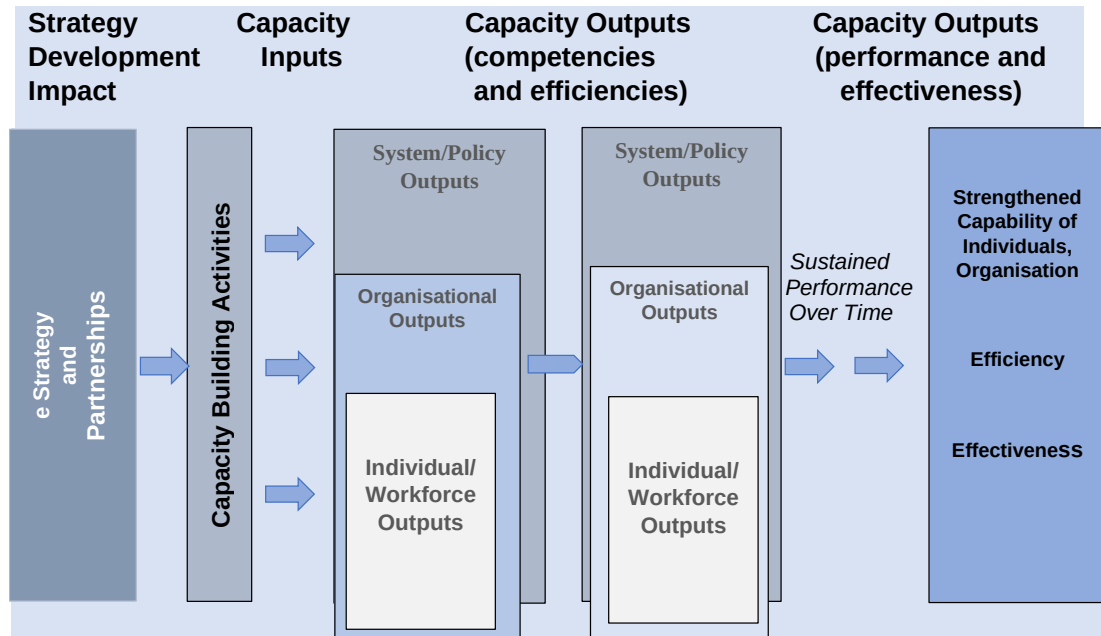
Common to these definitions of capacity building are knowledge and skills. In line with the above definitions, for the ECDOE, capacity building is concerned with institutionalising strengths of senior managers. Capacity building is also concerned with increasing the abilities of senior managers to do what is required of them. The ECDOE must have competent people for generating developmental results. Therefore, capacity building can be viewed as a measure of organisational potential as it addresses specialised management issues (Baser & Morgan, 2008).

Developing management and leadership capacity of senior managers in lower education throughout the country is an endeavour to make them more capable and competent on accomplishing performance goals (Seale, 2015). The education sector is facing expectations for greater accountability and transparency as well as improved performances. As such, the education sector needs to pay attention to the required development in areas that would enhance efficiency and effectiveness of the sector. There is a critical requisite for capacity building of the senior managers' skills and expertise to manage the strategy of the department effectively in a way that takes cognisance of the changes in education and the pace thereof (ECDOE,

2015). Figure 6 is a representation of a capacity building framework for organisations and institutions.

Figure 6

Capacity Building Framework



Note: Adapted from Seale (2015)

According to Figure 6, organisations invest in capacity building and development of staff to enhance their knowledge and skills. The framework indicates that through capacity building activities, participants are afforded opportunity to redefine their skills. A set of activities are offered to increase the individuals' capacity with the aim of producing efficient services. Capacity is a measure of individual and organisational potential. For example, capacity building activities may enhance efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of services. Therefore, capacity is associated with both, the activities an organisation should perform and the results it should be achieving. If the framework is executed well, organisational capacity development can contribute to sustainability, ownership and improved organisational services.

Executive development value capacity building activities that will contribute to professional development within the organisation. However, research has shown that it remains difficult to understand the exact mechanisms by which individual capacity translates to organisational capacity (OECD, 2006). It is nevertheless argued that a well-executed capacity development strategy will enhance capacities of individuals to contribute optimally to the development of the organisation. For the ECDOE, capacity building is a complex quality that includes an understanding of the education practice. This capacity building also includes the reinforcement of capabilities of individuals and organisations, as well as the links amongst them.

Professional Development of Senior Managers. Executives, or also known as managers, run organisations. They plan, organise, direct and control the resources and activities in every organisation. According to Dike et al. (2015), to function effectively and efficiently, every organisation needs effective leaders and managers. The authors further indicated that effective managers are capable of making thoughtful and useful choices in relation to the mission and goals of their organisation. Day and Dragoni (2015) agree and declared that senior managers should set direction by formulating and implementing strategic direction that will move the organisation forward. Therefore, maximising managerial effectiveness is a significant concern for all organisations (Anzengruber et al., 2017).

Professional development is described as the process which is meant to enhance the expert knowledge and skills through collective learning amongst individuals of a work team (Sharma & Jain, 2013). The Minister of Basic Education in SA highlighted that there must be greater emphasis on continuous professional development to achieve efficiency and effectiveness (DBE, 2015). Without competent managers, other valuable resources may remain of little significance for the organisation (Day & Dragoni, 2015). Without professional development, executives may lose their inspiration and drive (Kakabadse, 2011). It is one of the

reasons why executive development has become obligatory to modern organisations.

Senior managers are a critical resource for any organisation. Most of the responsibilities of the senior management include planning, organising and setting of the primary objectives and goals to be achieved (Day & Dragoni, 2015). According to Akrofi (2016), their leadership role can extend over the entire organisation or for specific divisions such as finance, human resources, or operations. Additionally, their expertise and leadership skills can determine the variance between organisational success and failure (Anzengruber et al., 2017). Executive development also assists managers in building on their skills and gain the knowledge they need to manage the organisation, to boost performance and to exploit their full potential.

Further, Akrofi (2016) indicated that organisational success depends on whether the top team possesses appropriate capabilities. As extensive time and a considerable amount of money is often consumed on development programmes of senior management (Brown, 2006), it is therefore imperative that the development programmes of the managers are run effectively (Zuber-Skerritt & Louw, 2014). Moreover, there is a general acceptance that there is a link between the skills level of executives and their contribution to the success of the organisation (Jackson et al., 2003).

Organisational Performance

While the study is focused on the perceptions of individual senior managers, they are however operating within an organisation with development requirements in place for its leaders which are not necessarily specific to an individual. The aim of any organisation is to survive and sustain its presence by improving performance. Organisational performance refers to the manner in which a team of individuals in an organisation who have a particular common purpose execute their functions (Ajisafe

et al., 2015). Further, Andrews and Boyne (2010) explained that organisational performance can be used as an indicator to measure the extent and level of achievement of organisational objectives. Akrofi (2016) contended that organisational performance points to quality, production and consistency. To improve organisational performance, employees must be provided with continuous training and development (Khan, Khan, & Khan, 2011).

Gupta and Kumar (2016) stated that instilling a high performance culture in any organisation begins with its senior management. The senior management's understanding of the importance of a high performance culture, therefore, cannot be over-emphasised. Even if there are excellent proponents of a foundation of best work culture, it will be challenging to implement, if the top management does not acknowledge the compelling reason to perform. In effect, leadership links organisational objectives to management systems (Andrews & Boyne, 2010), and this linkage reinforces better performance (Gupta & Kumar, 2016).

There is no common agreement in the literature on principles to be used to measure organisational performance. However, Andrews and Boyne (2010) indicated that organisational performance can be measured through its efficiency in goal achievement as well as its effectiveness in goal achievement. The authors further highlight that the efficacy of a management development programme should be linked to the context in which it is applied. The success and effectiveness of an organisation often depend on the people who are working in a particular organisation and in particular, the top team (Gupta & Kumar, 2016). Organisations, therefore, benefit from an Executive Development Programme through its contribution to enhancing productivity, i.e. efficiency and effectiveness (Andrews & Boyne, 2010).

Gupta and Kumar (2016) indicated that the terms, efficiency, and effectiveness, become dominant when assessing the performance of organisations.

While these terms seem synonymous, Gupta and Kumar (2016) indicated that a measure of efficiency assesses the ability of an organisation to accomplish its outputs with the least possible level of inputs. On the other hand, effectiveness measures the organisation's ability to accomplish its planned objectives. Linked to the goal of the EDP to ensure that the mission of the ECDOE is achieved, measuring effectiveness is helpful to improving the impact of service delivery. Efficiency also has to do with how performance is maximised with the least amount of effort and money.

The two concepts were therefore relevant for this study as they both indicate the potential of the programme for improving the service delivery of the ECDOE. To sum up, high performance is linked to effective management and leadership. Studies also link development and management commitment to better outcomes. Therefore, the effectiveness of any management development programme is closely tied to its intended outcomes. In fact, effective management is the foundation for organisational performance and growth. Moreover, organisational performance is the ability of the organisation to achieve its goals.

In addition, it is considered that the success of the organisation is attributable to organisational performance and employee affective commitment (Drucker, 1993). Understanding the connection between executive development and organisational performance is an important factor. On the other hand, finding the approaches and methods to develop the performance of the employees is an important duty for today's leaders. From the literature review, as a result, the researcher established that there is a positive relationship between executive development and the performance of the organisation. However, the nature of this relationship has not been analysed yet, as well as how and why leadership affects performance. For the purpose of this study, it is hoped that as the participants share their perspectives,

the study can conclude as to how executive development impacts performance of senior managers and the department.

Having discussed the concepts in the previous sections, Table 1 summarises linkages between the identified concepts and research questions.

Table 1*Operationalisation of Concepts*

Concepts	Definition	Source/ Author(s)	Operationalisation	Research Questions Sub-	What the interviews covered
Executive development	Education focused on acquiring skills, competencies and capabilities required for effective management and leadership.	1. Jackson, Farndale, & Kakabadse (2003) 2. Akrofi (2016) 3. Druker (1993)	Senior managers' perceptions of the success with which the EDP equips them with clarity of vision to cope with a radically transforming education environment.	Q1. How do senior managers in the ECDOE perceive the overall concept of executive development?	A description of the concept of executive development and the intentions of the EDP.
Development needs	Employee and organisational needs may be identified through a performance review process.	1. Bolden (2011) 2. Viitala (2005)	Implementation of the EDP	Q2. How do personal development plans define development needs prior to participation in the EDP?	The methods used to identify development needs.
Capacity building	Strengthened ability and endeavour to improve performance.	1. Day & Dragoni (2015) 2. Kakabadse (2011)	Senior managers' perceptions on their continuous development in order to be effective and competent in a changing and demanding education sector.	Q3. How do senior managers perceive the extent to which the EDP has enhanced their capacity?	Skills, competencies and capabilities equipped with in order to excel in their responsibilities.

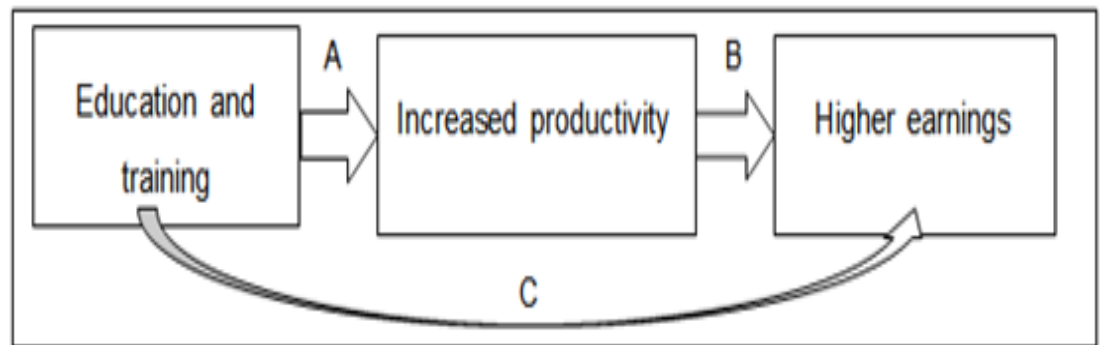
Concepts	Definition	Source/ Author(s)	Operationalisation	Research Questions	Sub- the interviews covered
Organisational performance	Extent and level of achievement of the organisation's mission	1. Andrews & Boyne (2010) 2. Gupta and Kumar (2016)	Senior managers' perceptions of the contribution of the EDP to organisational performance, manifested through effectiveness and efficiency of both the managers and the organisation.	Q4. How do senior managers view the effects of the Executive Development Programme on the performance of the ECDOE? Q5. What are the senior managers' perceptions on the factors that facilitate or hinder the implementation of the Executive Development Programme in the ECDOE?	▪ Linking the EDP success to the performance of the department ▪ Application of the EDP ▪ The obstacles that exist to the effective implementation of the EDP

Theoretical Framework

Ravitch and Riggan (2017) stated that one component of the review of literature is to provide clarity on the theoretical framework that supports the selected research topic. The theoretical framework also served to focus the research, and in this study, helped to conceptualise the term “executive development”. The conceptualisation of terms used in social sciences research is necessary because it specifies exactly what is meant by the terms that are used in the study. Conceptualisation therefore assists in the description of each term or concept by breaking it into common understandable meanings. In summary, the theoretical framework includes the chosen theory (or theories) that reinforces one’s thoughts with regards to how one plans to research a particular topic, as well as the assumptions from that theory that are appropriate to the research topic. In this study, the Human Capital theory and the Human Capabilities approach were deemed most relevant to the examination of senior managers’ perspectives about the EDP in the ECDOE. These theories provided useful perspectives to understand executive development and to analyse data.

Human Capital Theory

Human Capital theory is an economic theory which is generally used in Human Resource Development. This theory, coined in the early 1960s by Gary Becker and Theodore Schultz, has also been prominent in the global dialogue regarding policies on education (Becker, 1993; Schultz, 1971). It provides theoretical foundations to linkages between education, training and skills required (Ajisafe et al., 2015). Schultz (1971, p. 89) defined human capital as “knowledge and skills that people acquire through education and training”. Essentially, the theory proposes that education and training are deliberate “investments that produce returns in the future” (Onsomu et al., 2010, p.4), which translates into higher levels of productivity as portrayed by Figure 7 in the next page.

Figure 7*Human Capital Theory*

Source: Becker, 2007 (as cited in Gamede, 2017, p.31)

Becker (1993) also subscribed to this view as he opines that the Human Capital theory proposes that financial and resource investment is made in human resources to enhance productivity and earnings. The author further posited that investing in human capital ensures that the country's human resource endowment is knowledgeable, skilled and productive. Robeyns (2006, p. 9) agrees and stated that the Human Capital theory highlights "an essential point that skills and knowledge acquired through education are an important part of a person's income-generating abilities". The authors appeared to assert that education increases capability and effectiveness of people to perform in their places of employment. It would appear that organisations are making efforts to improve their internal effectiveness through education, staff development and improvement of skills.

On the other hand, the Human Capital theory is seen as not being comprehensive and has its shortcomings (McCowan 2011; Robeyns, 2006; Sen, 1999). One of the opponents of the Human Capital theory, McCowan (2011, p. 16) highlighted that the theory recognises education and skills development only in so far as they "contribute to expected economic productivity". Opponents of the Human Capital theory also argued that the theory takes into consideration only the economic benefits of education and overlooks other elements of human

development. One other challenge raised by the critics of the Human Capital theory is that increased years of education do not necessarily translate to improved levels of productivity in the workplace (Darwin, 2010)

To deepen and broaden the perspective of training, education and development as highlighted by the Human Capital theory, Sen (1993) suggested a move further than the human capital approach. This move was not to replace the Human Capital theory, but the intention was to add broader, non-economic effects that extend the scope of human development beyond education for higher earnings for the employees. Sen's Capability approach, which is presented in the next section, therefore provides a broadened view of human development going beyond a mere relationship between education and earnings.

A Human Capabilities Approach to Management Development

The Human Capabilities approach was articulated by Amartya Sen during the 1980s. It has gained popularity and became an influential framework for discussing topics in the areas of equality, well-being and development. Its advocates claim that the Capability approach is rather focused on human capabilities (Alkire, 2005; Robeyns, 2005, 2006; Sen, 1993, 1999). Although not a complete theory of education, the Human Capabilities approach provides the theoretic fundamentals of the Human Development model where educational attainment is included as one of the indicators (Hart, 2012; Kelly, 2012).

The Capability approach has offered much contribution for renewal of debates regarding human development worldwide (Sen, 1999). The approach suggests that the economic development of an organisation should be taken into consideration together with the development of persons at work (Subramanian et al., 2013). It also forms a broad basis within which to conceptualise and evaluate aspects of the design of policies and peoples' well-being (Robeyns, 2005). The Capability approach is, therefore applied in this study to advance the theoretical

understanding of how development is actualised within the context of improving well-being and effectiveness of organisations and their employees.

The Capability approach towards education has gained prominence because it has brought additional insights to the debate on development through education (Hart, 2012). Walker and Unterhalter (2007) provided a broad outline of the relationship between education and the Capability approach. One of the critical points of this relationship is the role of education in achieving development, empowerment and fulfilling the instrumental role in facilitating the ability to contribute in the decision-making processes (Walker & Unterhalter, 2007). The approach has therefore also influenced education policy and practice. It can be deduced that according to the Human Capabilities approach, education functions as a foundation for additional capabilities. Being well educated is central to the development of a person's additional capabilities. Moreover, the Capability approach concedes development through education to be understood "not only as increasing income or better access to resources but as the enhancement of people's freedoms to do and be what they have reason to value" (McCowan, 2011, p.285).

Both the Human Capital theory and the Capability approach provided the framework to guide this research. Along with the objectives of this study, the theories provided a comprehensive guidance on human capital management and its linkage to the public sector NPM. The NPM has been actively pursued over recent decades, with the desire to enhance public service delivery through a business-like model of governance aimed at achieving greater efficiency and effectiveness (Hood, 1995). As governments of today are under increasing pressure to deliver more and better services, the theories further provided direction on human capital planning and implementation of Human Resource Development programmes. Employees and in particular senior managers are crucial to the delivery of services. Therefore, the calibre of those employed at the top level in an organisation often

manifests in the excellent rendering of quality services (Walker & Unterhalter, 2007). Moreover, the theories provided guidance on how to measure progress and outcomes for programme implementation. Lastly, the theories linked to the conceptual analysis which was discussed in the previous section.

Conclusion to the Literature Review

The review of relevant literature indicates the prominence and significance of Executive Development Programmes to advance the skills and capabilities of employees. Senior managers are believed to be directing the strategy of the organisation. Therefore, their participation in Executive Development Programmes is of critical importance. As it is expected to contribute positively to enhancing senior managers' capabilities and assist in improving organisational performance. The chapter also reflected on the role of senior managers in organisations. Although there is significant research on executive development, there is little literature on the gains of an Executive Development Programme as perceived by those who had participated in it in SA in particular, and specifically in the public sector, where it has become widely used to strengthen the capacity of the state. The literature review has therefore helped to gain knowledge and understanding of executive development as it explained the meaning and nature of executive development interventions for senior managers.

To contextualise executive development, the chapter ended by exploring theories associated with human development, particularly at the senior management level. The theoretical framework underpinning this research, the Human Capital theory and the Capability approach, were examined. The theories provided the conceptual basis for understanding, analysing and designing ways to investigate relationships within social systems.

The following chapter examines the research methodology that was used in this study.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

The research methodology is the general “approach that the researcher takes in carrying out the research study” (Babbie & Mouton, 2008, p. 74). The term methodology is used to describe an overarching and underpinning philosophical justification for the methods and approaches used in the research. Choosing research methods is not just a technical exercise; it involves more (Cohen et al., 2000). Chilisa and Kawulich (2012) indicated that choosing the research methodology is influenced by three key aspects: first, the theoretical framework, literature and research practice; secondly the assumption about the nature of reality and knowledge; and lastly the value system and ethical principles. These realities, as identified by Chilisa and Kawulich (2012), are important in establishing the fundamentals of the study.

This chapter discusses the research methodology applied in this study and explains the methodological approach utilised during the research process. The chapter includes the following sections: (i) research paradigm, methods and design; (ii) sampling procedures; (iii) data collection procedures and (iv) analysis strategies. A summary of the ethical aspects that underpinned the study as well as issues of research trustworthiness are also considered in this chapter.

Research Paradigms

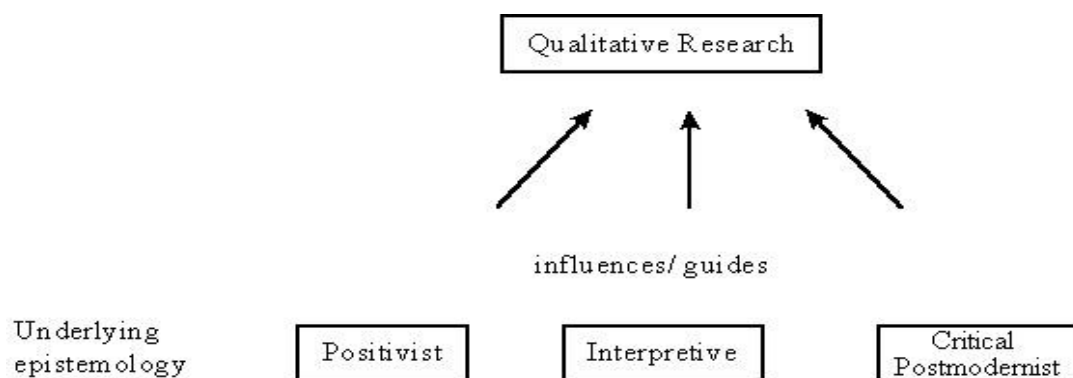
A paradigm is defined as a comprehensive “belief system, worldview, or framework that guides research and practice in a field” (Creswell, 2014, p. 16). This section explores discourses on paradigms generally; discusses selected paradigm; locates the study in a paradigm and advances reasons for the relevance and appropriateness of the paradigm for this study. Klenke (2008) indicated that all research is centred on some fundamental philosophical assumptions about what constitutes valid research. Further, Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) explained that research is premised on the adopted paradigm chosen for a study that comprise

three foundational elements: ontology, epistemology and methodology. In clarifying the three concepts, Durrheim (2006, p. 5) stated that “ontology specifies the nature of reality that is to be studied and what is to be known; epistemology specifies the nature of the relation between the researcher and what can be known and methodology specifies how the researcher may go about practically studying whatever they believe can be known”. It is therefore important that each research is thoughtfully positioned amongst other forms of research. Such positioning is informed by what one believes about the nature of reality (ontology) and the nature of knowledge (epistemology) (Merriam, 2009).

The researcher reviewed some of the common philosophical assumptions, as shown in Figure 8 below, which essentially signify the different approaches to research.

Figure 8

Underlying Philosophical Assumptions



Source: Neuman (2011)

Positivism is often associated with quantitative research. The positivist ontology believes that there is a single objective reality to any research phenomenon that researchers ought to try and uncover as they conduct their research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As positivists believe that the world is external, positivist researchers remain detached from the research participants by creating a distance and therefore remain neutral (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Willis (2007)

remarked that this is important in making clear distinctions between reason, feelings and personal experience.

Positivism would be unsuitable for this study because it emphasises a view that aims to produce precise descriptions of parameters and relationships, uncovering truth and presenting it by empirical means. Further, it views reality as independent of social construction. Furthermore, it regards human behaviour as being passive, controlled and determined by the surrounding environment (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Neuman, 2006). Contrary to positivism, this study appreciates that humans are active and purposeful actors who socially construct their surroundings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

In contrast to the positivist approach, interpretivism research assumes that reality is socially constructed and that there is no single, observable reality (Merriam, 2009). Rather, the position of interpretivism in relation to ontology and epistemology is that there are multiple realities or interpretations of a single event (Neuman, 2006). Denzin and Lincoln (2018) explained that the knowledge acquired through this discipline is socially constructed rather than objectively determined as is the case in positivism. Therefore, the interpretivist paradigm is the methodological lens through which this research was approached, and the analysis conducted.

The Methodological Approach: Interpretivism

As mentioned earlier in chapter one, the researcher identified the interpretivist paradigm for the framework of this study. The researcher chose the interpretivist paradigm because it aims to capture the worlds of the people by describing their perceptions, thoughts and feelings (Babbie, 2008; Babbie & Mouton, 2008; Leedy & Ormrod, 2015). In the same way, this study sought to understand the EDP through the participants' perceptions, what they say about this phenomenon, and the meaning they attach to it based on their individual experiences. It was important that the researcher approached the study in such a manner allowing the

participants, as constructors of their social realities, would be able to describe their views of reality (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The researcher was therefore able to better understand the participants' perceptions while remaining open to new knowledge throughout the study.

The interpretivist paradigm was also relevant because its assumptions linked with the focus of this study to explore the participants' opinions and experiences from their point of view. The researcher was gathering data for this research from a group of senior managers of the ECDOE, their supervisors, and programme coordinators to obtain more varied and multifaceted information. As the researcher was dealing with different categories of participants, the interpretivist paradigm helped to make sense of the views of multiple participants from the perspective of individual experience.

The relevance of the interpretivist paradigm in this study also allowed the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the EDP. Moreover, it helped the researcher to source the thoughts of the senior managers and feelings about the programme while accepting multiple viewpoints of different individuals. The goal of the researcher was to understand and conclude interpretations of the reality and meaning of the EDP as told by the research participants rather than to generalise and predict causes and effects (Neuman, 2006). Interpretivism is often associated with qualitative research which is primarily concerned with understanding things rather than measuring them. In line with this interpretivist philosophical underpinning, a qualitative research method, which is discussed in the next section, was identified as a relevant approach to be taken for this study.

The Research Method

Two broad methodologies are generally used by researchers when collecting data, namely, quantitative and qualitative research methods (Babbie, 2008; Bryman, 2011). Quantitative research methodology focuses more on numbers when

collecting and analysing data (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015). It is the research method which utilises data collection techniques that yield numeric data (Kumar, 2014). On the other hand, qualitative research methodology focuses more on words (Bryman, 2011; Willis, 2007), and data is collected through, for example, interviews and observations (Kumar, 2018; Leedy & Ormrod, 2015). Qualitative research is concerned with analysis in terms of non-numerical data, asks different sorts of questions about processes, understandings and beliefs, and therefore produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification. The main focus in qualitative research is to understand, explain, explore, discover and clarify situations, feelings, perceptions, attitudes, values, beliefs and experiences.

Qualitative Research Method

Merriam (2009) postulated that the qualitative researcher attempts to attain rich, real and valid data. The choice of following a qualitative research methodology was therefore relevant for this study. Its relevance was based on the fact that the qualitative method is primarily concerned with understanding meanings and feelings rather than measuring them. Researchers who are using interpretivist paradigm and qualitative methods often seek experiences, understanding and perceptions of participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). A qualitative approach was therefore best suited in this research study in the field of education where the researcher sought to understand the experiences of senior managers ascribed to the EDP. The qualitative method was also favoured because of its emphasis on the views of the participants as it allowed the participants to describe their feelings and perspectives. Most importantly, applying this approach enabled the researcher to view the executive development through the eyes of the participants.

McMillan and Schumacher (2006) argued that in qualitative research, the perspectives of the participants are central. For this study, the key was to

understand the perceptions of senior managers on the EDP they had participated in and how it had contributed to increased performance. Basically, qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have formed, that is, “how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006, p. 315). In the same vein the researcher was interested in how the ECDOE’s senior managers constructed their experiences by providing a rich description of the EDP.

Similarly, considering the nature of the research questions, a qualitative method was deemed most appropriate as it provided a variety of participant perspectives in order to understand the EDP in greater depth (Creswell, 2014; Kumar, 2014). The senior managers, therefore, critically reflected on the EDP offered to them and its effect on their performance of strategic and day-to-day activities. Furthermore, the strengths of qualitative research adding value to this study include:

- providing an extensive description of the EDP;
- producing a wealth of detailed data from a small number of individuals;
- employing a purposive sampling by intentionally selecting participants who would contribute an in-depth, information-rich understanding of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2014).

The next section describes the research design selected for the approach of this study.

The Research Design

Bryman (2011, p. 228) described a research design as “the framework the researcher employs to collect and analyse data or information”. Further, various authors indicated that a research design provides the plan and the structure of the investigation for the execution of a study (Babbie & Mouton, 2008; Creswell, 2012; Leedy & Ormrod, 2015). For qualitative studies, the traditions of enquiry or

methodologies could be ethnographies, case studies or phenomenological studies (Creswell, 2012). According to Yin (2015), case studies are the preferred approach when 'what' and 'how' questions are to be answered.

The research questions formalised in chapter one related to answering the 'what' and 'how' questions. The questions required the participants to describe their perceptions about 'how' the EDP has enhanced their capacity and capabilities, 'what' were the factors that facilitated or inhibited effective implementation of the EDP, and 'what' was the effect of the EDP on the performance of the ECDOE. Creswell (2014) and Merriam (2009) indicated that a case study involves an in-depth description and analysis of a confined and unique system, according to place and time and participant characteristics (McMillan and Schumacher, 2010). Yin (2017) added that the case could be an individual or organisation or relation or a process.

Yin (2011, p. 18) further described a case study as an "empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within real-life context". It is precisely for the argument posited by Yin (2011) that the case study design was chosen to explore the EDP implemented over time through comprehensive data collection involving multiple participants. With this case study the researcher was hoping to learn more about the perceptions of senior managers on executive development as the researcher interacted with them during the interviews. Therefore, the case study was used to gain an in-depth understanding and description of the EDP in the ECDOE through the experiences of senior managers who had participated in the programme.

There were several advantages associated with choosing case study method, amongst which are (i) the data being examined was generally within the context of a real-life occurrence (Yin, 1994), and (ii) the case study allowed for an intimate and in-depth study into a specific occurrence, geography, person or

organisation (Zainal, 2007). On the other hand, there were also several disadvantages associated with case studies:

- Case studies have limitations in their ability to generalise a phenomenon, one cannot make or state a general finding from a single case (Yin, 1994)
- Case studies may be biased or influenced, based on views to influence end results (Yin, 2011).
- Case studies may be time consuming to conduct as some case studies require a longitudinal approach, hence requiring the researcher to record a phenomenon over a prolonged period of time, resulting in added expenses (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

In addition to the research designs, there are three possible forms of research, depending on the purpose of the research area. These are exploratory, explanatory and descriptive research. Exploratory research seeks to explore new ideas or phenomenon in order to understand more about it (Yazan, 2015). Saunders and Lewis (2012) explained that exploratory research is often utilised when not enough is known about a phenomenon or when a problem is broad and not specifically defined. Further, Saunders and Lewis (2012) added that researchers utilise exploratory research as a beginning step to lay groundwork for future research. The exploratory design was overlooked for this study.

The next form of research is explanatory research which focuses on cause and looks for reasons as it explains which causes produce which effects (Cooper & Schindler, 2011). The explanatory design is therefore suited to explain and interpret relationships (Creswell & Poth, 2018). It also sets out to explain and account for the descriptive information. Although its weakness is the length of time it takes to collect data, the researcher did adopt it for this study intended for the reasons provided towards the end of this section. The last one is descriptive research which involves the gathering of data that describes a phenomenon in order to provide a picture and

clarity about the phenomenon (Cooper & Schindler, 2011). Yin (2015) argued that when in-depth, narrative description of a single case is needed, researchers use description as a tool to organise and describe data.

Yazan (2015) indicated that while descriptive research may ask ‘what’ questions, explanatory research asks ‘why’ and ‘how’ questions. Answering the ‘what’ and ‘how’ questions offered a balance for participants in this study to describe and explain their opinions of the EDP they had participated in. Hence, a descriptive and explanatory case study design (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Yin, 2017) was utilised in this study and the experiences of senior managers were investigated.

Target Population and Sampling of Participants

Population

A population is defined as a group of individuals having some common characteristics (Babbie, 2008; Bryman, 2011; Laher & Botha, 2012). The total population of this study comprised of 60 officials in the ECDOE that were directly or indirectly involved in the implementation of the EDP in the department. It included senior managers, their supervisors and coordinators of the EDP. Senior managers constitute chief directors and directors within the ECDOE. However, it is important to be mindful that this study was not meant to generalise the whole population that was studied.

Sampling

Sampling involves selecting a smaller portion of the population that is studied to acquire some knowledge about the population (Neuman, 2011). In selecting the participants for this study, the nonprobability sampling strategy (Creswell, 2012) was used. In nonprobability sampling, not all the elements of the population have an equal chance of being selected (Battaglia, 2011; Kumar, 2014; Laher & Botha, 2012). Laher and Botha (2012) further indicated that the sample is not determined

by chance but rather by the researcher's judgement selecting participants who have information vital to the questions asked.

In qualitative studies, nonprobability sampling tends to be the norm. The most common types of nonprobability samples include convenience samples, purposive sampling, snowball sampling and quota sampling (Klenke, 2008; Kumar, 2018; Laher & Botha, 2012; Neuman, 2006). In this study, purposive sampling was applied to select relevant participants who understand and have in-depth knowledge about the subject studied. Purposive sampling is a technique where the selection of participants is based on their knowledge and experience of the topic at hand (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Laher & Botha, 2012).

Based on the judgement of the researcher and the purpose of the study, the purposive sample constituted senior managers in the ECDOE who were involved in the EDP during the period 2016 to 2017. The first category of the sample comprised senior managers who were the course participants. The second category were their supervisors. The researcher decided to also interview the supervisors to corroborate the information supplied by the senior managers. Interviewing the supervisors provided a further layer of verification and added to the trustworthiness of the data collected from the senior managers.

The third category was drawn from a separate cohort of external coordinators and facilitators of the EDP whose perspectives were also deemed valuable. Although this category consisted of non-course participants, it was important to include them in the sample because of their role in the coordination and facilitation of the EDP. The responses from these participants assisted the researcher to gain further knowledge about executive development, thereby providing for a detailed understanding of the concept. The total sample of 16 participants consisted of (i) 11 senior managers, (ii) two supervisors, (iii) one programme coordinator, and (iv) two facilitators. To ensure anonymity of the

research participants, their names are not mentioned in this report. Instead, participants are referred to in codes as indicated in Table 2 below.

Table 2

Participants' Profile

Participant	Post	Gender	Years in position	Highest education qualification
Participant 1	Senior Manager	Female	11	Postgraduate
Participant 2	Senior Manager	Female	7	Postgraduate
Participant 3	Senior Manager	Male	5	Postgraduate
Participant 4	Senior Manager	Male	6	Postgraduate
Participant 5	Senior Manager	Male	12	Degree
Participant 6	Senior Manager	Male	5	Postgraduate
Participant 7	Senior Manager	Male	6	Degree
Participant 8	Senior Manager	Female	16	Postgraduate
Participant 9	Supervisor			
Participant 10	Supervisor			
Participant 11	Programme Coordinator			
Participant 12	Programme Facilitator			

The ECDOE's senior managers who were the course participants, included five males and three females. They have all served the department in a leadership role for five years and more. This information was gathered during the interview period through the biographical template designed by the researcher. Although it was not part of the purpose of the study, this information was intended to describe biographic variables of the course participants. The interest of the researcher was focused on understanding the biographical data of the course participants only, hence it is not provided for non-course participants. The biographical data was

meant to provide insight of the lives of each of the course participants in terms of their history in the department and their management positions.

Data Collection

In qualitative research, sources of data collection that are most common are interviews, observations and review of documents (Neuman, 2006). Interviews and observations are classified under primary sources of data. Primary sources of data are eyewitness accounts, that are reported by an actual observer or participant in an event. Secondary sources are accounts of an event not actually witnessed by the observer (Creswell, 2014; Silverman, 2017). Documents are classified as secondary sources of data. Secondary sources of data are usually of limited value for research purposes due to the errors that may result when information passes from one person to another. In this study, the researcher chose to use both primary data (from semi-structured interviews) and secondary data (documents), each of which is described separately in the following sections.

Primary Data Collection Procedures

Data collection instruments are described by Bryman (2011) as tools that are utilised by researchers to gather data from the population sample in response to research questions. In this study, data was collected from a small sample of senior managers through face-to-face semi-structured interviews. According to Bryman (2011, p. 225), in “a semi-structured interview, the researcher has a list of questions of fairly specific topics to be covered, often referred to as an interview schedule”. In order to respond to the research questions stated in chapter one, the semi-structured interview schedule was the most appropriate research instrument to explore in detail the perspectives of the participants. Therefore, the use of the interviews also helped to obtain more in-depth information from the participants.

The selection of semi-structured interviews was also informed by the fact that the interviewer has the opportunity to organize and structure the sequence of

the questions to allow for gathering of comprehensive information through elaboration on questions that are not fully answered. As such, the semi-structured interviews were a direct attempt by the researcher to extract trustworthy data in the form of verbal responses from the participants (Neuman, 2011). To accommodate the four categories of participants, four interview guides (one for each category of participants) were developed for the following targeted individuals: (i) senior managers (Appendix C), (ii) supervisors (Appendix D), (iii) the programme coordinator (Appendix E), and (iv) programme/training facilitators (Appendix F). Each interview guide had a set of specific guiding questions that were relevant to the category of participant. The researcher approached each participant individually to brief them about the study and asked if they would participate. Since the researcher was also employed in the same department as the participants, the researcher opted to visit them in their offices to conduct face-to-face interviews.

In cases where the researcher could not approach the participants face-to-face, appointment requests for interviews were made by telephone and email. Upon agreeing to participate, the researcher scheduled an appropriate date, time and venue to conduct the interviews. The researcher also sent the interview questions in advance, which allowed the participants to apply their minds concerning the information asked.

The researcher found the scheduling of interviews to be challenging due to her work schedule which demanded her to travel away from her workplace every Tuesday to Thursday. What complicated matters more, was that the senior managers had very busy schedules as well, which meant that the researcher had to grab any opportunity provided to meet with them at times and venues suitable to them. Most of the face-to-face interviews were conducted at the participants' workplaces during their lunch break or after working hours. The duration of each interview lasted between 45 to 60 minutes, where participants were encouraged to

elaborate fully and give comprehensive information regarding their experiences and perceptions. The entire interview process took a period of nine weeks to complete.

At the start of each interview, the researcher explained the purpose of the study to each participant and emphasised the confidential nature of the conversation. The role of the researcher included establishing a rapport with the participant, to create a trusting atmosphere to allow participants to share their experiences honestly. A tape recorder was used to capture and record the conversations after obtaining permission from each one individually. The 12 interviews conducted were all recorded using the same recording device. The informed consent forms were signed by all the participants, and they were comfortable with being tape recorded. The researcher therefore did not encounter any problems from participants about tape recording the conversations. Table 3 illustrates the relation between the research questions and the concepts that emerged during the review of literature.

Table 3

Key Elements covered by the Interviews

Research question	Key elements covered by the research questions
<i>Research sub-question 1</i> How do senior managers in the ECDOE perceive the overall concept of executive development?	A description of the overall concept of executive development
<i>Research sub-question 2</i> How do personal development plans define development needs prior to participation in the EDP?	Development needs of senior managers
<i>Research sub-question 3</i> How do senior managers perceive the extent to which the EDP has enhanced their capabilities?	Capacity building of senior managers through the EDP
	Skills, competencies and capabilities expected of senior managers

<i>Research sub-question 4</i> How do senior managers view the effect of the EDP on the performance of the ECDOE?	How the EDP is contributing to equipping senior managers to excel in their responsibilities
	The impact of the EDP on the performance of the ECDOE
<i>Research sub-question 5</i> What are the senior managers' perceptions on the factors that facilitate or inhibit effective implementation of the EDP in the ECDOE?	Implementation of the EDP
	The methods used to identify developmental needs
	The obstacles that exist to the successful implementation of the EDP

Note. Student's own source, 2020

Pre-testing the Research Interview Instrument. Pre-tests are preliminary measures which are used before the administration of the final version of the data collection instrument (De Vos et al., 2011). The pre-test was done to determine the following issues:

- potential areas that might have been overlooked
- the relevance of the questions
- whether questions developed would respond to the objectives of the study
- whether the interview questions would elicit the relevant responses that would enable the researcher to explore, describe and understand the EDP meaningfully.

In this study, the interview schedule developed for senior managers was piloted with the participation of two officials who were not part of the actual research but fitted the profile of the participants utilised in the study. The two officials were encouraged to make comments and suggestions for possible amendment to questions that were not clear or useful. The pilot exercise was helpful because it assisted the researcher to effect the necessary changes in the instrument, such as

rephrasing and sequencing of questions. However, none of the questions tested to be irrelevant.

Secondary Data Collection Procedure

In addition to primary data collection through semi-structured interviews, the researcher also conducted secondary data collection by reviewing the official documents pertaining to training and development of employees. Secondary data was collected and analysed from official documents related to policies and guidelines regulating skills development in the South African public sector context, with a specific focus on executive development. These included the following official documentary sources:

National documents.

- National Skills Development Strategy
 - DPSA SMS Competency Framework
 - National School of Government Revised Strategic Plan 2015-2020

Provincial documents

- Human Resource Development Policy Manual
- Integrated Leadership Development Strategy
- Eastern Cape Office of the Premier close out Report 2012-2016

Eastern Cape Department of Education documents

- Human Resource Development Strategy
- ECDOE Annual Report

The researcher followed these guidelines for collecting documents:

- identified the types of documents that could provide useful information to answer the research questions
- considered both public and private documents as sources of information
- sought permission to use the documents from appropriate individuals in charge of those documents

- once permission was granted, the documents were examined for accuracy and completeness
- recorded information from the documents

The policy documents were reviewed with the following key questions in mind: (i) what does executive development intend to address? (ii) what are the underlying principles and approaches to capacitate senior management members? (iii) to what extent do reports of government indicate that the EDP was successfully implemented in the ECDOE? (iv) to what extent do reports reflect that the EDP has had a positive impact on individuals' as well as on the department's performance? These questions will help to answer the research questions raised in chapter one.

National Skills Development Strategy. The National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS) is the primary guide for skills development in the public sector and outlines the national skills development priorities over a five-year horizon. It directs all sector skills planning and implementation. According to the National Skills Development Framework, skills development refers to “education, training and development activities designed to help employees gain knowledge, skills and attitudes that would improve their performance in the positions that they currently hold and improve their prospects” (ECDOE, 2015, p.2).

New regulations relating to skills development in the South African public service were introduced in the years 1998 and 1999, namely, the Skills Development Act No 97 of 1998 and the Skills Development Levies Act No 9 of 1999. In addition, the National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS) was introduced in 1997 to substitute the old apartheid skills system. The intention for these regulations was to provide guidelines to employers for training and the supply of necessary information on the training needs of each sector (Clinton et al., 2016). Moreover, the National Development Plan acknowledges that “improving the quality of education skills development and innovation” is one of the priorities for SA

(National Planning Commission [NPC], 2012, p. 17). To accomplish this priority, strong leadership is required to ensure success in the implementation of policy programmes. Related to this claim, Andrews and Boyne (2010) argue that managerial and leadership development of senior managers is essential for the smooth operation and improvement of an institution. To achieve this expertise, ongoing and effective staff development is necessary.

DPSA SMS Competency Framework. As pointed out earlier, to support performance initiatives in the public service, especially at the SMS level, the DPSA introduced the SMS Competency Framework. The SMS Competency Framework emphasises the key basic competencies, needed for a particular department or job which senior managers ought to have. In addition, the SMS Competency Framework was designed to ensure that senior managers have the necessary competencies needed to do well at the top management level. It is therefore the basic driver of human resource management effectiveness. The researcher believes that the framework serves as a vision for highly competent and productive senior management in the public service.

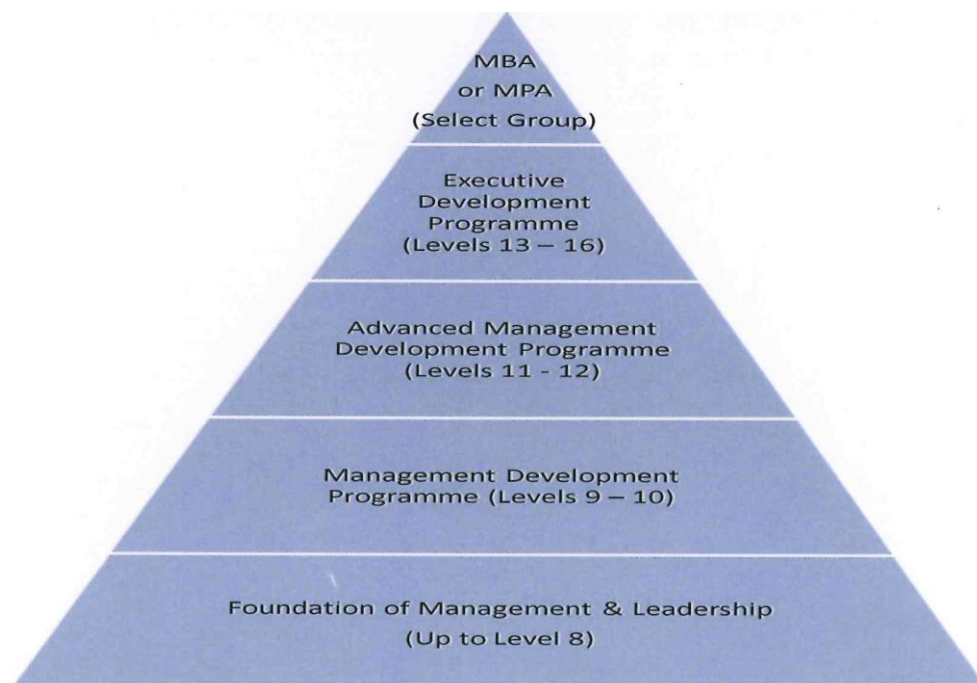
National School of Government Revised Strategic Plan 2015-2020. The South African Government's National Development Plan commits to an efficient and effective public service. As such it values the role of training and development to improve capacity. The NSG, under the management of the DPSA, is mandated to provide training for capacity building of public sector employees through a series of courses and programmes. To deliver on this mandate, the NSG provides generic compulsory and demand-driven training focused on improving administration, leadership and management in the public service. The NSG strategic plan therefore communicates a directive issued by the DPSA which spells out that there must be compulsory capacity building for all senior managers (DPSA, 2010).

The Eastern Cape Provincial Human Resource Development Policy

Manual. The Human Resource Development unit in the ECOTP has been mandated to focus on the development of the leadership and management capability of the ECPA to improve provincial administrative efficiency and effectiveness (Eastern Cape Human Resource Development Policy Manual, 2014a). The unit therefore identified management, leadership and executive development training as one of its key priorities for the financial years 2014 to 2018 to build leadership skills and to drive the implementation of programmes in the Public Sector Transformation Strategy. The training, through a management model as shown in Figure 9, is targeting all positions that are responsible for supervising personnel and specifically those that must provide leadership in implementing the government's development agenda. The model is outlined as follows:

Figure 9

Leadership and Management Model



Source: Eastern Cape Human Resource Development Policy Manual (2014)

In fulfilling the role of coordinating the functions of the ECPA and its departments, the ECOTP introduced HRD interventions that were both competency

and needs-based. The ECOTP's HRD policy provides guidelines for developmental programmes designed to improve employee skills and expertise for improved service delivery. The objectives of the HRD policy are as follows:

- “to create a skills base necessary for the achievement of the strategic objectives of the departments in the ECPA;
- to create a culture of lifelong learning which will assist officials to have the capacity needed to enable the ECPA to achieve its objectives;
- to provide a framework for the Personal Development Plans (PDPs) of employees and accelerated development programmes for staff with great potential;
- to facilitate the development of career path for all employees in the departments” (Eastern Cape, 2014a, p. 22).

These objectives link well with one of the objectives of this study to establish the perceptions of senior managers on the learning programme assist in their capacity building needed to enable performance improvement for them and the department. Further, in relation to the objectives of the HRD policy, it would appear that the EDP introduces senior managers to the new set of outcomes and a strong focus on delivery to improve the provincial administrative efficiency and effectiveness.

Integrated Leadership Development Strategy. The Integrated Leadership Development Strategy (ILDS) consists of variety of programmes that are tied to the needs of the ECPA. The ILDS targets the senior management levels and those that fill middle management levels with high potential to move to upper positions in the hierarchical management structure (Eastern Cape, 2014b). The strategy seeks to describe a culture of leadership and management that is necessary for implementation of government strategies. It is therefore envisaged to invoke leadership practices that determine a culture reflective of effective leadership. It also

seeks to strengthen leadership and management competencies in line with addressing the pillars of the HRD policy. These pillars address selected training interventions that are relevant to the public service. The pillars also have strong correlation with the provincial government priorities.

Office of the Premier Close Out Report on the EDP 2014-2018. The ECPA was mandated to focus on the development of leadership and management capability of managers in the province and to improve the provincial administrative efficiency and effectiveness (Eastern Cape, 2014a). The EDP forms part of a set of programmes designed to support the development of leadership and management capacity amongst public sector senior managers. The researcher reviewed the close out document which reports on the project deliverables executed for the period of 1 October 2014 to 31 January 2018. This period also covers the implementation period for the EDP being investigated in this study. Key points that the researcher noted from this document include:

- The ECOTP is responsible to select a service provider for the implementation of the EDP for senior managers in the province on an annual renewable contract over a period of three years.
- The ECOTP would therefore enter into a service level agreement with the institution of higher learning selected as the service provider.

The document also highlighted the modules that constitute the EDP for senior managers which are shown in Table 4 in the next page.

Table 4*The Content of the Executive Development Programme*

Modules	Equivalent NQF Level	Duration
Financial Management and Budgeting	7	48 hours
Leadership for Good Governance	7	48 hours
Policy Formulation & Implementation	7	48 hours
Programme & Project Management	7	48 hours
Strategic Human Resource Management	8	48 hours
Strategic Planning and Management	8	48 hours
<i>Enrichment Modules/Training:</i>		
Research for Senior Managers		48 hours
Academic Writing Skills		16 hours
Library & Electronic Platform Training		8 hours

Further, the report also highlighted the EDP outcomes as follows:

- Undertaking strategic alignment in the organisation
- Understanding the nature of organisational capacity in terms of policy formulation and implementation
- Critically assessing challenges and opportunities in undertaking planning, budgeting and performance management
- Applying a series of skills and strategies in undertaking risk management and internal control
- Investigating the importance of effective policy formulation and implementation
- Evaluating public sector programmes

- Identifying the factors that influence the external and internal environment

From this report, it could be reasonably inferred that the EDP had focused on strategic leadership and on a significant portion of functional and management skills. The report also highlighted that any effective training programme should be aligned to organisational goals. The development programme should be further integrated into the operational requirements of that specific organisation. On the question of the success of the EDP, the report indicated that the institutions selected as service providers had delivered training development of the highest quality as rated by the senior managers who were the course participants.

ECDOE's Human Resource Development Strategy. The ECDOE HRD strategy presents a framework of coordinating the implementation and promotion of Human Resource Development in the department by means of an integrated approach to education, training, and development. The framework is aimed at developing employees and enhancing their capacity for both personal benefit as well as to benefit the department's mission and performance. In this regard the skills development needs of employees are defined along the necessity to support their responsibilities within the department. The strategy also indicates that all training and development interventions should be based on an objective and systematic needs assessment.

In recognising its human assets as the most vital resource, the department ensures that employees acquire appropriate and relevant skills development opportunities. Employees are therefore encouraged to take advantage of all development opportunities available to them. Moreover, it is the responsibility of the human resource unit to ensure that employees receive equal opportunities to skills development.

Together with the HRD policy of the ECPA, the department's HRD strategy indicates that the departmental training programmes should be aligned with the National Qualifications Framework. This is to ensure their design is relevant to the business of service delivery. The strategy also acknowledges that all employees have a basic right to continual and applicable education, training and development within the framework of their appointments. In this regard, the strategy suggests that the developmental process should be linked with the job descriptions of employees and the strategic plans of the department.

The ECDOE HRD strategy outlines the following principles:

- Development of employees so that they can render the appropriate quality and quantity of service.
- Development of human resources should aim at improving knowledge, skills and attitude and unlocking potential to the benefit of the individual and the department.
- A costed workplace skills development plan approved by the department to be in place. The plan shall be the centre for the provision of skills development opportunities to employees.
- Training partnerships with the ECOTP and external institutions to address specific training needs.
- Approved training and development programmes or workshops will be conducted during normal working hours.

These principles link appropriately with the intent of the DPSA to facilitate leadership and management training. Further, the EDP's intent on the development of public service employees which entailed development of public sector managers to provide them with training to improve managerial efficiency in daily work operations. Another principle for the EDP was the strengthening of strategic capabilities of senior managers in the ECDOE. The strategy therefore served as a

basis for the development of employees, particularly the senior managers aiming at improving their skills in order to render services effectively and efficiently.

ECDOE's Annual Report 2017/18. The 2017/18 ECDOE Skills Development Annual Report highlights the mandate of the HRD unit to manage the skills development and training needs of departmental employees through strategic skills planning within the context of NSDS III (ECDOE Annual Report, 2018). In realising this mandate, the HRD unit coordinates training and development programmes aligned to the department's mission. It is anticipated that the programmes will have a positive impact on the performance of the department. According to the department's annual reports of 2016/17 and 2017/18 reviewed by the researcher, 18 senior managers participated in the EDP during the period 2016 to 2017. Out of the 18, five senior managers did not complete the programme.

The review of documents gave the researcher a clear background about the EDP and description of the findings obtained from each document. In chapter four, the researcher gives an explanation on what the government hoped to derive out of the EDP implementation. It was helpful to undertake a document review and the analysis to supplement the interviews. The documents in this study were used to complement the semi-structured interviews and to enhance the findings. The decision to collect multiple forms of data was informed by the research literature on triangulation, which proposes the collection of various sources of information or different kinds of evidence.

Data Analysis

Qualitative research produces detailed and substantial data originating from interview transcripts (De Vos et al., 2011). Gibbs (2018) suggested that data must be analysed to bring order and meaning, and to turn it into findings. McMillan and Schumacher (2006, p. 367) concur and argued that "it is important to organise data because it would otherwise be difficult to analyse it". Neuman (2006, p. 447) also

affirmed that “a qualitative researcher analyses data by organising it into categories based on themes, concepts, or similar features”.

Data analysis involves transforming data, extracting useful information, interpreting data and drawing conclusions (Flick, 2014). This study used thematic content analysis. Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 9) defined thematic analysis as a “method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data”. Further, the authors indicate that thematic analysis is a way of selecting, as well as a process for coding qualitative information (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In the same vein, Yin (2015) explained that thematic analysis is a method which is used widely in qualitative research to identify and analyse patterns. To reach an in-depth description of senior managers’ perceptions of the EDP, Table 5 below shows the framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) for thematic analysis which were used for analysing the interview transcripts in this study.

Table 5

Steps in Thematic Analysis

Steps	Analysis
Phase 1	Familiarising yourself with the data: ▪ Includes transcribing the data following the interviews ▪ Repeated reading to be familiar with the data ▪ Includes the organisation of data into easily retrievable sections
Phase 2	Generating initial codes: ▪ Includes identification of frequently used words or phrases and organise them into codes or categories ▪ Includes identifying patterns and coding in a systematic fashion
Phase 3	Search for themes: ▪ collating different codes or categories into one over-arching them ▪ Combine and catalogue patterns of data into themes
Phase 4	Reviewing themes: Synthesise findings in relation to emerging patterns and themes
Phase 5	Defining and naming themes: Define the specifics of each theme
Phase 6	Produce the report: Analyse identified themes against research questions and literature review

Source: Adapted from Braun & Clarke (2006)

Chapter four contains a detailed representation of thematic content analysis process illustrating the actual codes identified as well as the themes and sub-themes.

Research Trustworthiness

“Without rigour, research is worthless” (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2008, p.14). Flick (2014) indicated that measuring the truth and the quality of qualitative findings is usually not easy. Pressing the point further, Birt et al. (2016, p. 1802) posited that the “trustworthiness of results is the bedrock of high-quality qualitative research”. It was, therefore, important that the study included a planned approach to ensuring the trustworthiness of the findings. Providing trustworthiness in qualitative research needs the application of four aspects: credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability, which are used to assess rigour and quality of a qualitative study (Merriam, 2009). Credibility demonstrates the truthfulness and believability of the research findings (Cohen et al., 2007). As the research findings will be used to make policy recommendations, it was crucial that they were credible and represented the actual meanings of the participants. In this regard, the researcher cross-checked with participants for any contradictions.

Member checking also played an important role whereby the results of the study were taken back to the participants for verification and to assess their accuracy (Birt et al., 2016). However, due to time constraints, member checking was conducted with only three participants. The research is believed to be credible as the participants confirmed the results to be a reflection of their perceptions. To ensure confirmability, that the research findings were not influenced by the researcher’s bias (Creswell, 2014; De Vos et al., 2011), the responses of the participants were reported verbatim as featuring in the tape recordings. The researcher also kept all the interview schedules, records of raw data (audio recordings), transcripts, and stages of analysis, including the coding process.

Transferability of qualitative research findings to other settings is particularly problematic as it involves generalisability and the application of the results in a different context (De Vos, 2005). Generalisability refers to the level to which one can extend the findings of a specific setting or population to other persons, settings or times (Cohen et al., 2007). However, this study was not designed to be generalised as the study was delimited to the ECDOE. The results of this study would not be generalised beyond the study's geographical area. There might be a need to replicate this study in other settings such as by comparing different departments to determine generalisability of the findings.

Another strategy to enhance the rigour of qualitative research is triangulation. Triangulation means comparing many sources of evidence to determine the accuracy of information (Flick, 2014). It strengthens a study by combining several data collection methods and sources. While triangulation is an essential factor for enhancing the rigour of qualitative research, the researcher did not apply a variety of research methods in this study. However, various sources of information were used in gathering data. These included the review of literature, which was later enhanced by participants' interviews.

Triangulation also involves a process of corroborating evidence from different individuals or methods of data collection (documents and interviews). As previously mentioned, four different categories of participants were interviewed. In this way, the researcher examined each information source and found evidence to support a theme from the different sources. The assumption was that different perspectives generated from multiple participants would give a fuller and more informative picture of the EDP. This ensured that the study was accurate as the information gathered was drawn from multiple sources of information and participants. In this way, the researcher was certain that the research report was both accurate and credible.

Ethical Considerations

Research ethics were an essential consideration in this study. Educational research focuses primarily on human beings whom the researcher is ethically responsible for protecting their rights and welfare as they participate in the research study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). For this reason, multiple ethical considerations were taken into account and applied in this study, during data collection as well as data presentation.

Research in social sciences is subject to approval by institutions which are charged with ensuring that the researcher adheres to a proposed set of ethical principles. For this study, the researcher submitted the research proposal together with an application for ethical clearance to the University of the Witwatersrand Ethics Committee. The application was approved in writing (see Appendix G). Permission was also sought from the Director for research in the ECDOE to conduct the study in the department's provincial Head Office and Districts which was granted (see Appendix H). The nature of this research meant that the researcher was further required to obtain permission from the ECOTP where the EDP is provincially coordinated from. Here, too, permission was granted (see Appendix I). The researcher abided with all the conditions given in the approvals from the various institutions.

Amongst the essential ethical principles the qualitative researcher needs to adhere to are – informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality and anonymity (Ogletree & Kawulich, 2012). A letter inviting the participants, was forwarded to them in which they were informed about the purpose of the study (see Appendix A). This letter explained how the findings of the research will be used. On agreeing to participate, consent forms (see Appendix B for an example of the consent form) were sent to participants, thus obtaining confirmation and agreement for their participation (Cohen et al., 2007). In this regard, participants signed the

consent forms and agreed to participate in the study as well as to the use of a tape recorder during the interview process for record purposes. The information received was also handled with the strictest confidentiality and was not shared with individuals outside of this research project (Cohen et al., 2007).

The transcripts of the interviews are being kept securely for a period of three years. This is to ensure that they are readily available to the researcher's supervisor and examiners if so required. The researcher also maintained strict ethical standards at all times, retaining objectivity and neutrality (Floyd & Arthur, 2012). As the researcher is a professional in the department at middle management level, complete anonymity would be difficult. While this might have presented a potential problem, the anonymity of the participants was secured. One safe way to ensure anonymity was to record the names of participants by using a coding scheme.

Concluding Remarks

This chapter described the logical sequence of the overarching strategy the researcher employed in the research process. The interpretivist research methodology adopted for this study responded to the research questions. It further outlined how the research was conducted by illustrating the methods and techniques followed for data collection. The study took the form of a descriptive and explanatory case study that was analysed through qualitative methods. The justification for the most appropriate approach and data collection methods adopted for this study was given. The researcher carefully outlined the sampling procedure and the sample size for the study. Further, the process used to select the participants as well as the approach that was used in analysing the data was illustrated in this chapter. Ethical issues observed in this study were also highlighted and justified. The purpose of the study was to examine the participants' perceptions of executive development in the ECDOE. The actual research findings from the data are presented in the next chapter.

Chapter Four: Presentation and Analysis of Findings

Chapter four presents and provides analysis of the findings of this qualitative case study on the perceptions of senior managers on executive development in the ECDOE. The findings relate to the research questions that guided the study. This chapter begins by presenting findings from secondary data sources. This is followed by a detailed description of the practical steps of how thematic content analysis was applied in the processing of data. Lastly, findings from the semi-structured interviews are presented and analysed in line with the research questions that informed this study.

Findings and Analysis of Secondary Data

Having described each document used as secondary data in the previous chapter, this section presents an analysis of secondary data in relation to the purpose of this study and ends with a reflection on how the documents compare and connect regarding the development of skills and capacitation of senior managers. The researcher believes that building capabilities is key to re-equipping the state's capacity for higher performance. On the one hand, the documents revealed that a capable state is best placed to respond to developmental changes and to harness opportunities for development. Much of what is related to the subject of building a capable developmental state is the mandate for organisations to manage the skills and development needs of employees.

Findings from National Documents

In line with the secondary research questions, the NSDS highlights that skills development remains an imperative in all organisations. Its importance on individual and institutional development cannot be underestimated. The researcher, therefore, can infer that skills development is an important management tool used to advance the full effectiveness of the organisation's staff. As technological advancements continue to raise the demand for highly skilled employees, the implementation of

skills development programmes becomes more vital. It would appear that the implementation of skills development programmes and in particular the EDP is likely to either enhance the efforts to develop the capabilities of senior management. The training is normally informed by research that the NSG conducts to establish developmental needs of employees and institutions. The NSG strategic plan points to relevance and responsiveness of training to the needs that confront the public service (DPSA, 2010). According to the NSG strategic plan, training should aim at closing development gaps identified through competency assessments or indicated in the PDPs. The researcher concurs and believes that it is important that the programmes are aligned to departmental priorities.

To try and answer the question on the executive development concept and its intentions, this framework particularly depicts areas of senior management professional development. In line with the EDP for senior managers, it outlines the importance of management and development as an endeavour to improve managerial performance by imparting knowledge and developing skills. This is in line with Amagoh (2009) who postulated that it is important for all managers to be furnished with executive skills for setting direction.

Furthermore, Gil and Mataveli (2016) claimed that having senior managers trained and developed in knowledge, skills, behaviours and attitudes as described in the competency model is a helpful tool that allows both the individual and the organisation to be more effective. Various authors stretched this point further by positing that training and development is a means by which the organisation attempts to increase an individual's skills and knowledge for them to perform a particular set of tasks with increased ability (Aguinis & Kraiger, 2009; Amagoh, 2009; Gil & Mataveli, 2016). Another view by Tshukudu and Nel (2015) is that training programmes should be directly linked to the individual and to the overall strategic goals of the organisation.

Given the ECDOE's challenge of poor performance, there was need to build the capacity of managers by participating in the EDP. In responding to the question on capacity building of senior managers, the EDP was aimed at increasing the capability of the senior managers by providing leadership development. Andrews and Boyne (2010) continued to point out that leadership is the major factor that contributes to improved performance and to the success of change in organisations. In effect, the authors propose that leadership links organisational objectives to management systems, and this linkage reinforces better performance Andrews and Boyne (2010).

As mentioned earlier in chapter one, the EDP is a national programme which is rolled out at provincial level according to the national directive. The capacity building through the EDP is also to ensure access to relevant knowledge and development of skills and capabilities that relate to management and leadership in government departments. The commitment to building the capacity of the state has been prioritised as a practice that leans towards developing a range of desirable skills and competencies that are linked to the mission of the department. This commitment has been reiterated in the South African government declarations such as the State of the Nation Address by the President of the country, the State of the Province Address by the Premiers of provinces. Developing a government's capacity allows for better governance, leadership and management that can lead to sustainable development and improved service delivery. Hence the provincial response to this directive and the implementation of the EDP.

Findings from Provincial Documents

The growth of the EDP in the public sector sphere is in line with equipping senior managers to perform effectively in a developmental state. Naicker and Mestry (2016, p. 6) indicate that linking training to leadership development has "brought individual and organisational development efforts to the forefront of human

resources management". Hence, organisations who attempt to succeed in achieving their pre-determined goals tend to invest in the development of their employees more often. The literature revealed that most effective developmental programmes are generally modified such that the content is adapted to the organisation's needs. As such the policy indicates that the ECOTP has customised programmes for the provincial departments' senior managers. This was done in order to better align the programmes with the provincial priorities and departments' strategies. Through the EDP, senior managers would be armed with knowledge and skills which will improve performance. The modified programmes are further customarily based on a growing demand to demonstrate the effectiveness of training on the development of employees and on the performance of departments.

The researcher also noted that the ECPA Leadership Development Strategy advocated for a team of managers who valued the systems thinking and placed it at the heart of their leadership values to be developed. It is imperative for senior managers to realise that in achieving the departmental goals the 'system' becomes relevant. In other words, the intention should be to deliver selflessly by interrelating with all other parts of the whole 'system'. A system is defined as an organised structure made up of various interrelated or interdependent factors, such as activities and interactions that influence one another in order to achieve the goal of the system (Mella, 2012).

Senge (2000) as cited in Jarvie and Stewart (2018) argued that employees must learn how to build own capacity. In response to the objectives of this study, the strategy's mandate of building a system's intellectual capital appears to concur with arguments by Senge (2006) regarding a learning organisation. Senge highlighted that the acquisition of knowledge, individual improvement and increased efficiency must be shared through interactions so as to improve the performance of the entire organisation (Senge, 2006). In the same manner in this study, where the senior

managers responsible for various functions in the ECDOE should interact with one another towards achieving the mission of the department.

The researcher also believes that the strategy places emphasis on leadership effectiveness in achieving departmental strategic goals. In this way it manages to strike a balance in developing key leadership competencies and improving the success rate of the change initiatives, by aligning the leadership strategy and the department's transformation plan. In addition, the ILDS was conceptualised, recognising the challenges faced by departments. Its design would therefore be a guide to ensure that senior managers are responsive, accountable and ethical in carrying out the mandate of government. To this end, senior managers would undergo training in leading cultural transformation and developing capabilities as they lead the execution of the departmental strategy.

From the discussions above, it could be deduced that there are positive effects of Human Resource Development on organisational outcomes. The impact of Human Resource Development programmes can be seen as attempts to influence the ability of employees to perform effectively. It also appears that the EDP had been implemented in a systematic and effective way with the potential of increasing outcomes through employee empowerment. The Human Resource strategy therefore provided a path for the implantation of the EDP which can be viewed as a method for enhancing commitment to work, own professional development and achievement of organisational goals.

Analysis and Reflection on Secondary Data Sources

Executive development has over the past decade enjoyed great prominence as a key necessity for managerial development. Government, in general, views Human Resource Planning and Development as integral in building the capacity needed to deliver quality services and helping to improve service delivery performance. Therefore, enhancing senior managers' capabilities and competencies

has come out as key for development of human capital. Moreover, the review of literature revealed that organisations that are willing to improve performance and achieve their set goals are those in which action is taken to plan for the training and developing of employees. In such organisations senior managers participate in development programmes in order to be equipped with the knowledge, skills and capacity to take actions that promote the accomplishment of the mission and objectives of the organisation.

The various documents presented the approach to skills development generally and also pertaining to the EDP for senior managers in the ECDOE. The documents set out attributes of the developmental state and emphasises on development and training of senior managers in the public service. In an effort to improve performance in the ECDOE, it is believed that the department allowed its senior managers to participate in the EDP. This step would enhance the ability to translate the vision of the department into programmes and projects to ensure their implementation for improved performance. Further, the effectiveness of a development programme is mediated by the quality of implementation.

The actualisation of a vision for participating professional, managerial, leadership and technical skills development would require an organised working relationship between the department and the institution of learning underpinned by clear cooperative measures. This was raised as a concern as funds had been spent to pay for tuition and other expenditure such as transport and accommodation for the managers. However, those who completed the programme commented positively regarding the information they gained during their participation. From the evaluation forms that were completed at the end of each module the participants indicated that they were satisfied with both the content and facilitation.

The researcher is, however, aware that in some cases self-completed evaluation forms might not provide an honest reflection of things that could have not

gone well during the implementation process. Generally, evaluation forms are meant to provide alerts on processes that require corrective action. In such instances, these should then be instrumental in determining the relevance and impact of the development programme by highlighting lessons learned inclusive of both positive and negative ones. It is hoped that the primary responses from the interviews would hopefully substantiate the overall indication of positive satisfaction that was highlighted in the evaluation forms.

Regarding the secondary data, the researcher examined the efficacy of the documents they had obtained from the answered research questions. Descriptive narrative analysis and explanation of information were utilised, where the researcher established developing patterns of the content that was associated with the specific research questions. This was done by recording information from the documents. The researcher took notes focusing on providing valuable information to understand the phenomenon, known as executive development. Document analysis was a rich source of information which was ready for analysis without transcription as is the case with interview data.

Findings and Analysis of Primary Data

This section presents the study findings as shared by the participants during the semi-structured interviews in conjunction with the information established from the reviewed documents. In this section, the key perceptions regarding the EDP implemented in the ECDOE were answered through five research questions that guided the study which are restated as follows: (1) How do senior managers in the ECDOE perceive the overall concept of executive development? (2) How do personal development plans define development needs prior to participation in the EDP? (3) How do senior managers perceive the extent to which the EDP has enhanced their capabilities? (4) What are the senior managers' perceptions on the factors that facilitate or hinder the implementation of the EDP in the ECDOE? (5)

How do senior managers view the effect of the EDP on the performance of the ECDOE?

Thematic content analysis guidelines were discussed in chapter three where the general phases of thematic content analysis were outlined. This section sketches the practical procedure and steps of thematic content analysis utilised in this research.

Table 6

Schematic Illustration of Thematic Content Analysis

Main Research question What are the perceptions of senior managers participating in the Executive Development Programme and its contribution to improved performance?			
Data collected through semi-structured interviews			
Step 1 Familiarise with data	Step 2 Code data	Step 3 Identify codes (Categories)	Step 4 Group data
- Transcribed all audio recordings of 12 interviews conducted - Read all transcripts to familiarise with data - Re-read and noted down initial ideas - Identified interesting elements in the data	- Coded transcripts - Collated data relevant to each code - Refined transcript coding - Reviewed and re-read - Categorised code sections - Collapsed or sub-divided categories as appropriate	- Compiled code list - Explained codes	- Codes collated into potential themes - Defined and named themes - Data relevant to each theme gathered - Identified sub-themes
Verbatim quotations from participants' interviews	administration, leadership and management in the public service	education and training	Theme1: the meaning of executive development
	more training is needed at all levels	competencies and skills	Theme2: identification of developmental needs
	role of training and development	efficient and effective public service	
	capacitation of senior managers		
	compulsory demand driven training	capacitation and support	Theme3: capacity building of senior managers
	capacitation of senior managers	work performance	
	drive change in the department	organisational performance	Theme4: linking executive development to organisational performance
	workplace environment and performance		

Note. Student's own source, 2020

Thematic content analysis is a descriptive presentation of qualitative data (Flick, 2014). For this research, qualitative data took the form of interview transcripts obtained from interview data collected from the participants. Through thematic content analysis, the narrative data from the interviews was analysed and coded as shown in the table above. Table 6 therefore is an illustration of the thematic sketch indicating the full data analysis process that was undertaken by the researcher.

The presentation in this section infused verbatim quotations from the participants' responses. This was done to ensure that the voices of the participants were not lost. The presentation also addresses the following elements, namely; the summary of findings, quotations to verify findings and integration of literature.

On the Question of the Overall Concept of Executive Development

Participants were asked to give an account on their perception about the concept of executive development. With regards to enhancing capabilities of senior managers, the literature revealed that executive development and education is gaining popularity as a key management developmental intervention for organisations. As such there is a noticeable rise in the number and type of executive education programmes implemented through internal and external training. Their emergence is a response to the rapidly changing workplace environments. Hence continuous employee development has become a critical component of an organisation's efforts to improve work performance.

In dealing with the concept of executive development, the findings were centred on two aspects, namely, understanding the intentions of the EDP and the relation between the EDP and the mission of the ECDOE. Participants were therefore asked to give an account on their perception about the concept of executive development in relation to its intentions and how it relates to the mission of the ECDOE. Below are the verbatim statements which were expressed by the participants.

Participant 2: I am sure the aim was to capacitate the senior managers of the government because it was all the managers of the departments, it was not only from department of education.

Participant 3: It is a course that is meant to assist in developing the senior managers in terms of the skills such as project management, human resource skills and so forth. It is a high level course. The intention is basically to assist us as senior managers to manage better at strategic level.

Participant 7: it is one of the skills development workshops which is targeting the senior managers of the Department. It is attended by Chief Directors and Directors both from Head Office and Districts. The intention of it is to capacitate us as SMS members to be equipped with the strategic responsibilities of management and leadership. It is developing our skills and capacity to be able to manage the Department.

Participant 11: The expectations of the EDP are that senior managers need to drive change with an understanding of provincial and departmental priorities and responsibilities embedded on the executive level. It is an important programme to capacitate leadership of departments.

All course participants found it easy to articulate the intentions of the EDP they had participated in. Through a related question, the supervisors were asked to explain the department's executive development strategy. Their explanation corroborated the views of senior managers when they said:

Participant 9; 10: ... the Department of Education is a department that is non-performing in terms of processes, systems, project management and how people are managed amongst other things. Therefore, in response to the requirement of the DPSA, the department's senior leadership and management committee, decided that in order to create a culture of high performance, its senior managers should participate in an intentional

programme that would look at executive management of the department.

This programme would support senior managers to orientate and capacitate them around the strategic drive of the department.

Furthermore, Participant 9 added: ... in that way, you create ability to put your capital human resource and align it with the value system for a culture of high performance.

The participants' understanding of executive development concurs with Jackson et al. (2003) where they claimed that executive development refers to empowering, acquiring of skills and competencies that are required for effective management and leadership. The participants' responses also coincided with Akrofi (2016) point of view that to ensure organisational success, the top team should be undertaken through a planned development process to be equipped on the most critical capabilities for effective performance. The senior managers also confirmed the need for the improvement of their knowledge and skills role through formal training and other informal leadership and management development means. Executive Development Programmes have thus gained prominence, putting greater emphasis on leadership, managing people and teams, as well as managing organisational change.

As pointed out earlier, secondary documents reviewed by the researcher indicated that the developmental programmes and in particular, the EDP for senior manager was meant to equip them. Participants' sentiments also supported this. As much as the participants seemed to understand and articulate the intentions of the EDP very well, the question is still why the department continues to underperform. There could be underlying handicapping systemic factors that hinder the practical implementation of the EDP. It is reasonably speculated that the preventative factors, as highlighted in chapter one, are connected amongst others systemic inefficiencies including staff shortages.

The statements expressed during the interviews indicated that participants largely believed that the configuration of the EDP was in line with the national prescripts as directed by the DPSA and the HRD policy documents. The DPSA's approach was to consider the entire SMS and to follow a model taking into consideration the competencies that are required for any manager at an executive level. The competencies relate to key issues such as the responsibilities of senior managers in line with the SMS Competency Framework. The perspectives of participants also resonated with the programme description as well as its contents regarding the modules undertaken as earlier presented in Table 4.

The researcher further asked whether the executive development intentions were in line with the mission of the department. The mission of the department relates to the implementation of "appropriate and relevant educational programmes through quality teaching and learning in order to provide learners with opportunities to become productive and responsible citizens through quality basic education" (ECDOE, 2017(b), p. 3).

Although one participant acknowledged the need for the EDP, they were doubtful in their response if it would achieve the department's mission.

Participant 1: there is a need for the programme but I am not sure if its structure is going to achieve its intended purposes. You know most of the time these courses they are normally carried out under the pretext that the situation at the workplace is normal and ideal and we do not operate in an ideal and normal situation. For example, we are short-staffed, these courses presume that we are not short-staffed, there are politics at play, unions and so forth you see. The course will tell that under these circumstances you must react in this manner but when you come to practical operation you see it does not become possible. If you follow the rules, then you are in trouble that is what I am trying to say.

On the other hand, another senior manager articulated his response in the following manner.

Participant 4: My view in relation to my unit is that we are support and our role is such that we provide support to teaching and learning which is the core business of the department so that core achieve its mandate that is providing quality teaching and learning. Now if as support for instance we do not recruit qualified teachers for instance as HR then we will not achieve the mission of the department because it will mean we are recruiting a maths teacher with a qualification in history. So, the development programme does assist in terms of the importance of strategic resource management so that we recruit right people with right qualifications at the right time. So, it does link in that manner.

Another senior managers also gave a positive response about the alignment of the intentions of the programme to the mission of the department.

Participant 2: In line with the mission of the department of education is to ensure that senior managers are exposed to all the sections, to all the information of the sections such as supply chain, HR, and all the other sections. So, the aim for me is just in line with ensuring that empowering us with the challenges faced by the department. So, that we can achieve the vision and mission.

The articulations from the interviews confirmed that the EDP is needed for the capacitation of senior managers. The participants went on to highlight certain areas in line with the content modules that they thought were important, for example, human resource module. The mission of the department, as outlined in the department's annual performance plan relates to quality basic education. The participants felt that there was a need for them to be empowered so that their

activities are targeted and implemented in such a manner that the mission is realised.

However, participant 1's response reflected some of the department's challenges that the participant perceived as hindrances to achieving the mission of the department. Linked to the challenge of systemic inefficiencies that were captured in the department's policy and budget speech 2017, the participant raised challenges such as shortages of staff and interference by unions as issues that do not make it possible for them to put what they learnt into practice. Therefore, from this participant's perspective, the mission may not be achieved. Of the eight senior managers interviewed, four of them (50%) shared the same sentiments as participant 1.

On the Question of the Identification of Development Needs

Participants were asked for their perceptions of the areas of development. The responses brought forth important elements on the process of developmental needs identification. According to the DPSA (2010) all senior managers are expected to participate in the EDP for developing new skills and enhancing old skills in many areas of management and leadership as was portrayed in Figure 1 on page 8. The selection of a particular intake of senior managers to attend the EDP is the responsibility of the HRD unit of the department. The ECOTP coordinating office sends letters to the heads of HRD units in various departments informing them of the upcoming training programme and the amount of available space for each department. The head of HRD then writes to various offices requesting them to send people to the training course and provides exact attendance sessions and days.

There is no evidence that indicates a particular selection process was followed to attend any development programme. What the researcher learnt, was that a random group of senior managers would be informed that they have been selected to attend for a particular period. The main perception amongst participants

was that the majority of them (6 out of 8 senior managers) were selected without consultation.

Participants 1; 2; 5; 6; 7; 8: We were told by Human Resource Development that we must attend the course as senior managers of the Department of Education.

The responses of the participants seem to indicate that they expected to be selected based on their developmental needs that they had specified in their PDPs. Their perception was that the EDP was not specifically addressing the individual's developmental needs. Although they had previously indicated to understand the objectives of the EDP, their expectation of a selection criteria based on individual's needs was contradictory. According to the policy documents, all senior managers should attend the EDP regardless of the identified developmental needs. The EDP is a national programme designed for all senior managers. It covers a range of key competencies expected of senior managers.

From the review of the range of national and provincial policy documents, the EDP was described as a programme conceptualised by the DPSA for all senior managers in all departments. Further, the NSG, through the SMS Competency Framework developed content modules that were envisaged to be relevant for empowerment of top teams in the public service. Since the department cannot send all managers at once, the researcher presumes that the only selection criteria would be deciding on a particular group to attend at a particular period until they all are given a chance. Once the HRD unit has selected those to attend, they would be informed accordingly. This concurs with the responses of two other participants.

Participant 3; 4: Normally, HRD would send a communication memorandum for employees to indicate on a needs basis for the following financial year courses as long as it is within one's function. It is important that relevancy of the course to be attended should be in line with the scope of work. But this

programme is a requirement of all senior managers, so we are all going to attend it on rotational basis so that the offices are not all closed.

As was seen in Figure 1, the Executive Development Programme comprises a broad range of topics concerned with assisting senior managers to become more effective in their job. In the same vein, Table 4 indicated the contents of the EDP covering a number of modules suitable for enhancing knowledge, skills, competencies of individuals at SMS level. The researcher is of the view that these modules align with most development needs that were indicated in senior managers' PDPs. The development topics focus on specific skills, general abilities and personal development. Senior managers further acknowledged that they needed to be more technologically enabled and be able to work smarter by developing institutional systems that enhance the department's performance.

On the Question of the Extent to which the EDP has Enhanced Senior Managers' Capabilities

The researcher asked the participants how the EDP had enhanced their capabilities. They were further asked to reflect on the content of the EDP and their views on the facilitation of the programme. The issue of skills acquisition is essential for any organisation, particularly during periods of transition. Specifically, for the ECDOE, it reflected upon its challenge of non-performance which led to a decision taken to drive high performance culture through its transformation plan. Most participants had a strong view that the EDP was a great learning experience to capacitate them with the required skills and competencies for the senior management positions they hold. These sentiments were substantiated in the following articulations.

Participant 3: The programme assists to enhance the management skills in terms of project management, strategic human resource management, to

sharpen our minds on how to conduct processes and run projects in an efficient manner.

Participant 4: It has also helped me to manage my staff better, my staff are probably the best managed in the department their productivity is commendable. There is sense of accountability, responsibility, things that were lacking in the past. The performance has improved a lot. Of course, the culture still needs to be changed from non-performance, it is work in progress. On the overall I am satisfied with room for improvement.

Participant 8: It has made me more capacitated, even dealing with people. I really liked the fact that as the department we are about people so ours is to make sure anyone who came for assistance when they leave by that door they are happy and that is client service. If we can all apply what we learnt there the whole face of the department will change for the better.

Another point of view indicating that there was gain from the programme came from participant 7: We gained skills to do research to benchmark the best practices and to be on par with other good performing departments in other provinces. We commend the programme.

As Blanchard (2009) argues, that a management development intervention is intended for both the organisation and the individuals to gain from. While any organisation might be able to offer an opportunity to develop staff members, the responsibility lies with the individual to make the best out of the training. Generally, the EDP is perceived to have added practical skills to the senior managers' capabilities. From the interview responses, the capacity building EDP seemed to have helped them to become familiar with new methods of working, new technologies and a new work culture in the organisation. However, the researcher noted participants' bias in responding to this question. One wonders again here as

to the causes of repeated underperformance of the ECDOE if the EDP was perceived to have contributed so much capacitation.

Aligned with the review of the literature, participants emphasised that the EDP as a capacity building programme, was an endeavour to grow their capacities beyond the existing condition. Further, it was highlighted that the effect of the EDP was also to add value to the strategic functioning of the organisation. Capacity building through the EDP was also an effort to bring about constant progress in the quality of a person's work with the idea to make the person knowledgeable. Therefore, capacity building presented an opportunity to expand the knowledge base of employees.

From this study, capacity related primarily to the readiness of the senior managers in terms of competencies and capabilities and their preparation for leading and managing in a complex and changing educational environment. Based on their backgrounds, knowledge and experience, senior managers need to be capacitated in the executive management demands of the senior management position. Equally important is the expectation that they should understand their roles for leading and improving the performance of the department. What this means is that senior managers require appropriate knowledge and skills, ongoing leadership development and support for performing their roles and responsibilities effectively.

Development is therefore viewed as a capacity building process that empowers the executive team to address the complexity of change, reflect and learn from their successes and failures, and focus their combined energy towards effective management and leadership. These views are consistent with the deliberations articulated by the senior managers during the interviews where most expressed the need for both individual and collective empowerment in the department given the need to improve the performance of the department.

Additionally, they deliberated on the importance of their role to ensure commitment to achieve the vision and mission of the department.

The content of the EDP was articulated in chapter one through the SMS Competency Framework shown by Figure 1. Earlier in this chapter, Table 4 indicated the content modules for the EDP. In line with this review, participants reflected on the content of the EDP and also shared their views on the facilitation of the programme.

Most the participants were satisfied with the programme content. The participants commending the facilitators as well. They also indicated that the course modules addressed their developmental needs which they had been highlighted in their PDPs. The content certainly appeared to address core knowledge, skills and competencies reflected in the SMS Competency Framework by the DPSA. Upon probing on how satisfied they were with the type of training they attended, some of the responses were that the training that they attended was worth it. They also indicated that the facilitators had sufficient knowledge on the subject.

Participants indicated that the programme helped them to improve in rendering their services and skills that are required in the job responsibilities.

Participant 4: It made a difference to me; I have improved my skills.

Participant 7: The quality of the programme was at a professional level. It has met and exceeded my expectations. The results enhanced my performance, kept me in the loop in terms of latest developments.

These views were also echoed by the supervisors. Participant 9 highlighted that the EDP course and training content looked at identifying and reinforcing skills in order to (i) strengthen high level of professional skills; (ii) manage performance of people under the managers' supervision; (iii) support units as a manager; (iv) look into how to hold people accountable. In support of this view, participant 10 further indicated

that the department had to turn around performance through a particular programme hence it had sent its senior managers to participate in the EDP.

The eight senior managers, supervisors and even the coordinator and facilitators of the programme found the course relevant and successful. There is a strong view that they could learn new skills that added value to their work. The participants further mentioned that they were implementing the new skills acquired during training. In relation to the participants' responses, the literature highlighted that capacity building of senior managers was aimed at developing their leadership and management capacity so that they carry out their functions and activities effectively. In line with the capacity development framework for organisations and institutions, the EDP is perceived to have contributed to skills, competencies and capabilities as measures for senior managers' performance.

With reference to the Human Capital theory, which was discussed in chapter two, it highlighted that when persons who had been exposed to an education and are knowledgeable would by some means do well. In other words, education functions as a foundation to other capabilities. Alongside this theory, the perceptions of participants were that in response to demands of the highly competitive education sector, organisations were advancing participation in executive development activities. In the same vein, the capabilities approach considered assumptions applicable to advance and understand development and education in the context of improving effectiveness.

On the Question of the Effect of the EDP on the Performance of the ECDOE

The researcher asked the participants whether they felt there were parts of the EDP that were or could be beneficial to their performance. The researcher further looked for responses as to whether the programme has contributed to improve the performance of the department. Also, considering the amount of money put into the EDP, it was of interest to get the participants' views on the parts of the

programme that have been most useful in equipping management to excel in their responsibilities.

The Human Capital theory asserts that education and improvement of skills increased the capability and effectiveness of people to perform (Robeyns, 2006). The literature also revealed that employees need to be provided with continuous training and development targeted at improving organisational performance. One of the objectives of this study was to determine the contribution of the EDP towards improved performance. Employees in this study, i.e. senior managers of the ECDOE were asked what effect do they perceive the EDP to have on improving the performance of the department.

All participants agreed that the EDP was relevant with regards to the functions of the department as well as providing senior managers with problem solving skills which are vital in managing the operations of the various units of the department. This was corroborated by the programme facilitator who indicated that the programme introduced, to the senior managers, the ethos of management that was perceived to be helpful and practical in dealing with challenges of their work.

Instilling a high performance culture in organisations begins with its senior management (Gupta & Kumar, 2016). It was envisaged that organisations would benefit from the EDP implementation through its contribution to enhancing both efficiency and effectiveness. Through a measure of efficiency, the organisation would be able to accomplish its outputs. Similarly, through a degree of effectiveness, the organisation would be able to accomplish its planned objectives. In line with the objectives of the EDP and the principles of Human Resource Development plan, the participants reflected on the effect of the EDP on the ECDOE's performance.

Regarding the application of acquired skills and knowledge in the workplace, participants expressed feedback regarding effectiveness of the EDP, its relevance to

the job and its link to the use of knowledge and skills learnt. One of the interview questions asked how senior managers perceived executive development as a helpful mechanism for equipping them for quality education. There were contrasting views when responding to this question.

Participant 3: The EDP gave me a lot of information that I can use to improve my work.

Participant 4: I managed to get knowledge to assist me when rendering my daily activities. Also the training I received will be of benefit to the schools and district teams.

Participant 6: Yes, gained more knowledge but I think it is of strategic level. I cannot see for now how it is supposed to assist in the problem of poor performance by the department.

Participant 8: For doing my job better, yes I think I am equipped but for quality education especially learner and school performance, I am not sure.

When asked if they had been able to apply what they had learnt from the training to their workplace environment, four out of eight participants indicated that they were only partially able to apply the skills and knowledge acquired during training sessions while the remaining four indicated that they could, although not always as other factors affect them. It seemed that the workplace environment was not enabling and not conducive for the application of the newly acquired skills.

Participant 1 reacted and said: Most of the training I have attended was relevant to my work. I learnt things that are applicable to my daily routine.

There are also things that I have learnt and wish to implement but the culture and structures of the office are too rigid.

Participant 2 added: I was partially able to apply what I have learned from the training. I think that part of the problem is that we receive training but we

are still thrown back to the environment that is not conducive for us to practice what we have learned.

The previous responses indicated that the EDP was very helpful. In this question, participants also responded positively, indicating that the EDP was relevant to their work. If one looks at the content of the EDP, it was conceptualised to benefit every member of the senior management team. However, having gained the knowledge, skills and competencies, applying those at workplace environment seemed to pose a challenge. The view of the participants was that the workplace environment did not allow for them to apply what they have learnt. They cited that the workplace environment was not conducive and too rigid, therefore it was not easy to put the knowledge gained into practice.

One senior manager felt he benefitted more as an individual and doubts if he could use this benefit to improve the operations of the department.

Participant 3 articulated their sentiments in this way: Things improved quite a lot. The programme helped to equip me to be able to impart the skills learnt in the improvement of the department, but it tends to be more personal development and I will be able to use the skills much better if I leave the department and go to work somewhere to make change there, not in the current environment. It has benefitted me personally not benefiting the organisation. The facilitators were good. How I wish the course could be recognised as a qualification.

These sentiments are in contradiction to what the literature revealed where Cole (2018) argued that education and development are likely to benefit the individual and organisations. Governments around the world had advocated for management development programmes such as the EDP. These programmes were argued to be critical for improved organisational performance. Further, various scholars contended that development interventions for managers were aimed at

improving requisite skills in the management and leadership levels in the public service. However, post assessment is always recommended to determine whether the development intervention yielded the intended results.

It must be noted that this research was not a performance review or evaluation, and therefore no analysis of the effectiveness of the EDP was intended to be conducted in this study. However, it is important to note that when the organisation is executing a development programme, there should be a measurement of the effectiveness of the training and development activities in place. O'Neill and Bent (2015) indicated that executive development is challenging to measure in terms of results that are directly attributed to the programme itself and the personal development of participants and subsequently on how they carry out their tasks within the organisation.

The discussion in this section is therefore only to assess the worth of the EDP in relation to the improvement experienced by the participants. The interest is to assess the perceptions of the participants, in terms of knowledge acquisition or the development of new skills and how these skills link to organisational performance. Following the training programme, participants were asked about their views on what could be done to improve the programme and applicability to the job environment. In answering the question, most participants indicated that the programme offered and equipped them with new ways of doing things, and new approaches and additional skills. However, a conducive environment with authority and opportunity to apply what has been learnt should be created for them to apply new strategies.

Majority of the participants (seven out of eight) in the study reported that they were exposed to training applicable to the responsibilities that they hold. However, there were mixed feelings about the effect the programme had in relation to improving the performance of the department. Those who have been exposed to the

EDP seem to have mixed feelings about its implementation and outcome with regards to improved performance of the department. One senior manager expressed their measure of success of the programme and its applicability to work in the following way.

Participant 8: All aspects of the EDP are beneficial. Attending the programme has improved my performance. Consciousness about the work of the department, how to do things the right way, knowing your responsibilities. If the skills learnt could be applied it would be much beneficial.

When interacting with the supervisors, they responded in this manner.

Participants 9; 10: We were training people already on the job and we have observed how efficient they were managing own areas of responsibility, their ability to partner and integrate work so that there is more value and collaboration and trust.

Additionally, the programme coordinator appeared satisfied and their response indicated that some kind of analysis was done with departments and the discovery was that the senior managers themselves were at different levels of leadership, some advanced and have even emerged to take up higher positions in a number of departments. The programme coordinator further indicated that it was evident that once people undergo these programmes, they took a different posture in terms of re-experiencing their positions having been broadened in their mindsets.

Span (2012) as cited in Mtsweni (2016, p. 15) maintained that “the biggest assets in an organisation are its people” and investing in the professional development of staff was vital for the growth of the organisation (Mtsweni, 2016). Professional development should involve programmes which enable employees to learn precise skills or knowledge to improve their performance. The responses of senior managers revealed that the EDP impacted on both their personal and professional lives.

As technological advancements continue to raise the demand for highly skilled employees, skills development becomes imperative in all organisations (Onsomu et al., 2010). Presently, leadership and management development have become a strategic requirement for all organisations. From a personal observation, senior managers agreed that the programme contributed positively to their work life and influenced their personal lives in a positive way. From a professional observation, senior managers indicated obstacles in terms of practicalisation of the programme.

Leadership development in this context provides opportunities to systematise and sustain these crucial networks that are vital for advancing more effective leadership and management performance for local deans. In line with the concept of a learning organisation, the EDP should therefore be seen as providing an opportunity to create networks and synergy vital for advancing effective implementation of the programmes.

On the Question of the Factors that Hinder Effective Implementation of the EDP

Regarding the implementation of the EDP, participants were asked about their opinions on the factors that inhibited its effective implementation. From the information gathered from the interviews, it seems that there were significant challenges to the executive development process, not only in the department but in the provincial administration as a whole. The most significant barrier being the poor attendance by the senior managers. Most of the participants lamented on some challenges experienced in the implementation of the EDP. The main impediments, as per the views of participants, to the success of the EDP implementation were:

- the competing priorities of the department to the extent that one might not be able to attend a particular session because there is another programme running.

- being recalled whilst they are in the middle of the programme
- high rate of absenteeism, managers missing some scheduled sessions.
Dates were lost and planning had to be revisited.
- insufficient implementation of the acquired skills due lack of post training support from supervisors.
- the workplace environment is not conducive enough to get platform to apply what they were trained on. Very little of what was learned in the training has been applied to the job.

Thus participants showed concern about the challenges that were experienced during the implementation of the programme.

Participant 6: In terms of attendance there were a couple of hiccups along the way, may be because the course does not contribute to a qualification. HRD coordination and facilitation of dates is also not adhered to. Dates fell out, I do not know why.

Participant 4: ... support from senior or top managers, we lack that support, they may not allow us to be innovative enough, can block us from effectiveness basically and the challenge of resources, human, we are short-staffed.

Participant 8: Missing a block session can also affect being evaluated. It also affects continuity with the group.

The programme coordinator agreed with the above responses.

Participant 11: At the end of the day they do not have marks and won't be certificated and now it will be tantamount to wasteful and fruitless expenditure.

Though most of the senior managers expressed experiencing challenges in the practical application from what they achieved and learnt, they indicated that the execution of their strategic responsibilities and the quality of their output improved

due to the EDP. Participants felt strongly that training should not be a matter of compliance. Instead, training should be relevant and should add value to service delivery. The institutional management context of senior managers is nowadays characterised by the need for effective systems and processes to deliver quality service. In a sense, what the responses of senior managers illustrated was also that the environment should be created for practical application of what was learnt. Akrofi (2016) indicated that the success of an organisation depended on the appropriate capabilities of its top team. Hence considerable time is consumed on development programmes. These must therefore be effectively run. Likewise, the EDP strives to enhance managers' skills and contribute to service delivery.

Concluding Remarks

This chapter commenced with the presentation of findings from secondary data sources which included various official documents providing information on the development initiatives for senior managers. The next part focused on data presentation and analysis of the findings from primary data which was collected through semi-structured interviews. In this chapter, data analysis, data analysis methods, study findings and discussion of the findings have been presented. The findings were analysed via thematic content analysis within the context of the literature reviewed in chapter two.

The next chapter focuses on the overview of the study by making a summary discussion, conclusions, and recommendations.

Chapter Five: Summary, Conclusion and Recommendation

The preceding chapters have explored perceptions of senior managers and their experiences in executive development. This chapter concludes the study. It summarises the main findings of the study against the research questions and the literature on executive development. To this end, chapter five is divided into three sections. The first section gives an overview of the study by summarising the main findings, the second section presents the conclusion while the last section provides recommendations for policy and practice. It also recommends further research both in the geographical area covered as well as related fields.

Summary of the Main Findings and Integration of Literature

The purpose of this research was to explore how senior managers in the ECDOE perceived the Executive Development Programme which they had participated in. The research was underpinned by the following key question:

“What are the perceptions of senior managers regarding the Executive Development Programme and its contribution to improved performance amongst the senior managers?”

In discussing the major findings, this section interrogates the identified themes emanating from the research sub-questions. The first theme engages the concept of executive development, its intentions and whether the intentions relate to the mission of the ECDOE. The second theme discusses how developmental needs for training were determined. The third theme looks at capacity building and whether what was learnt is applicable to the work practice. The fourth theme focuses on how the EDP has contributed to the improved performance in the department.

Summary of Findings from Secondary Sources

As part of the documentary analysis, various pieces of legislation enacted by both the national and provincial government relating to employee development programmes and their implementation were reviewed. These documents helped the

researcher in determining whether they outline the required institutional arrangements for the implementation of Executive Development Programmes. These included the institutional arrangements outlining the role of all relevant actors, such as in the Human Resource Development units.

Organisations invest in executive development of senior managers to enhance their capabilities. These include organisations investing in programmes that train executive teams to promote leadership and management capabilities expected at senior management positions. Participants in these development programmes are often capacitated to acquire skill sets and capabilities that will enable them to take their organisations to the next level of performance. This is related to the arguments by Schultz (1971) who devoted a huge amount of time expanding the knowledge base that elucidated the Human Capital theory. Schultz (1971) argues that knowledge and skills are vital ingredients in developing human resources. The author asserts that the amalgamation of education and training will subsequently empower individuals with useful knowledge and skills as a form of capital. The literature revealed that participants in the Executive Development Programmes do value the development of skills that will plausibly contribute to their professional development and career progress within and outside of their organisations. This was also confirmed during the interviews where participants indicated that they valued the capacitation they received during the training.

NPM reforms adopted around the 1990s to transform the public sector included amongst others, improvement of leadership and management capacity with the aim to achieve high performance levels. In response to these reforms, the DPSA and the NSG were mandated to deliver capacity building programmes for employees at various levels of management within the public sector. In the same vein, the Human Resource Development Strategy for SA outlines eight commitments. Commitment number seven refers to the capability of the public

sector to realise the strategic priorities of the South African developmental state. This obligation is further teased out in goal seven of the NSDS. The ILDS thus ensures that it supports the HRD skills policy and the NSDS, by increasing the capacity of the ECPA for service delivery improvement. It is against this backdrop that the ECPA puts special emphasis in developing the leadership capabilities of senior managers. This relates to arguments put forward by proponents of the Human Capabilities approach indicating that human development is about expanding people's choices by increasing their capabilities. Walker (2010) adds that the Capability approach brings forth the importance of expanding the viewpoint of management in supporting human development.

With regards to the ECDOE, the HRD strategy provides a framework for coordinating the implementation of development programmes including the EDP. The HRD strategy outlines principles to guide programme interventions. According to the ECDOE's Head of Department, the EDP was intended to equip senior managers with skills and knowledge so that they can execute daily operations effectively (Kojana, 2017). Moreover, those participating in the programme are expected to make a change in the department when they are return to work. The researcher perceives that the type of changes expected would include (i) a greater understanding of responsibilities by the managers and more able to perform with their roles (ii) adherence to quality standards thereby increasing productivity (iii) consistent experience and knowledge relevant to the mission of the department, amongst others. From the responses of the participants during the interviews, this area seemed to be one of the challenges in the EDP implementation. Participants indicated that the workplace environment was not favourable for the application of knowledge gained.

The next section presents major findings of the study from the analysis of data collected during the semi-structured interviews with the participants. In this

section, major findings are discussed in line with the themes identified during thematic content analysis of data.

Summary of Major Findings from Primary Data

Theme 1: Executive Development. This theme was underpinned by the following research sub-question: “How do senior managers in the Department perceive the overall concept of executive development?”

It was important to establish whether the participants shared a common understanding of the concept of executive development. The findings found that all senior managers understood the concept and the reasons why they had to participate in the EDP. Participants highlighted that as senior managers they needed to participate on ongoing training and development towards improving effectiveness and efficiency in performing their roles.

One participant explained that executive development involved mastering the responsibilities in the section that one is a manager of, coupled with authority in managing that section. Participants further indicated that there must be alignment of the strategic direction of the organisation with the individual and collective competencies of its staff. The researcher believes that senior managers of the ECDOE needed to be empowered and capacitated to shoulder the responsibilities of the department’s top team. It was further highlighted that all senior managers should share and strive to achieve the department’s mission. The shared mission becomes the driving force towards the high performance culture envisioned by the department.

This research re-confirms the belief that executive development is a critical development investment that builds confidence to take on leadership challenges. Moreover, the participants mentioned that they welcomed the programme as an effective vehicle for updating knowledge and developing management and leadership skills. The literature (Bolden, 2011; Jackson et al., 2003; Preece & Iles,

2009; Sadler, 2001; Suutari & Viitala, 2008) and the interview responses pointed to the need for executive development that is tailored towards both the individuals and the department. In their own words, the participants indicated that the development should be linked to individual and institutional performance and should receive ongoing support from the supervisors.

Theme 2: Developmental Needs. Jackson et al. (2003) indicated that executive development begins with identification of development needs related to the organisation. The authors further argue that organisational needs may be identified through the organisational analysis of its strategies and growth plan. Alternatively, individual needs may be identified through appraisal and the career plan of the individual. Data generated through interviews indicated that participants were not necessarily identified to participate in the EDP because of their development needs as stated in the respective PDPs. Rather, as a requirement of the DPSA, the EDP for senior managers was understood to be a compulsory developmental programme essential for ensuring increased effectiveness at top management level.

The fundamental premise is that senior managers possess the requisite minimum knowledge, skills, and demonstrable experience to do their jobs, hence their appointment to those senior management positions. Senior managers have therefore become more and more aware of the need and necessity for the possession of strategic management skills which would hopefully lead to more effectiveness at work and increased productivity. Executive development in this research context is directed specifically towards enhancement of their capabilities to lead and manage more effectively amidst organisational complexity and change.

The skills development policy documents revealed that developmental needs are an integral part of any organisation's human resource policy. Furthermore, according to the policy documents, HRD programmes are used to address a

particular need within the organisation. Tshukudu and Nel (2015) concur and assert that it could either be an existing inconsistency such as poor employee performance or a new challenge that requires an alteration in approach in which the organisation ought to operate. As pointed out earlier, for the ECDOE, there was a need to address the issue of non-performance in various areas.

Participants were of the view that the competencies of the executives must be aligned to the organisation's strategic needs. These views are linked to the literature which revealed that organisations should identify development needs in line with the targeted competencies. This finding also concurs with Jackson et al. (2003) who postulate that the value of management development stems from the need for managers who are skilled and knowledgeable about the current changes in education.

Therefore, leadership development in the prevailing context must be cognisant of and responsive to the development needs and leadership complexities of organisational change for senior management. Emerging from the documents, was an adoption of a more strategic approach to senior management development programmes which is aligned to the mission and objectives of the department. Further, the documentary analysis pointed to a programme that would incorporate various dimensions such as performance management, planning and leadership development. These areas are deemed key for leadership development as they are linked to advancing a high performance culture in the department. These leadership development interventions are linked to advancing the institutional mission, objectives, and culture.

To sum up, the literature revealed that currently, development of top managers is needed to enhance individual learning in line with responding to work related challenges and the required improvement in individual and organisational

performance. It needs to be stressed that the environment for implementation should be enabling and empowering to deliver the desired outcomes.

Theme 3: Capacity Building of Senior Managers. This theme was underpinned by the following research sub-question: “How do senior managers perceive the extent to which the EDP has enhanced their capacity?”

With the concern for reform in the ECDOE, it is the opinion of the researcher that the department has given much attention to the effectiveness of its senior managers through capacity building programmes. As revealed by Seale (2015) capacity building is concerned with maximising employee performance and also helping in strengthening the link between employee development and strategic objectives. From this assertion, it can be inferred that capacity building involves growth and extension of individual skills, abilities and competencies.

Data from the interviews revealed that senior managers perform tasks that are especially linked to improving educational outcomes and high performance culture. These tasks include strategic capability and leadership; people management and empowerment; project and programme management; financial management; change management; and technical and professional skills (DPSA, 2010). In carrying out these tasks, managers must employ a collection of different types of technical, interpersonal, conceptual and diagnostic skills (Jackson et al., 2003).

Competencies and capabilities are two terms used regularly in relation to capacity building. Alongside the Human Capabilities approach, capacity building involves the expansion and enhancement of people’s capabilities. According to the Human Capabilities approach, education plays a role in empowering and facilitating the capacity of employees for effective participation in decision making processes. Capacity building is therefore a combination of diverse competencies or capabilities that interrelate to form the overall capacity of a human system. Akrofi (2016)

indicated that organisational success is dependent on whether its top team possesses appropriate capabilities.

As gleaned from the data generated by this study and in the literature, it is interesting to learn that, although not necessarily lacking in management and leadership competencies, but many times the senior managers have discovered many areas where the development programmes have reinforced and strengthened their capacities and competencies in. Jackson et al. (2003) have depicted executive development as a capacity builder. What the authors meant was that executive development was an enabler of performance in organisations. Also emerging from the literature, was that the executive development was a systems wide, integrated programme which was cognisant of the individual and organisational learning needed to enhance performance.

For the successful implementation and improved performance, the EDP considered those competencies and capabilities considered by top management to be the basis in the department's development initiative. With specific reference to the EDP implementation, consideration was made for the need in changing the organisational culture of the department. As such strategic imperatives for a high performance culture were defined and linked to the Executive Development Programme.

Theme 4: Organisational Performance. All participants who attended the EDP seemingly found it to be beneficial. In addition, the participants mentioned that the course has positively impacted on their personal skills and the way they do their job. Although participation in the EDP is aimed at the improvement of work performance and the enhancement of career prospects, most of the participants seem to be reluctant applying what they learnt from training sessions to their workplace environment. This emerged as participants revealed various challenges

that affect the application of knowledge and skills gained. Amongst others was the fact that they do not receive sufficient support from supervisors.

The literature also revealed that there has been an increase in the focus on development programmes designed for public sector executives. The researcher pursued to comprehend the degree to which participation in the EDP has resulted in improved individual performance as well as improved organisational performance. Participants perceived the EDP to have impacted positively and contributed to the improved performance of the department. This is in line with several authors' assertions that employees must be provided with continuous development targeted at improving the general performance of the organisation.

Whichever approach has been adopted, there remains, say Jackson et al. (2003), the problem of knowledge-transfer into the workplace and measurement of individual and organisational impact. Another inhibitor is the resistance that participants encounter from other colleagues to the implementation of new ideas acquired during management development training. What can be deduced is that the effectiveness of leadership development interventions hinges on enabling organisational conditions and a learning culture (Naidoo, 2009). This seems to also be the case for the ECDOE.

Conclusion of The Study

Research Purpose and Method: A Reflection

Subsumed within one of the objectives of this study – the views of senior managers on the implementation of the EDP – was the intent to explore their perceptions of the EDP. It was anticipated that the participants would share their understanding of executive development, how they construct the meaning of executive development, and its possibilities for enhancing improved performance. Hence, the notion of the interpretivist paradigm influenced this study. The interpretivist paradigm was used since it embeds particular notions of reality,

knowledge, meaning and learning. It therefore allowed for understanding of multiple participant meanings who participated in the data collection phase of the study.

As mentioned before, interpretivists seek to understand how people interpret and make sense of events in their lived experiences. Although “generalisability of the findings of research conducted within the interpretivist paradigm is practically impossible” (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017, p. 32), for this study interpretivism were deemed suitable because its epistemology is inter-subjective knowledge construction. The interpretive paradigm views participants as sources of data as it seeks to reveal their perceptions of a phenomenon, what they say about a phenomenon, or the meaning they attach to such a phenomenon.

A qualitative research methodology adopted for this study was used to collect information from different categories of participants. The researcher believes that the qualitative methodology used in this study was effective in addressing the purpose set out in the beginning of the study. The qualitative approach is more flexible and lends itself better to the study of aspects like values, beliefs, understanding, perceptions and meanings (Kumar, 2014, p. 133). In this study, perceptions of ECDOE’s senior managers, their supervisors and executive development, were important.

The main research tool was face-to-face semi-structured interviews which allowed the researcher to connect with the respondents. A semi-structured approach also provided opportunity to clarify questions where needed and allowed the researcher to seek elaboration by asking follow-up questions and clarity of answers. The semi-structured interview process involved asking questions, listening, expressing interest, and recording what was being said by the respondent in the particular research study. The researcher believes that the prepared set of guiding questions provided consistency as well as aided the analysis and comparability. The

researcher conducted in-depth interviews with 12 out of the planned 16 participants who were purposively selected for being directly and indirectly involved in the EDP.

As indicated, participants were chosen based on their knowledge and strategic roles in the strategic management processes of their departments and/or organisations. Participants answered five open-ended interview questions along with probing questions when needed to provide more clarity. The use of semi-structured interviews was appropriate to capture the richness of responses and views of the different participants as it allowed for the gathering of in-depth, rich qualitative data on senior managers' perceptions of executive development. The inquiry needed to produce a description as well as an explanation of the perspectives of participants regarding the executive development in the ECDOE. The choice of using the semi-structured interview schedule as a data collection technique allowed for an in-depth examination of the EDP, its implementation and the benefits for both the senior managers and the ECDOE.

Conclusions

Executive Development Programmes are currently widely prioritised globally. This research explored the perceptions of senior managers regarding the Executive Development Programme they participated in. The selected case study was the Department of Education in the Eastern Cape Province, South Africa. The rationale for its selection was threefold: the department has been faced with non-performance as compared to similar departments in other provinces nationally; the EDP has been implemented with a view that it will contribute to a high performance culture; the department electing to the implementation of a programme that will capacitate its top team for improved performance.

The theoretical framework provided the foundation of the study in which theories associated with human development, education and training were discussed. The Human Capital theory and the Human Capabilities approach formed

part of the theoretical framework for this study. These have arguably been influential theories impacting upon Human Resource Development and education policies worldwide. The work of scholars such as Sen (1993), Becker (1964) and Schultz (1971) provided insight into understanding the need for capacity building and development of employees.

Central to the Human Capital theory is the idea that education and the improvement of skills increases productivity. The Human Capital theory (Becker, 1975, 1993) provided the basis for the perspective that training is an investment in employees and productivity rather than a cost. On the other hand, the Human Capabilities approach focuses on people's capabilities in the context of improving the quality of life, well-being and effectiveness of people and organisations. These theories considered and laid down the following assumptions applicable for Human Resource Development:

- education and training are investments for higher levels of productivity
- education and improvement of skills increase the effectiveness of a person
- skills and knowledge broaden people's capabilities

Human capital comprises the knowledge and competencies embodied in the ability to perform efficiently and effectively. Senior managers are endowed with knowledge and skills set and personality traits which they contribute to senior management positions they hold. The main purpose of executive development is to prepare them to be effective in their positions through knowledge and skills enhancement. This is in keeping with predominant approaches to executive development which not only focuses on professional but also on personal advancement. This is corroborated by Rogers theory on personality as an additional epistemology in executive development.

The main outcomes of human capital for an individual are generally an enhanced professional profile with additional knowledge and skills for greater productivity. In addition to human capital which focuses on developing individual knowledge, skills, and abilities, Rogers theory places emphasis on building networked relationships amongst individuals to improve organisational performance. This is demonstrated by the responses from senior managers on the networks they have developed for professional and personal support in their roles with other departments. Systems thinking also provided an appropriate methodological construct for reconceptualising executive development for senior managers. In a systems context, a set of elements (individual, organisation, and environment) are directed towards a common purpose and do not exist separately from each other.

Based on the issues raised and discussed in this study, the researcher concludes the following:

- The perceptions of executive development and its effect did not differ much amongst the senior managers. All senior managers who participated in this study indicated that there is a need for continuous development and training programmes to equip them more on their roles and responsibilities. The researcher found it interesting that senior managers were eager to be equipped for the purpose of improving efficiency and effectiveness in order for the department to realise its mission towards a high performance culture and improved education outcomes.
- The results identified executive development as one of the interventions for the capacity building of senior managers. This research study was found to be consistent with the literature stating the importance of the top team for the success of their organisation. Moreover, owing to rapidly changing workplace environments, organisations have

considered the development and empowerment of senior managers as critical. It was for this reason that the senior leadership and management committee of the department prioritised a process of development and training to be put in place for its top team to grow to become successful and drive a high performance culture in the department.

- The results of this study show that senior managers found the EDP to be beneficial in terms of developing their capabilities and competencies to contribute to improved organisational performance.

The study also acknowledges progress made in the area of executive education thus far. It is clear that the programme offers opportunity and support for understanding one's strengths and efforts to improve one's effectiveness as a manager. The study came up with a detailed description of executive development in the ECDOE. Knowledge about perceptions of senior managers on executive development is extremely limited. The current study is the first research to look at this matter for the ECDOE, and therefore further studies of this nature would assist to building a body of knowledge on building public sector capability in the Eastern Cape province in general, and the ECDOE in particular.

Recommendation for Policy and Practice

This section recommends key aspects that should be attended to in order to improve the implementation of executive development in the ECDOE. Present senior management teams are required to be well educated and resilient to function effectively in the ever changing workplace environments. The EDP has the potential to bring awareness to those areas where senior managers need to excel in their day to day work responsibilities.

The following recommendations are recommended for the effective implementation of executive development in the department:

- The programme should be linked to the departmental strategic plan and the transformation plan of the ECDOE. In its transformation plan, the department had already highlighted priority areas of development. These should be infused into the programme.
- The PDPs also contain developmental areas as identified by each senior manager. The training should take note of these and in addition to compulsory courses, they should find expression into the programme. This suggests that a thorough developmental needs analysis should be carried out before the training programme so that these further developmental areas could also form part of the focus areas of training and development.
- There must be an opportunity for sharing what was learned with other colleagues and supervisors and in this way, application of what is learned will be much easier. It is believed that post training support would eliminate the feeling of doubts when implementing the newly acquired knowledge. It is therefore critical that the senior managers should be provided with support as they implement the new skill learned.
- The programme facilitator should provide a comprehensive learning experience which ensures that learning does not start and stop with the training contact sessions, but to take care of all stages of learning transfer. Therefore, post training follow-up sessions are recommended to cement the knowledge, identify gaps and barriers for a strong transfer of learning. This recommendation emphasises on the point that employees should be provided with ample opportunity at the workplace to practice the skills they have learned from the training and development programme.

- The ECOTP and the HRD unit should instruct supervisors not to recall managers whilst they are in the middle of the sessions. Because there is a schedule in place, it must be observed, and all managers must complete the programme.
- The ECOTP indicated that there should be strengthened monitoring during training programmes. It was indicated that once absenteeism by managers was picked up, there was usually a written warning that they would be liable to pay back the money for tuition. In that way the managers were made to take responsibility for their own development.

The results of the study add to academic research exploring the experience of executive development. It adds the dimension of understanding the perceptions of those who have participated in the programme. It also contributes to a better understanding of the leadership capacity requirements of senior managers to enhance their knowledge, skills, and experience in an enabling environment.

Recommendation for Future Study

It is important to explore perceptions of employees of their own development. For future research, this study should be replicated with a larger number of participants. It could also be replicated within various contexts such as looking at middle management or throughout the whole provincial administration to enable generalisation of the findings to a broader population.

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Appendix A: Information Sheet

My name is Nozibele Mtebele, a student at Wits University registered for Master of Management in Public Sector Monitoring and Evaluation. As part of the requirements of the degree I am conducting a research entitled: **Senior managers' perceptions of executive development in the Eastern Cape Department of Education.**

Purpose

The purpose of this research is to explore senior managers' perceptions regarding the Executive Development Programme (EDP) in the Eastern Cape Department of Education and its contribution to their improved performance.

Benefit of the research

This study is meant to provide rich description of senior managers' perceptions of the EDP and narrate their views on the EDP they had participated on. It is important to understand their views because their attitude towards executive development has an effect on the individuals' professional growth and performance.

Procedure

I would like to invite you to participate in an interview with myself as the researcher at a venue and time that is convenient to you. The interview involves answering 10 questions (including sub-questions) and will last approximately an hour. With your permission I would like to tape-record the interview in order to ensure accuracy.

Voluntary participation

Your participation in this study is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time and you may also refuse to answer any questions that you would prefer not to. Refusal to participate or answer questions will not be held against you in any way.

Anonymous and Confidential

Confidentiality is of utmost importance. Please be assured that your name and personal details will be kept confidential. No identifying information will be included in the final research report besides the fact that you are a senior manager in the Department. The interview material, which includes recordings and transcripts will not be heard or seen by any person, only the researcher will have access to. This research is not a quasi-performance review or evaluation, therefore perceptions of efficacy will not be shared.

Contact Information

If you have any questions about the study, or require any further information please feel free to contact the researcher at 0716408692 and email: nozibelemtebele@gmail.com. A copy of the results will be available on request.

Your time and assistance is greatly appreciated, thank you for participating in this study.

Appendix B: Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

Name of the programme: Masters of Management in Public and Development
Sector Monitoring & Evaluation

Title of the research: Senior managers' perceptions of executive development in
the Eastern Cape Department of Education

Name of the researcher: Nozibele Sweetness Mtebele

Please fill and return the reply slip below and indicate your willingness to participate
in this project and your willingness to have your interview audiotaped for my
research project

.....

REPLY SLIP

I agree to participate in this research project.

The research has been explained to me and I understand what my participation will
involve.

I agree that my participation will remain anonymous YES NO (please circle)

I agree that the researcher may use anonymous quotes

in her research report YES NO

I agree that the interview may be audio recorded YES NO

I know that I may withdraw from the study at any time
and that I will not be advantaged or disadvantaged YES NO
in any way

..... (signature)

..... (name of participant)

..... (date)

Contact details: 0716408692 Email address: nozibelemtebele@gmail.com

Appendix C: Interview Schedule for Senior Managers

PART A: BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION OF RESPONDENTS – SENIOR MANAGER (Quantitative data)

A1. What post do you hold? (Indicate with X)

Chief Director	Director	Other

A2. Indicate your gender (Indicate with X)

Male	Female

A3. How many years in the management position? (Indicate with X)

0-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25	26-30	30+

A4. Your highest education qualification (Indicate with X)

Diploma Technikon	Diploma University	Undergraduate Degree	Post Graduate	Other

PART B: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS – SENIOR MANAGER

Question 1: Perception of the overall concept of executive development

What did you know about the programme?

Probe: What are its intentions?

Probe: Do you agree with these intentions? Why?

Question 2: Perception about the vision and mission of the Department

2.1 What does the Executive Development Programme relate to the mission of the Department?

2.2 What role do you play in managing your chief directorate overall?

Question 3: Perception of the capacity building of senior managers through the EDP

- 3.1 Please tell me about the applicability of the programme to your work practice
- 3.2 Do you think that any aspect of the programme has changed your performance as a manager? If so in what way has it done so?

Question 4: Perception about implementation of the EDP

- 4.1 In your opinion what factors facilitate effective implementation of the EDP in the Department?
- 4.2 In your opinion what factors inhibit effective implementation of the EDP in the Department?

Question 5: Perception about the impact of the EDP on the performance of the Department

- 5.1 Do you feel that there were parts of the programme that were or could be beneficial to your performance as a senior manager?
Probe: which parts of the programme were most useful to you?
- 5.2 Do you think that any aspect of the programme has improved your performance? If yes, in what way has it done so?
- 5.3 Considering the amount of money put into the EDP, in your view is this programme contributing significantly to equipping management to excel in their responsibilities?

Thank you for your participation!

Appendix D: Interview Schedule for Supervisors

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS - SUPERVISOR

1. What is Eastern Cape Education Department's approach to executive development, or put differently, what is the Department's executive development strategy?

Probe: Is there a personal development plan?

Probe: Does the Department follow it or what plan is used to select senior managers who should participate in the programme?

2. How do you perceive the efficacy of the Executive Development Programme which the ECDOE senior managers have participated on?

3. What have been some of the Department's major successes in terms of executive development?

Probe: How do you measure results?

4. What have been some of the Department's challenges regarding the implementation of executive development?

Thank you for your participation!

Appendix E: Interview Schedule for Programme Coordinator

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS – COORDINATOR

1. What is Eastern Cape Provincial's approach to executive development?
Probe: Is executive development linked to the various Departmental strategies?
2. Which tools (e.g., internal/external courses, e-learning, job rotations, coaching, etc.) does the Eastern Cape Province use to develop executives?
Probe: Is it a one-size fits all for all Departments, including the ECDOE?
3. Please tell me the expectations of the EDP for senior management of the ECDOE.
4. What have been some of the key successes in terms of executive development?
Probe: How do you measure results?
5. What have been some of the failures in terms of executive development? What are the ongoing challenges?
6. Do you have any internal documentation that could be of help to my research? (e.g., presentations on executive development, programme offerings, annual reports, etc.)
7. Do you have any other contacts to recommend for interviewing?

Thank you for your participation!

Appendix F: Interview Schedule for Programme Facilitator

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS – FACILITATOR

1. Please tell me the expectations of the EDP for senior management of the ECDOE.
2. Which tools (e.g., internal/external courses, e-learning, coaching, etc.) does the Eastern Cape Province use to develop executives?
Probe: Is it a one-size fits all for all Departments, including the ECDOE?
3. How do senior managers define their development needs prior to participation in the programme?
4. I'm sure you do conduct a satisfactory survey at the end of the course. How do senior managers describe the efficacy of this development intervention which they have experienced?
5. What have been some of the key successes in terms of executive development?
Probe: How do you measure results?
6. What have been some of the failures in terms of executive development? What are the ongoing challenges?
7. Do you have any documentation that could be of help to my research? (e.g., presentations on executive development, programme offerings, annual reports, etc.)

Thank you for your participation!

Appendix G: Ethics Letter – University of the Witwatersrand



Research Officer:
Zibusiso Mazanti-Moyo
Tel: 011 717 3505
Email: Zibusiso.Mazanti-Moyo@wits.ac.za

Research Director:
Prof Pandy Pillay
Tel: 011 717 3501
Email: pandy.pillay@wits.ac.za

18 April 2019

Dear, Miss Nozibele Sweetness Mibele

Title: Senior managers' perceptions of executive development in the Eastern Cape
Department of Education
Student Number: 1589023
Degree: Masters in Management in the field of Public and Development Sector
Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)
Ethics Clearance Number: #PSG-2019-27

Your ethics application has been received and considered by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the Wits School of Governance.

Your application was reviewed and your ethical clearance has been approved. You may continue with your data collection under the guidance of your supervisor.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any queries.

Yours sincerely

Professor Pandy Pillay
Research Director

www.wits.ac.za/wsg

2 St David's Place, Johannesburg 2000, Pretoria, South Africa
administrators.wsg@wits.ac.za (Email 1), shortcourses.wsg@wits.ac.za (Email 2)
+27 11 717 3600 (Telephone)

Appendix H: Permission to Conduct Study – ECDOE



Province of the
EASTERN CAPE
EDUCATION

STRATEGIC PLANNING POLICY RESEARCH AND SECRETARIAT SERVICES

Steve Vukile Tshwete Complex • Zone 6 • Zwelitsha • Eastern Cape
Private Bag X0032 • Bisho • 5605 • REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA
Tel: +27 (0)40 608 4691/4773 • Fax: +27 (0)86 742 4942 • Website: www.ecdoe.gov.za

Enquiries: B Pamla

Email: babalwa.pamla@ecdoe.gov.za

Date: 12 June 2019

Ms. Nozibele Sweetness Mtebele

4 Athlone Gardens

Weir Street

King William's Town

5600

Dear Ms. Mtebele

PERMISSION TO UNDERTAKE A MASTERS RESEARCH: SENIOR MANAGERS' PERCEPTIONS OF EXECUTIVE DEVELOPMENT IN THE EASTERN CAPE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

1. Thank you for your application to conduct research.
2. Your application to conduct the above mentioned research involving over 16 participants from the Head Office of the Eastern Cape Department of Education (ECDoE) is hereby approved based on the following conditions:
 - a. there will be no financial implications for the Department;
 - b. institutions and respondents must not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation;
 - c. you seek parents' consent for minors;
 - d. it is not going to interrupt educators' time and task;
 - e. you present a copy of the written approval letter of the Eastern Cape Department of Education (ECDoE) to the Cluster and District Directors before any research is undertaken at any institutions within that particular district;
 - f. you will make all the arrangements concerning your research;
 - g. the research may not be conducted during official contact time, provided that an arrangement to do research at the school including getting inside a classroom has been arranged and agreed upon in writing with the Principal and the affected teacher;



Appendix I: Permission to Conduct Study – ECOTP

 Province of the EASTERN CAPE OFFICE OF THE PREMIER	
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR GENERAL Office of the Premier Building Independence Avenue Bhebe Eastern Cape Private Bag 30047 Bhebe 5605 REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA Website: www.ecprova.gov.za Tel: +27 (0)43 609 6181/2 Fax: +27 (0)43 639 1419 email: marion.mtshali@ecprova.gov.za	
Ms NS Mtshali 4 Athlone Gardens King Williams's town 5606	
Dear Ms Mtshali	
PERMISSION TO COLLECT DATA WITHIN THE HRD SECTION OF THE OFFICE OF THE PREMIER	
Your correspondence on the subject matter is hereby acknowledged and noted.	
Please note that permission to collect data within the HRD section of OTP is granted as requested. You are therefore requested to present the department (OTP) with a copy of your final report with most important findings and recommendations.	
I hope you will find this in order.	
Kind Regards	
 MS NTM MBINA-MTHEMBU DIRECTOR GENERAL	26/08/2019 DATE
Cc: Mr L van Zuydam Ms N Ntshali	
LEADING DEVELOPMENT WITH EXCELLENCE AND INTEGRITY 	