

**STRATEGIES FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF LOW PERFORMING
SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN THE NORTH WEST PROVINCE**

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DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to my wife MALEHLOHONOLO LILLIAN and my two children, KEOIKANTSE and REITUMETSE MOGONEDIWA.

OPSOMMING

STRATEGIEË VIR DIE BESTUUR VAN SWAK-PRESTERENDE SEKONDÊRE SKOLE IN DIE NOORDWES-PROVINSIE

Sleutelwoorde: Bestuur, swak-presterende, effektief, oneffektief, swak-gedissiplineerd, sosio-ekonomiese status, landelik, stedelik, strategie, instruksionele leierskap, totalegehaltebestuur ("TQM"), prestasiebestuur, skoolgebaseerde bestuur, hulpbronne.

Die doel van hierdie ondersoekstudie is om vas te stel wat die aard van die bestuur in swak-presterende sekondêre skole is, met spesifieke inagneming van interne bestuur sowel as die eksterne strategieë wat die Departement van Onderwys aanwend om skoolprestasie te verbeter. Daar word ook gekyk na verskeie uitdagings waarmee swak-presterende skole te kampe het, met inbegrip van algemene bestuurtemas wat swak prestasie kan help verbeter, soos totalegehaltebeheer, prestasiebestuur en skoolgebaseerde bestuur.

Ná die literatuurstudie is daar 'n empiriese studie gedoen oor die mate waarin die lede van die skoolbestuurspan van interne bestuurstrategieë gebruik maak; daarna is die menings van opvoeders oor hoe effektief eksterne bestuurstrategieë is, ingewin, asook data – wat by wyse van 'n vraelys ingesamel is uit 'n steekproef van 158 opvoeders, wat skoolbestuurspanne ("SMTs") insluit. Die data wat ingewin is, is ontleed deur van frekwensies en persentasies gebruik te maak. Om die bevindinge verder te belig, is daar van die gemiddeldetelling-rangordetegniek ook gebruik gemaak. Daarna is die data wat ingewin is aangebied, ontleed en vertolk. Die belangrikste bevindinge van die studie omvat menings dat skoolbestuurspanne ten opsigte van hul toepassing van die meeste bestuurstrategieë meer dikwels "bevredigend" is as "uitstekend". Die data het ook getoon dat die meeste bestuurstrategieë, met die uitsondering van drie strategieë wat as effektief beskou is, beskryf is as "oneffektief" as dit by die hantering van swak-presterende skole kom.

In hoofstuk vyf is die navorsingstudie saamgevat. Dit is gevolg deur bevindinge oor die doelstellings van die studie. Daarna is die aanbevelings en motiverings wat van die literatuurstudie afgelei is, bespreek, asook 'n empiriese ondersoek na die aard van die bestuur in swak-presterende skole en die bestuurstrategieë wat aangewend word om skoolprestasie te probeer verbeter. Ten slotte is daar voorstelle aan die hand gedoen oor moontlikhede vir verdere navorsing.

SUMMARY

STRATEGIES FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF LOW PERFORMING SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN THE NORTH WEST PROVINCE

Key words: Management, low performing, effective, ineffective, ill-disciplined, socio-economic status, rural, urban, strategy, instructional leadership, total quality management, performance management, school-based management, resources.

The purpose of this investigative study is to determine the nature of management in low performing secondary schools, looking specifically at internal management as well as at external strategies employed by the Education Department to improve school performance. Various challenges faced by low performing schools are also looked at, including general management themes that can help turn around low performance, such as total quality management, performance management and school-based management.

After the literature study, an empirical investigation was conducted regarding the extent to which school management team members employed internal management strategies, and the views of educators were sought on the effectiveness of external management strategies. Data was collected by means of a questionnaire from a sample of 158 educators, including SMTs. The collected data was analysed, using frequencies and percentages. To cast more light on the findings, the mean score ranking technique was also applied. This was followed by the presentation, analysis and interpretation of the data collected. The major findings of the study include opinions that SMTs apply most management strategies to an adequate rather than to a great extent. The data also indicated that most management strategies, with the exception of three strategies that were considered effective, were seen as ineffective in dealing with low performance in schools.

In chapter five, the research study was summarised. This was followed by findings on the aims of the study. The was followed by recommendations and motivations derived from the literature study and an empirical investigation regarding the nature of management in low performing schools, including the management strategies used to improve school performance. Suggestions for further research were also presented.

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CHAPTER 1: ORIENTATION

1. INTRODUCTION

The announcement of the final matriculation examination results elicits mixed reactions from the South African community almost every year. According to Taunyane (1999:1), these reactions are outcries emanating mainly from the black community as a result of the high failure rate of matriculation candidates attending rural and township schools, commonly referred to as the previously disadvantaged schools, while other sections of the community seem to rejoice.

Riley (1998:91) states that the high failure rate of matriculation candidates has negative a impact on the South African community, both socially and economically. It is therefore imperative that the situation of the low performance of secondary schools should be turned around. This implies that measures should be found to guide such low performing schools to improve their matriculation pass rates; appropriate measures will have to be found to lay foundations for better matriculation results.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Some secondary schools in townships fail to meet their major obligation, namely helping learners pass matriculation successfully (Taunyane 1999:1). This failure is reflected by national matriculation pass rates for 1991, 1997 and 1998 which were 48,9%, 47,4% and 49,3% respectively (North West Education Department, 1999:9). These pass rates indicate that more than half of all candidates failed to pass in each of the years mentioned. In 2000 and 2001 there was an improvement to 57,9% and 61,7% respectively nationally (Asmal 2001:2). In 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001 and 2002 the North West Province had matriculation pass rates of 54,6%, 52,1%, 58,3%, 62,5%, and 67,8% respectively (North West Education Department, 1999:18; Tolo 2002:2).

One of the reasons observed for the ineffectiveness of schools is that some school principals are lacking in a wide range of management skills. Teaching is therefore not effectively supervised, as there are no clear internal policies developed by management in schools (Legotlo, Maaga, Sebego, Van der Westhuizen, Mentz, Mosoge, Niewoudt & Steyn 2002:116). The incompetent management of schools by principals and school management teams (SMTs) is cited as a further problem hampering good performance in so-called trapped schools (North West Education Department, 2001:5). School management tolerates poor teaching, which results in poor academic achievement (Woods & Levacic 2002:239). This fact is further explained by Van der Westhuizen (2003:54), who says that although management deals with the "externa" of teaching and learning, it does help to make academic achievement possible. One of the differences between low and high performing schools in similar environmental contexts lies exactly in such managerial factors (Arnott 1999:23).

Effective or high performing schools have inter alia the following characteristics in common (Arnott 1999:14; Bosker & Scheerens 2002:4; Taunyane 1999:26) –

- strong leadership
- an orderly school environment
- the frequent assessment of learners
- learners' ability to deal with their own problems and
- learners having a vision that helps them pursue and strive for improved performance.

We may then assume that the above features require good management skills if they are to be developed and applied effectively.

According to Soanes and Stevenson (2004:448), the meaning of "dysfunctional" is abnormal functioning; a dysfunctional school is therefore one that does not function well, with a pass rate below expectations or standards. In England and France, a school is seen to have performed unsatisfactorily if more than one out of every two pupils in the top

level fails at least one year (Bosker & Scheerens 2002:2). In South Africa, Asmal (2001:3) separates dysfunctional schools into two categories, namely those with 0-20% matriculation pass rates and those falling in the 21-40% range. In the North West Province schools with 0-45% matriculation pass rates are regarded as dysfunctional and are therefore named "trapped schools" (North West Education Department, 2001:1). This means in South Africa the dysfunctionality of schools is measured in terms of their matriculation results. It may be argued that matriculation examination results are not perfect indicators of the general effectiveness of a school; however, they are seriously considered in the community and in the business world as indicators of school effectiveness.

Low performance has deleterious 'vicious cycle' effects on schools, since not only do dysfunctional schools fail to attract quality teachers and ambitious learners, but business people are also reluctant to sponsor such schools (Woods & Levacic 2002:29). Other stakeholders become reluctant to be associated with a school with a negative image and reputation. Parents who have a choice, enrol their children elsewhere (Woods & Levacic 2002:236). Learners and teachers become ashamed of their school, which leads to low morale and a lack of confidence among educators and learners alike (Legotlo *et al*, 2002:117). Effective educators may lose out on promotion opportunities, and learners may fail to secure bursaries or even gain entrance into higher learning institutions.

Schools that have been identified as "dysfunctional" are subjected to special measures to help them improve (Woods & Levacic 2002:241), such as –

- assisting schools to plan systematically
- setting new targets to work towards
- analysing examination results
- helping teachers develop the quality of their lesson planning skills and giving support to both teachers and learners.

A similarly failing school in England is normally closed and reopened as a "Fresh Start" school (Woods & Levacic 2002:208). In the North West Province in South Africa officials of the education department visit such schools regularly to monitor and evaluate progress. Extra attention is paid to poor performance in key subjects such as Mathematics and Science (North West Education Department, 2001:1). Moreover, the department of education conducts courses on various management issues to empower school principals. One example of such courses would be the Education Management Development courses offered to newly appointed principals.

Schools sometimes resort to unsavoury strategies in order to improve their performance. Some such strategies include:

- the regulation of student intake, specifically choosing learners with higher grades (Karsten, Visscher & De Jong 2002:239)
- referring learners with low grades to other schools such as technical schools (Monare 2003:1) or
- preventing certain learners from proceeding to grade 12, thus creating a bottleneck in the lower grades (Monare 2003:1).

In spite of such efforts, the low performance of matriculation candidates continues to be a problem in some schools. It appears that management's failure to give proper guidance to teachers also contributes toward the continued low performance (North West Education Department, 2001:7). It may also happen that functional schools deteriorate in time and later fall into the category of "trapped" schools. Some schools fail to sustain good performance because they perform well in one year and then fall back in the "trapped zone" the following year. For example, in 2003, 24 schools in the North West Province moved into the "trapped zone". These schools had performed well in 2002 and prior (Tolo 2002:3). Singh and Manser (2002:56) point out that a change in management strategy is required in order to address or improve the poor performance of learners. They further state that the responsibility of schools to manage themselves efficiently lies with principals and their management teams. According to Crouch and Mabogoane (2001:64),

very little research has been done in South Africa on improving the management of poorly performing schools.

The intervention strategies applied in dysfunctional schools are not altogether a failure, however there have been some successes. For example, in South Africa, the number of dysfunctional schools decreased from 559 in 2000 to 472 in 2001 (Asmal 2001:3). The North West Education Department also achieved some success; the number of "trapped" schools decreased from 136 in 2000 to 100 in 2001 (Tolo 2002:3). Nevertheless, there are still secondary schools that continue to underperform in 2003. For example, in the North West, 58 "trapped" schools were identified in 2002 (North West Education Department, 2002:3).

In conclusion, then, the focus of problem is to analyse the management strategies practised in dysfunctional secondary schools, thereafter developing management strategies that will help such schools improve the performance of their matriculants.

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This research will seek answers to the following questions:

- 3.1. What is the nature of management in a low performing school?
- 3.2. What are the views of educators and principals about strategies used in the management of low performing schools
- 3.2. Which management strategies should be implemented in low performing schools in order to help them improve?

4. AIMS OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to:

- 4.1. determine the nature of management in a low performing school
- 4.2. determine the views of educators and school managers concerning the management of teaching and learning activities
- 4.3. determine the views of teachers and school management teams regarding the effectiveness of certain strategies implemented by the Education Department as measures to improve the matriculation results of schools.
- 4.4. provide recommendations with regard to actions that can be taken to overcome low performance in schools.

5. RESEARCH DESIGN

5.1. Literature study

This section involved studying existing literature on low performing or dysfunctional schools. A literature search was conducted using the following descriptors: dysfunctional school, trapped school, failing school, school management and strategies. The literature study aimed at studying the nature of management in dysfunctional or low performing schools and finding out management guidelines to assist in improving the performance of low-performing schools..

5.2. Empirical research

5.2.1. Research instrument

A questionnaire was constructed from the data of the literature study. The aim of the questionnaire was to gather views of principals and educators from selected secondary schools with regard to their management of teaching and learning activities, as well as, their opinions regarding the effectiveness of certain strategies implemented by the Education Department as measures to improve the matriculation results of schools.

5.2.2. Population and sampling

The population consisted of schools in the North West Province because of its proximity to the researcher. The province currently has five regions. Only the Central Region of the North- West Province was involved in this study. Of this region's 97 schools, 40 schools were randomly selected. From those 40, two members of the school management team, two educators and one school principal were selected. The total sample consisted of 200 respondents (n=200).

5.2.3. Statistical techniques

Suitable statistical techniques were selected with the help of the Statistical Consultation Services of the North- West University.

6. PROVISIONAL CHAPTER DIVISIONS

Chapter 1

Orientation

Chapter 2

The nature of management in functional and dysfunctional schools

Chapter 3

Empirical research

Chapter 4

Presentation, analysis and interpretation of data

Chapter 5

Conclusions and recommendations

CHAPTER 2: THE NATURE OF MANAGEMENT IN LOW PERFORMING SCHOOLS

2.1. Introduction

This chapter deals with the theoretic framework of the nature of management in effective and dysfunctional schools. It gives a definition of key concepts that are important for the discussion of management strategies in schools. It also examines various models of school effectiveness criteria, leadership and management styles of principals, leadership theories, criteria for the effective management of schools, strategies of the Education Department to improve the performance of schools and the consequences of poor school management.

2.2. Definition of Key Concepts

2.2.1. *Management*

According to Robbins and De Cenzo (2001:5) management is the process of getting things done, effectively and efficiently, through and with other people. As a process, management entails certain primary activities that managers should perform, namely planning, organising, leading and controlling.

Bittel and Newstrom (1990:4) describe management as the process of obtaining, deploying and utilising a variety of essential resources in support of an organisation's objectives. One of the most important resources of an organisation is its employees. For this reason, a large portion of managers' efforts is devoted to planning, organising, staffing, activating and controlling the work of human resources.

Van der Westhuizen (2003: 55) defines educational management as "a specific type of

work in education which comprises those regulative tasks or actions executed by a person or body in a position of authority in a specific field or area of regulation, so as to allow formative education to take place."

The above definition implies that as a particular kind of work in education, management is largely concerned with ensuring that certain actions that occur mainly outside the classroom, but in the school environment, facilitate effective teaching and learning – actions that are classified into planning, organising, leading or guiding and controlling.

For the purpose of this research, it is accepted that educational management includes actions of planning, organising, leading and controlling the work of teachers, learners and non-academic staff. If this is done in an effective and efficient manner it is possible that the goals of the institution may be realised. But if the management of a school fails to execute such management actions correctly, it is possible that the aims of such a school may not be attained, causing such a school to become "dysfunctional".

2.2.2. Leadership

Squelch and Lemmer (1994:10) define leadership as a process of encouraging and influencing people so that they co-operate willingly and strive to accomplish organisational goals that have been mutually agreed upon. This agrees with Van der Westhuizen's view (2003:187) that leadership is "the integrated and dynamic application of the leader's abilities..... [to] convince, inspire, bind and direct followers to realise common ideals". In educational settings, leadership implies motivating and urging educators and learners to achieve school goals.

2.2.3. Functionality

According to the Cambridge Learner's Dictionary (2001:272) something that is "functional ... operates or works correctly". For the purpose of this study, a functional school operates according to socially accepted standards and is able to meet its societal

expectations. For example, the school may have satisfying academic results, a healthy culture and produce well-developed learners. It may also have a functional management driving the institution toward success.

2.2.4. Low performance

Soanes (2002:497) defines the term "low" as "lacking importance or quality", while the term "perform" is defined as to "function or do something to a specified standard". For the purpose of this study, a low-performing school may be defined as a school that fails to perform or function in such a way that it meets the expected standards. This means its academic results are inferior and fall short of societal expectations.

2.2.5. Effectiveness

According to Soanes (2002:261), the term "effective" refers to "producing an intended result". In this study, an effective school is seen as being able to meet its set targets or achieve its goals. The management of such a school is able to drive and lead its personnel, learners, parents and the community toward achieving their planned results, which could be high academic results, solving internal problems amicably or promoting good personal growth. In other words, the results or outcomes are not achieved by chance or accident.

2.2.6. Efficiency

The word "efficient" means "working productively with no waste of money or effort" (Soanes 2002:262). For the purpose of this study, an efficient school is seen as one that is able to achieve significant results without the extravagant or careless use of capital and human energy. This means the management of such a school takes the lead to set common priorities for their institution and then allocates the use of human and material resources, purposefully, for the benefit of learners.

2.2.7. *Strategy*

Soanes and Stevenson (2004:829) define the term "strategy" as "a plan designed to achieve a particular long-term aim." For the purpose of this study, a low performing school needs to devise plans that are intended to help it address the low academic performance of its learners. It is also clear from the definition that the plan should include long-term strategies, because poor performance cannot be addressed with short-term strategies only; once the problem has been surmounted, the progress has to be sustained to avert backsliding.

2.3. **Theoretical Basis for Management in Low Performing Schools**

One of the challenges facing South Africa today is to improve the academic performance of most previously disadvantaged schools. The assumption of this study is that many such schools are performing poorly mainly because of the negative cultures that prevail in them, which could be emanating from a lack of effective management as well as the inability to restore the culture of learning and teaching that deteriorated mainly during the liberation struggle. It is therefore imperative to examine the factors of ineffectiveness that contribute to the low performance of schools from a management perspective.

2.3.1. *Ineffectiveness model*

The ineffectiveness model suggests that there are three indicators of a low performing school: Harmful internal conflicts, problems that remain unresolved for a long time and poor academically performance (Cheng 1996:25; Ncube 2002:117). These ineffectiveness characteristics serve as obstacles to the basic functioning or effectiveness of a school.

The hint from the ineffectiveness model is that the management of a low performing

school finds it difficult to dissolve serious negative internal conflicts. Secondly, the problems faced by the school are not dealt with decisively, but are left hanging for a long time, which tends to create uncertainty in the school.

Thirdly, the school management fails to influence both teachers and learners to work diligently and co-operatively toward achieving a high academic performance.

2.3.2. *Multilevel model*

The multilevel approach recommends that it is best to acknowledge that secondary schools are made up various levels or variables of management, namely the classroom level, subject departments level and the school level (Reynolds, Cremeers, Neselrodt, Schaffer, Stringfield & Teddlie 1994:14; Sammons, Thomas & Mortimore 1997:165-166). This approach indicates that the overall performance of a school may become negatively affected if any one of the three levels is not managed effectively and efficiently.

2.3.2.1. *Classroom level*

The classroom level consists of the lower layer, where actual teaching and learning takes place. The teaching and learning inside the class is susceptible to various social and economic factors brought to the table by both teachers and learners, and such factors have the potential to affect the quality of teaching and learning negatively. For example, Metcalfe (2006:18) states that many children in township and rural schools come from poor backgrounds where parents are not always able to support them. This lack of parental support can affect childrens' performance negatively.

However, despite the poor backgrounds, some learners in rural and township schools come to class lacking commitment in respect of their studies (Legotlo *et al.* 2002:116). Such a lack of commitment to learning could be regarded as an indicator of a low performing school. Nxumalo (1993:55) states that a lack of commitment to learning is

reflected in learners' bunking lessons, a lack of discipline, high absenteeism and late-coming. Such factors reflect a poor culture of learning.

On the other hand, Kruger (2003:207) states that teachers in a low performing school often have no desire to teach. A lack of enthusiasm on the part of teachers means that they lack commitment and suffer from low morale. As a result, it is possible that the classroom level may suffer because teachers may come to class unprepared, or may play truant, which indicates a poor culture of teaching.

The above discussion shows that if there is a poor culture of teaching and/or learning at the classroom level, the academic performance of learners is likely to be affected in a negative manner. This indicates that the classroom level has a lot to contribute toward the overall academic performance of a school, because teaching and learning occur in the classroom. Other factors brought to the classroom by both educators and learners and which may cause low academic performance, include the following (Van der Westhuizen, Mosoge, Swanepoel & Coetsee 2005:90):

- Class size
- Teaching strategies
- Language of instruction
- Classroom interaction
- Learner ability
- Learner behaviour, and
- Learning strategies.

2.3.2.2. Subjects departments

The second school level is made up of various subjects departments which are led and supervised by senior management team members. However, such supervision is lacking in low performing schools (Masitsa 1995:53). If teachers' and learners' work is not supervised, it indicates ineffectiveness which is likely to cause underperformance.

The lack of supervision at subject level becomes more evident when tests or examinations are written (Maja 1995:53). Educators who share a subject in a particular grade find it difficult to come up with a common question paper. Such ineffectiveness indicates a lack of standardisation and little or no subject policy implementation. Learners who take the same subject but are taught by different teachers may therefore not necessarily be exposed to the same quality and standard of questions.

The above discussion shows that ineffectiveness at subject level has the potential to contribute negatively toward the academic performance of learners, which in turn results in a school's low performance.

2.3.2.3. School level

The third layer that may contribute indirectly toward a school's low performance is the school itself. Angelides and Ainscow (2000:148) state that certain factors which include common values, assumptions, norms and beliefs, have an indirect influence on the performance of a school. In addition, Haasbroek (1998:15) agrees that low performing schools need to change their cultures in order to improve their performance.

According to Van der Westhuizen *et al.* (2005:99-101), low performing schools have ineffective and negative organisational cultures. Such unproductive cultures are reflected in factors such as the following:

- Lack of a school philosophy,
- A declining value system,
- Ignorance of the school's mission,
- Lack of recognising good performers,
- Lack of pride in the school's buildings and environment.

The above discussion points to a possibility that the ineffective management of the school

level could have a negative impact on the functioning of the department and the classroom levels. This implies that an inefficient principal can facilitate ineffectiveness at subject department level by not ensuring that heads of departments become effective, which in turn may contribute to a low quality of teaching and learning inside the classroom.

2.3.3. *Instructional leadership model*

The instructional leadership task of a school manager consists of sub-tasks which are aimed at creating a positive and secure environment to facilitate effective teaching and learning (Kruger 2003:247). By virtue of their position, members of the school management team are also instructional leaders who must help the principal with effective teaching and learning in their areas. However, not surprisingly, Botha (2006:343) states that low performing schools are characterised by weak leadership.

The sub-tasks of instructional leadership include the following (Kruger 2003: 207):

- To define and formulate a clear mission, goals and objectives for the school, in collaboration with other staff members, so as to solicit their support for the achievement of effective teaching and learning.
- To manage teaching and the school curriculum through the provision of resources and appropriate time allocation.
- To supervise teaching as well as giving guidance and support to teachers.
- To monitor and evaluate the progress in respect of learners' performance in tests, examinations and other continuous assessment tasks, and to give them support and encouragement.
- To promote excitement about and enthusiasm for both teaching and learning.

- To promote a positive school climate which facilitates effective teaching and learning.

Contrary to the above, it seems that in low performing schools management finds it difficult to carry out its instructional leadership tasks effectively. Such schools are characterised by the following (Kruger 2003:207; Masitsa, Van Staden, De Wet, Niemann, Heyns, Brazelle & Niemann 2004:231-238):

- Learners and teachers are ignorant about their school's mission,
- Learners and teachers do not know exactly what is expected of them,
- Inappropriate time allocation,
- Lack of supervision in respect of teachers' work,
- Learners' progress is not monitored, and
- Teachers and learners find little joy in teaching and learning.

The above factors indicate that the management of low performing schools experiences serious challenges when it comes to ensuring that there is effective instructional leadership in the institution. As a result of the ineffectiveness of the principal and senior management team members, the learners face serious academic performance obstacles which require effective management if anything is to change.

2.3.4. Leadership as a determinant of performance in a school

The above model of instructional leadership (par. 2.3.3) indicates the importance of exercising leadership in managing schools especially for turning around low performing schools. According to the definitions of management (par 2.2.1) and leadership (please see above (par. 2.2.2) there is a close correlation between management and leadership. There can be no management without leadership and vice versa. Accordingly, a leader must encourage and influence people so that they willingly co-operate in striving toward the accomplishment of mutual organisational goals. An effective leader has certain ways

in which he/she encourages and influences others to work for the benefit of the organisation. In this case an effective principal is able to positively mobilise teachers and learners to work co-operatively toward the accomplishment of the goals of the school. This suggests that a successful principal will be one who consciously practises effective leadership styles.

The following presents different leadership styles that a principal and the SMT may apply in order to enhance the performance of a school:

2.3.1.1. Autocratic style of leadership

This type of leadership refers to a principal who tends to centralise authority, take unilateral decisions, determine policy alone, and limit the participation of other stakeholders (Robbins & DeCenzo 2001:346). Furthermore, such a principal tends to give duties to staff members without proper consultation, issuing instructions and not expecting to be questioned. Lastly, colleagues may be ordered around, controlled or threatened if they do not comply with the issued instructions.

This type of leadership seems not to apply in the management of well performing schools where teachers could be willingly co-operating with the school management to work toward achieving their schools' goals. Another probability is that principals of effective schools do not often use the autocratic style as they seem not to find it difficult to encourage teachers and learners to work diligently on their own. This could mean that teachers and learners do not have to be nagged or cajoled into doing their work because they may be willing to use their efforts to ensure that the school performs effectively. For example, if the principal is not available, but learners and teachers keep attending their classes as they should, mainly because they feel that they are part of the institution.

2.3.1.2. *Laissez-faire style of leadership*

This type of leader allows his/her staff the freedom to take his/her own individual or group decision because the leader does not make his/her presence felt (Van der Westhuizen 2003: 190). Furthermore, such a leader appeals to personal integrity as a way of guiding staff members to performing their duties. The *laissez-faire* leader prefers not to interfere, so he/she is more comfortable in the background. Because such a leader is as good as absent, the school may be thrown into a state of confusion, chaos or uncertainty.

According to Drucker (1992:18) an effective leader does not sidestep his/her responsibilities by becoming almost invisible in the organisation. This suggests that principals of effective schools do not often practise the *laissez-faire* style of leadership, because they are fully involved in leading, encouraging and influencing both teachers and learners to work willingly toward the accomplishment of the goals of the school. It is therefore possible that the management of a school led by a principal who practices a *laissez-faire* type of leadership could lack proper direction because the leader is not seen to be focusing on the goals of the school. Furthermore, this type of leadership seems not to augur well for effective schools either.

2.3.1.3. *Participative/democratic style of leadership*

A democratic leader allows staff members to participate in organisational matters through consultation. Furthermore, there has been an increase recently on the insistence that staff members should be given the opportunity to participate actively in matters that affect their institution or work. This implies that school managers may no longer take unilateral decisions. Teachers must also be given the opportunity to take informed decisions (Steyn 1998:131). The assumption of the democratic style of leadership is therefore that people are willing to participate in and contribute to taking decisions that affect their own lives.

The advantage of such a willingness to participate and contribute is that people may be more committed toward achieving the goals of the school. Consequently, this style of leadership seems to augur well for effective schools, because principals of effective schools seem to find it easy to get teachers committed to their work and learners to their studies, which could in part be thanks to the fact that school management allows teachers and learners a say in serious matters that concern themselves, by taking decisions on critical matters in consultation with other stakeholders. Eventually such participation by other stakeholders may increase their level of commitment, which could have a positive impact on the performance of the school as a whole.

2.3.1.4. Bureaucratic style of leadership

This style of leadership combines the autocratic, *laissez-faire* and democratic styles (Van der Westhuizen 2003:191). The principal who adopts the bureaucratic style adheres strictly to the rules, regulations and policies. The advantage of this style is that there is uniformity and consistency in terms of the application of the rules, regulations and policies. This leaves a little room for being personal or biased as the existing rules, regulations and policies may provide direction regarding what action to take; thus a principal who applies this style appropriately may contribute to the success of an underperforming school.

It is probable that the bureaucratic style of leadership may contribute toward a school becoming effective by adhering to stipulated rules and regulations regarding timetabling, duty allocation, the promotion of learners or the distribution of resources. This style may also help the management of a school to apply its own rules, regulations and policies as well as those of the education department. Consequently timetabling, duty allocation to teachers, the promotion of learners or the distribution of resources may all take place with consistency and without favouritism.

2.3.1.5. Transformational style of leadership

According to Leithwood, Begley and Cousin (1992:7) the word "transform" implies major changes in the form, nature, function and/or potential of some phenomenon. In a school situation this suggests that a principal who practices transformational leadership could bring about changes in the functioning or performance of a dysfunctional school. This change may be brought about by capacitating and enhancing the academic potential of teachers and learners. Transformational leaders normally articulate the problems of the organisation and have a clear vision of how the "new" school can be. This suggests that specific school problems that obstruct good performance could be clearly identified and possibly dealt with in a positive manner.

Such a style of leadership seems to be helpful to effective schools. Because the transformational leader has a clear vision of how the school can be, it is possible that such a leader could offer an attractive alternative to teachers and learners. The implication is that if a school is able to identify its particular problems that prevent it from functioning effectively and efficiently, it may start to develop strategies that could help to improve the performance of both teachers and learners. Therefore the application of the transformational style of leadership has the potential of elevating the performance of both teachers and learners.

From the above discussion on leadership styles it may be concluded that no one particular style is the best for all dysfunctional schools to turn around and improve their performance. Some schools may require more control or a little freedom, while others may require stakeholder participation or strict adherence to rules, regulations and policies. Be that as it may, the recent South African striving for political freedom may not be ignored as it necessarily also brought along many challenges in terms of school leadership and management. It may therefore be necessary for those in school management to acquaint themselves with various leadership theories.

2.3.5. *Synthesis - characteristics of low performing schools*

The following characteristics occur mainly in low performing schools and can usually be associated with the poor academic performance of learners. Such features reflect a negative school culture and an unfriendly school climate, both of which can be influenced by the school management and the principal. The characteristics of low-performing schools presented by various authors are summarised in Table 2.1. below:

Table 2.1: Summary of characteristics of low performing schools

Nxumalo (1993:55-60)	Legotlo <i>et al.</i> (2002:114-115)	Bouwer (2002:22-23)	Van der Westhuizen <i>et al.</i> (2005:98-105)	Kruger (2003:207)
High absenteeism	Lack of resources	Crime	Lack of school	Negative attitudes
Late-coming	Ill-discipline	Vandalism	philosophy	High drop out rate
Shortage of	Overcrowded	Theft	Declining values	Poor buildings
resources	classrooms	Sexual abuse	Unclear goals,	and facilities
Incompetent	Lack of	Truancy	mission	Shortage of
teachers	commitment	Ill-discipline	Non-recognition of	resources
Low morale	Lack of	Lack of resources	heroes, heroines	Overcrowded
Ill-discipline	management skills	Poor relationships	Delapidated	classrooms
Bunking lessons	Teacher unions	Poor leadership	buildings and	Lack of
Teachers not	disturbances		facilities	management skills
upgraded	Lack of policy			Poor relationships
Drug abuse	implementation			Poor attendance
Poverty	Automatic			Vandalism
Overcrowding	promotion			Weak leadership
Lack of security	Lack of parental			Drug abuse
	involvement			

2.3.6. *In conclusion*

From the above discussion it may be concluded that certain characteristics have the

potential to undermine the performance of a school if they are not attended to in a constructive manner. The ineffectiveness, multilevel and instructional leadership models indicate that low performing schools struggle to make effective teaching and learning possible. Consequently the academic performance of their learners may remain low. A summary of such characteristics is given in the next section.

From the summarised characteristics of low performing schools, it seems that the principal, as a key member of the school management team has an impact on the poor academic performance of learners by allowing certain negative teaching and learning practices to occur in his/her school. Such negative practices are management challenges that tend to obstruct effective teaching and learning.

2.4. Management Challenges facing Low Performing Schools

2.4.1. Introduction

The management members of low performing schools have to deal with various challenges that tend to obstruct effective teaching and learning . Although some such challenges can be traced back to the resistance period, they still pose a serious management threat to the normal functioning of many township and rural schools where the leaders concerned seem not to have been able to regain their lost control over learners and teachers.

Such management challenges seem to have a negative impact on the academic performance of many schools. The management challenges manifest themselves through a lack of clear vision, mission and commonly-defined school goals. The school management also seems to struggle with policy implementation, maintaining quality teaching and learning, managing physical resources, curbing ill-discipline and winning the support of parents.

2.4.2. *Vision, mission and school goals*

According to the synthesis above in par.2.3.5, principals, teachers and learners in low performing schools all have a limited understanding of the vision and mission of their school. In some cases the vision and mission exists on paper, but teachers, learners and parents are oblivious to what their school purports to be striving to achieve. In extreme cases there is no vision or mission at all.

The absence or ignorance of a vision and mission in a school may be attributable to the principal as manager and leader; it suggests that often the principal of a low performing school fails to articulate an attractive school situation to teachers, learners and parents. Of course this could also mean that the teaching and learning activities lack direction and clear goals.

Davis and Thomas (1989:24) are of the view that teachers in dysfunctional schools tend to operate without clearly defined goals and do not share a common purpose for their school. This lack of common goals implies that the school could have ambiguous and divergent priorities, and even mutually counter-productive ones! It is now wonder that the academic performance of such a school would suffer.

From the above discussion on a lack of vision, mission and clear school goals, it may be assumed that principals and senior management team members of low performing schools fail to give proper direction to teachers and learners in terms of what to strive for, which can make it difficult for principals to lead, inspire and motivate teachers and learners to work harder and achieve better academically and otherwise.

2.4.3. *Policy implementation*

One of the causes of poor academic performance in grade twelve is that the new policies and laws introduced as measures to reform the South African education system after apartheid (Legotlo *et al.* 2002:117; Masitsa *et al.* 2004:235) were not implemented,

probably because many principals, and hence teachers, did not fully understand how to implement the proposed changes or how to manage outcomes-based education.

2.4.3.1. Inappropriate time management

The managers of dysfunctional schools struggle with time management. Jansen (1999:58) states that due to poor management, actually very little formal teaching and learning take place in the first and last terms of the academic year, with the resultant negative effects on the performance of the school on all levels.

According to Maja (1995:33) and Jansen (1999:58) the teachers at low performing schools have a struggle using all the teaching and learning time available for the full academic year because at the beginning of each new year, they are roped into other activities instead, such as:

- Finalising the teaching timetable,
- Allocating subjects to teachers,
- Admitting learners and allocating them to classes,
- Distributing learner support materials.

The last term, on the other hand, is usually characterised by non-teaching activities such as:

- Preparing final exam question papers,
- Doing promotion schedules and reports.

Most schools write quarterly tests toward the end of term, but the majority of low performing schools lose at least two weeks of teaching time every term because teachers are marking test books, compiling marks and signing quarterly reports for parents. During this period most learners do not even come to school because there are no teachers in attendance (Usabuwera 2005:64).

Another area which reflects that the managers of low performing schools find it difficult to use instruction time appropriately is the dysfunctional teaching timetables. According to the North West Education Department (2001:4) most principals of low performing schools lack knowledge concerning the regulations in respect of weekly contact time with learners. Petersen (2006:61) adds that the poor implementation of weekly contact time may have a negative impact on the learners' ability to progress academically.

Because the departmental policies with regard to contact time between learners and teachers are not known, some subjects in poor performing schools get less teaching time than others (North West Education Department, 2001:4). This malpractice means that teachers do not have the time they need to complete their syllabi, and that learners get to the examination room unprepared. The likelihood is that unprepared learners will not perform to their best potential, which would naturally lead to the school underperforming academically.

2.4.3.2. Inappropriate work allocation

According to the Employment of Educators Act 76 of 1998 (SA, 1998) the work allocation to teachers should be equitably distributed, and done in consultation with teachers and in such a way that it maximises the individual abilities of each individual on the teaching staff; this could suggest that teachers could perform better academically if they were allowed a say in work distribution, rather than the principal unilaterally deciding who is going to teach what subject and at what grade. The individual interests of educators have to be taken into consideration when allocating duties. However, due to poor management in this regard, certain teachers in low performing schools are overloaded while others are compelled to teach subjects that they are not fully qualified for (North West Education Department, 2001:2). This scenario has the potential to minimise the academic contribution of teachers toward learner performance.

The above factors regarding poor time management and ineffective work allocation

indicate that poor management can undoubtedly have a negative effect on the academic performance of the school concerned. In addition, teachers who are dissatisfied with their work may find it difficult to give their best because they may feel demotivated, which is likely to cause them to be even less committed to their work.

2.4.3.3. Inappropriate promotion requirements

Low performing schools seem to struggle to implement learner promotion policies. According to Legotlo *et al.* (2002:117) poor management often results in certain learners being promoted to a higher grade, even if they have not mastered the basic knowledge and skills required for promotion. Ultimately the promotion of such undeserving learners must necessarily affect their eventual matriculation results!

It is not strange to find struggling schools coming up with their own pass-or-fail requirements. Maja (1995:82) tells of how that the passing requirements for the mid-year examinations would be elevated slightly, with the hope that that would encourage learners to work harder in the final examinations. This indicates that there is lack of consistency with regard to policy implementation.

By developing their own pass requirements during the course of the year, the principals of low performing schools tend to ignore the Education Department policies on passing and failing learners. This malpractice may well reflect desperation on the part of school management to improve academic performance, but it would do more harm than good in the long run, as learners and parents would become more and more confused and never know what to expect.

2.4.3.4. Incapacity to adapt to education changes

When the new democratic South African Government came into power, many education laws and policies were adopted with a view to reforming the South African education system. However, Legotlo *et al.* (2002:117) state that many school principals lack the

capacity to implement the necessary changes.

According to Galloway (2004:4), some school principals have not made significant paradigm shifts in terms of how they think about and practice and embrace the new democratic school order. This failure to adapt to a democratic management style could be one of the factors causing teacher dissatisfaction, which in turn could result in poor work performance.

In addition, Masitsa *et al.* (2004:235) state that the simultaneous introduction of new education laws and policies has caused confusion and insecurity among many principals. As a result of insecurity, many principals have felt incapacitated for their new roles, resulting in a negative effect on their work performance and ultimately on the academic performance of teachers and learners (Thurlow 2003:3).

From the above discussion it may be assumed that some school principals are underperforming when it comes to implementing new education laws and policies and are not coping well with their management duties. The failure to cope with the new demands seems to make some principals feel disempowered, so that they find it difficult to insist on effective teaching and learning in their schools.

2.4.4. Poor quality of teaching and learning

The low quality teaching and learning in many black schools can be traced back to resistance against apartheid education. Thurlow (2003:5) states that during the resistance period there was an open cry to defy school principals' authority and undermining certain education practices. The defiance campaigns contributed to the decline in the quality of teaching and learning, and now it is proving to be very difficult to restore in most black schools.

2.4.4.1. *Unsupervised teaching*

The monitoring of teachers' work seems to be lacking in many low performing schools, because some of the teachers in such schools resent any kind of monitoring and dislike classroom visits by those in management (Masitsa *et al.* 2004:232). In addition, as a result of such poor monitoring school managers may not be fully conversant with all the factors that disturb effective teaching and learning.

The resentment of supervision indicates that some educators ignore the teaching service that they are supposed to render and do not feel accountable for their school's academic performance. It follows that such teachers would have no problem compromising on the quality of education by arriving late for lessons, not preparing lessons thoroughly and taking very little pains to present innovative lessons.

The failure of senior management team members to supervise teachers' work causes an even further (though perhaps at first unnoticed) decline in the quality of teaching and learning. Ramonnye (1999:14) argues that such lack of supervision may lead to:

- Unmoderated tests, homework, projects, assignments and examinations,
- No proper guidance on effective teaching methods or techniques,
- No syllabi completion,
- No teacher accountability for poor performance,
- No updating or checking of learners' records, and
- Teaching activities may not relate to the school's bigger picture.

From the above discussion it seems that the principal and the management team that does not take pains to make teachers understand and appreciate the value of being supervised could themselves be contributing to the poor academic performance of their school, since teachers would be left on their own without clear direction in terms of how their teaching activities relate to the bigger picture.

2.4.4.2. Inappropriate use of the language of teaching and learning

The report of the North West Education Department (2002:4) on dysfunctional schools states that one of the problems prevalent in low performing schools is that some teachers resort to using their mother tongue to teach or explain difficult concepts instead of the language of teaching and learning. This suggests that both teachers and learners struggle to master the medium of instruction which differs in most schools from their mother-tongue. Unfortunately, in most schools learners have to write examinations in languages other than their mother-tongue.

Another disadvantage is that some learners may not understand the teachers' mother tongue because they are not natural speakers of the teacher's mother tongue. As a result they may feel left out academically. The indication is that management should encourage good teaching practices and increase sensitivity on language usage on the part of teachers because some learners would be disadvantaged academically.

2.4.4.3. Demotivated teachers

One of the challenges facing principals of poor performing schools is the low level of motivation among teachers. The report of the North West Education Department (2001:1) on grade twelve results explains that many educators who teach in township and rural schools are demotivated by various factors, as discussed below, which contribute negatively toward the performance of educators in class, thus causing low morale, which in turn may contribute to the poor academic performance of learners.

Kruger and Steinmann (2005:16) are of the view that the majority of South African teachers are demotivated by increasing workloads, which include workshops on implementing the new curriculum. Teachers are stretched to the limit in terms of what they have to do at work. Besides having to deal with education transformation, they have to handle all sorts of stresses such as learner ill-discipline, teenage pregnancies and the like – as well as performing all the additional administrative duties arising from the new

curriculum.

Legotlo *et al.* (2002:116) posit that teachers who work in poor performing schools are also demotivated by the lack of promotion opportunities. In addition, Mestry and Grobler (2004:3) state that there are principals who left the teaching profession because they felt that there was little or no opportunity for them to be promoted. Such principals were typically replaced by educators with very little management experience and often even very little experience of teaching. It could be assumed that the demotivation of principals led to a huge gap in school management, which may have contributed to the low academic performance of learners.

According to the Education Labour Relations Council Report (Anon, 2005:10-12) violence in and around many schools also seems to have contributed to educators opting out of the education system. More violence seems to have occurred in urban secondary schools than in rural schools. These forms of violence manifested themselves in the form of learners carrying dangerous weapons, which contributes to assaults and fights. It can be assumed that educators would not operate freely in such a climate of insecurity and disorderliness.

Yet other teachers are demotivated by having to travel long distances to work, which has a negative effect on their teaching (North West Education Department, 2001:2). The problem that the principal faces is that teachers who travel long distances may sometimes arrive at school late or tired, so that their level of enthusiasm in class is likely to deteriorate as the teaching day progresses. It would be difficult for learners to listen to a fatigued and apparently bored teacher.

Although some teachers chose to live far away and travel to work, many were redeployed, often against their will, which has had a negative impact on morale. Fleisch (2002:42) states that some principals are reluctant to accept redeployed teachers, perceiving them to be unco-operative, lazy or troublemakers. Such negative perceptions cast doubt on the person's teaching potential, and could make redeployed teachers feel

unwelcome and demoralised.

Some highly experienced educators responded to redeployment by choosing to retire early, which has had a negative effect on the quality of teaching in general (Fleisch 2002:42). The early retirement of experienced educators means that some principals have lost potential mentors to new educators – which again may have a negative effect on school performance.

In addition to the abovementioned factors affecting the performance of educators, the academic performance of some schools has been negatively affected by poor leadership and management. According to Van der Berg (2004:19) schools that are not run properly

fail to attract good teachers and learners who show great potential, as the latter may be unwilling to risk their good individual reputation in a poorly managed school.

From the above factors it appears that the quality of teaching and learning is sacrificed when the principal and the management team fail to execute their leadership and management duties effectively. It may also be assumed that the failure to lead and manage schools effectively has the potential of creating negative labels for teachers and learners, and ultimately a negative reputation for the school, which would cause damage to the future of all associated with the school later.

2.4.4.4. Poor learning

The managers of some township and rural schools are faced with the difficult challenge of helping learners from lower socio-economic backgrounds pass grade twelve. Maja (1995:87) asserts that learners from lower socio-economic backgrounds may perform poorly academically because they tend to experience additional learning obstacles such as the following :

- Overcrowdedness in the house,

- Lack of sufficient time to study,
- Lack of parental support, and
- Financial constraints.

Another factor which has the potential to lead to poor learning is large class sizes (Petersen, 2006:61). It is very difficult for an educator to teach effectively when a class is overcrowded; An overcrowded, unruly class is difficult to control, making constructive feedback and discipline almost impossible.

Ncube (2002:62) agrees that poverty as a social factor has a role to play in the poor learning of some pupils, because learners who are poorly nourished may find it difficult to concentrate in class. They are usually weak from hunger and occasionally may suffer health problems which prevent them from attending school regularly. During examinations they are compelled to do a lot of catching up with their peers, which could mean that they have to go through a lot of work in a short period, which would naturally have a negative effect on their performance.

Despite the fact that there is not much that school managers can do to alleviate the socio-economic obstacles that result in poor learning, they still face the challenge of motivating such learners to work harder and to concentrate on their studies, and not to fall into the trap of using poverty as an excuse for poor performance.

2.4.5. *Mismanagement of material resources*

Two other challenges facing managers of low performing schools are the lack of material resources and the mismanagement of such scantily available resources. Some schools seem to struggle to maintain their physical resources, while others find it difficult to secure resources.

2.4.5.1. Shortage of resources

According to Levi and Lockheed (1993:8) the managers of schools in disadvantaged areas have to deal with a shortage of material resources such as updated text books, functional libraries and laboratories, which is another important contributory factor that cannot be ignored in the academic performance of a school, since resources have an impact on the delivery of quality education.

Crouch and Mabogoane (2001:61) are of the view that it is not necessarily only the quantity of resources at the disposal of a school that influences academic performance, but also the quality of the management of such available resources ... since it is quite possible to find low academic performance in well-resourced schools. On the other hand, there are also poorly resourced schools that manage to achieve high performance levels.

Crouch and Mabogoane (2001:64) further argue that there are other extraordinary issues that affect the performance of a school, regardless of whether they have fewer resources or high poverty levels. Such issues include managerial factors, the culture of learning and teaching issues, which seem to have more influence on school performance than actual physical resources.

The high importance of management, the culture of teaching and learning factors becomes clear when one looks at a certain school in the North West Province, which achieved a 98,4% matriculation pass rate in the 2005 final examinations. Molema (2006:5) states that the buildings of this school were falling apart and the teachers were even using a classroom as staffroom. In addition, the school had no administration block, and no telephone, fax machine, photocopier or laboratory.

2.4.5.2. Vandalism and theft

According to the North West Education Department (2002:4), many of the township and rural schools struggle to manage the resources at their disposal efficiently. Such schools

used to have resources such as electricity, functioning toilets, running water, textbooks and laboratories, but had failed to manage and maintain them, and goods that were vandalised or stolen were never repaired or replaced again.

Sergiovanni (1990:11) argues that what separates effective principals from ineffective ones is that the former refuse to yield to the problems caused by vandals. Ineffective principals yield easily to vandalism and allow their schools to decay even further. They view fixing toilets or replacing broken windows and doors as a waste of resources because all it does is to invite more damage.

From the discussion on the management of physical resources above, it appears that managers in poor performing schools fail to utilise and maintain the little resources that they do have to the benefit of their learners. On the other hand, it also appears that a school can still produce good results, despite a shortage of physical resources. Naturally, effective management and a culture conducive to teaching and learning could contribute even more to good academic results.

2.4.6. Poor management of ill-discipline

According to Squelch and Lemmer (1994:81), discipline in schools is aimed at improving teaching and learning practices. This suggests that a school that cannot manage ill-discipline among teachers and learners may also find it difficult to maintain an improved culture of teaching and learning, and is therefore likely to underperform academically. The poor management of ill-discipline leads to misconduct being allowed to develop into chaos and disorder.

The implication of the above is that if a principal fails to act decisively, firmly and consistently with regard to educator and learner ill-discipline, teaching and learning will be affected negatively. Likewise, educators have to be able to handle learner ill-discipline in the classroom. If teachers fail to handle late-coming, absenteeism, lesson bunking and a failure to complete assignments, ill-discipline is allowed to prevail, which is not

conducive to effective teaching and learning.

2.4.6.1. Failure to manage ill- disciplined educators

According to the North West Education Department (2002:4), principals of dysfunctional schools spend most of their time dealing with cases of ill-discipline among educators. The lack of discipline among educators seems to affect the performance of a school negatively and manifests itself in the following elements:

- Regular failure of teachers to attend their classes
- Poor interpersonal relationships among educators
- A lack of co-operation between teachers and subject advisors
- Late-coming
- Absenteeism
- Lack of control over the work of teachers and learners
- Failure to complete set syllabi
- Failure to prepare thoroughly for lessons

From the above factors of educator ill-discipline, it is clear that principals who have to deal with a combination of such elements daily cannot focus on academic issues that can improve their schools performance. Dealing with endless educator ill-discipline implies that principals have to spend the bulk of their time organising disciplinary hearings, formulating misconduct charges, issuing warnings and solving interpersonal conflicts – all of which is mere crisis management, which has the potential to not only delay but also derail school progress.

2.4.6.2. Lack of managing ill disciplined learners

Many principals also lack the competencies to deal effectively with learner ill-discipline in their schools (Mestry & Grobler, 2004:7). According to Haasbroek (1998:13), some principals and educators see the abolition of corporal punishment as one of the major

reasons for their failure to deal effectively with poor learner discipline in schools. This incompetence to manage learner ill-discipline has the potential to disturb the normal operation of a school, because where there is no control of ill-discipline, there is a possibility of disorder and chaos (Mestry & Grobler, 2004:7).

The deterioration of strict discipline is evident in poor performing schools and commonly manifests itself in the following elements (Nxumalo 1993:55; Legotlo *et al.* 2002:115; Kruger, 2003:207):

- Poor school attendance
- High drop-out rates
- Drugs, sexual and alcohol abuse
- Late-coming and lesson bunking
- Cheating and not doing set assignments
- Forging parents' signatures on report cards
- Intimidation and refusal to co-operate
- Fighting and bullying
- Failure to pay school funds

On the other hand, Sonn (2002:21) argues that the deterioration of good discipline in schools can be attributed to certain factors that a school manager may find awkward to manage or control, such as:

- Family conflict
- Poverty
- Personal crises – e.g. not coping well with the challenges of adolescence
- Peer pressure
- Being ridiculed by fellow learners
- Having difficulty comprehending subject content

The above discussion indicates that the failure of principals to deal effectively with

learner ill-discipline can drastically hamper the progress of a school. Obviously, principals cannot be expected to deal with all the background challenges that learners bring to school with them, but that does not mean that principals have no influence on the ill-discipline of the learners in their schools. In fact, it is clear that the more principals implement good discipline, the more likely it is that their schools may perform better, as teachers and learners get the opportunity to learn and work in an orderly and secure environment.

2.4.7. Poor school-parent relations

In most township and rural schools there is a lack of real parent involvement in and support in terms of school matters, so much so that some parents are practically invisible. Legotlo *et al.* (2002:117) state that the invisibility of parents in school activities affects mainly underdeveloped areas. This could be because some principals lack strategies that can attract parents and inspire them to provide services to their children's schools.

Maja (1995:55) states that the minimal participation of parents in education matters affects the progress of a school negatively. Such apathy is reflected mainly in township and rural schools where the payment of school funds and the attendance of parent-teacher meetings present serious challenges, which can disrupt continuity and can make it impossible to implement resolutions adopted during meetings (which often do not quorate).

Negative school-parent relations are also reflected in the dysfunctionality of school governing bodies, which sometimes clash with principals over the allocation of resources and other matters. Modjadji (2004:20) states that such negative relations affect the progress of many township and rural schools. Very often the negative relations manifest themselves in the meetings of school governing bodies being cancelled due to poor attendance. In some cases, certain individuals may dominate the proceedings to their own advantage because there are too few members to oppose them.

The above discussion indicates that when principals fail to attract parents and motivate them to give their full support to their children's education, the progress of the school may be compromised. Parents may withhold their contributions and services to the school if they are not being educated and empowered with regard to their roles and responsibilities in terms of their children's education. This failure to maintain good relations between parents and the school indicates a gap between the home environment and the school environment.

2.4.8. *Dealing with a declining school*

According to Duke (2006:731), it is important to understand how a school's academic achievement begins to decline, because the majority of schools do not start out as low performers. Principals need to learn to recognise certain "pathologies" of organisational decline, which include the following (Duke 2006:731):

- Less communication
- More criticism and blame
- Less respect
- More isolation,
- Focus turning inward
- Rifts widening and inequities growing
- Less initiative
- Diminishing aspirations
- Negativity spreading

Because a school is regarded as a particular type of organisation (Mentz 1996:17), it can be assumed that some or all of the above "pathologies" may be applicable to declining schools. This means that principals who have to turn around poor academic performance need a variety of management skills to be able to deal with such negative factors.

2.5. Management Strategies to improve the Performance of a School

2.5.1. Introduction

There are various management strategies that principals of low-performing schools can apply to turn around poor academic performance. Some of these may be derived from theories such as total quality management, performance management and school-based management

2.5.2. Total quality management

2.5.2.1. Definition of total quality management

According to Schermerhorn (1996:21), total quality management (TQM) is "the process of making quality principles part of the organization's strategic objectives, applying them to all aspects of operations, committing to continuous improvement and striving to meet customers' needs by doing things right the first time".

The principles of TQM can help schools improve the quality of education through systematic data-analysis and decision-making. Principals of low performing schools can turn around poor performance in their schools by applying TQM principles – by coming up with principles that will steer teachers and learners toward improving the quality of their work. Such principles must be implemented as part of an overall strategy or plan to achieve better academic performance, since school performance is not an event, but a planned process.

2.5.2.2. TQM principles that can improve school performance

From the TQM perspective, a school performs poorly because its managers fail to plan ahead and are unable to use the resources at their disposal to the benefit of their school (Sallis 1996:34). This suggests that low school performance can be turned around if the

principal has an appropriate plan for the school and uses both human and physical resources wisely.

Managerial commitment: According to TQM principles, school managers have the duty of, and should commit to, leading the institution out poor academic performance (Schenk 1993:38). The indication is that the principal and school management should take the initiative in improving the academic performance of their learners, by providing the required leadership, having a new vision and inspiring others to support and follow their endeavours toward improvement.

Step by step improvement: The improvement of school performance can also be achieved by a series of small-scale projects (Sallis 1996:25). This suggests that a school manager must understand that bringing about change in school performance may require that big tasks be divided into manageable small-sized assignments. It may be difficult for a dysfunctional school to start generally improving its level of discipline, but targeting certain issues of ill-discipline that stand out as especially problematic can make the task seem more doable. This could mean that discipline problems may first have to be categorised in terms of their level of seriousness, and then tackled issue by issue.

Changing of cultures: TQM requires that for improvement to take place, there should be a change of culture in the school (Grobman 1999:22). This indicates that the principal, senior management team members, teachers and learners have to alter the way they are used to doing things in their institution.

Such a cultural change includes changing existing attitudes, school procedures and teaching methods that have not resulted in better academic performance. The cultural change may therefore require the principal to redesign the organization's structure, redefine priorities and to redeploy resources.

Internal marketing: TQM views internal marketing as a worthwhile strategy for low performing organisations to involve their members. The strategy is a proactive process

aimed at involving and empowering all school members through constant communication regarding various aspects and processes of the school (Cheng 1996:27).

Through stakeholder involvement, the principal of a low performing school has the opportunity to market to and inform other stakeholders about impending changes. This also provides him/her with the opportunity to listen to concerns, new ideas and contributions from other people on how they can help change the school's poor performance.

Stress reduction: According to Van der Linde (2001:380), teachers who are over-stressed cannot perform their duties effectively. To counteract high levels of stress, Van der Linde (2002:380-381) suggests, that it is important for the principal to apply the following TQM education principles:

- Establishing a problem-solving framework
- Suggesting solutions for the problems teachers encounter
- Advising staff to avoid hurried solutions
- Emphasising positive attitudes – e.g. avoiding negative talk and mediocrity
- Continuous training of staff
- Encouraging staff creativity

From the above discussion, it seems possible that certain aspects or principles of TQM can be applied to education, thus making a positive contribution to school effectiveness. The commitment of the principal and senior management, gradual step by step incremental change, cultural change, constant communication and managing stress, all seem likely to contribute to turning low school performance around.

2.5.3. Performance management

2.5.3.1. What is performance management?

According to Liebenberg and Van der Merwe (1996:263) performance management "is a

process during which the team leader engages in activities of planning the outputs and their standards, organises the resources, leads by observing and evaluating performance, including giving support and recommendations, and lastly the leader controls the performance of members".

The above definition indicates that the management of performance can be applied in schools as organisations to help them improve. The principal needs to undertake actions of planning, organising, leading, observing, evaluating, supporting and controlling the performance of teachers. The principal remains the key person who can steer the school forward through performance planning, monitoring and evaluation.

2.5.3.2. Performance planning

Liebenberg and Van der Merwe (1996:269) state that a performance plan is a document compiled for each staff member, outlining the duties or tasks that the employee, in this case a teacher, has to perform. This performance plan must include the following:

- Mission of the job – this describes why the job exists and how it differs from other jobs in the school.
- Key performance areas – these indicate the main areas of responsibility for each employee or teacher.
- Tasks – the actions that a teacher should perform.
- Outputs – the results which indicate whether the task has been achieved.
- Standards – these indicate the expected level of performance as well as the criteria to determine the success rate.

In addition the participatory nature of management requires that the principal consult the teacher on the action plan so that the teacher can understand exactly what is expected of him/her. By being allowed to have a say in his/her action plan, the teacher gets a sense of ownership which can bring increased commitment to school goals.

2.5.3.3. *Performance monitoring*

Monitoring the performance of teachers in a school is necessary so that the principal can follow the implementation of action plans, take note of obstacles that may hamper goal accomplishment and suggest alternatives to teachers (Van der Waldt 2004:310). The indication is that when the principal monitors teacher performance, there is the likelihood of picking on poor performance at its early stages and remedying it before it becomes a crisis.

Van der Waldt (2004:312) suggests that the monitoring of performance can be successful if it is done –

- continuously
- in collaboration with other stakeholders, rather than in isolation
- by identifying strengths and weaknesses during monitoring and implementing improvement strategies
- by giving feedback in a positive atmosphere

According to Liebenberg and Van der Merwe (1999:274-275), feedback to employees about their work performance can be effective when it is –

- Relevant – focus should be on work related behaviour
- Specific – enabling to recognise exactly where deviation occurred
- Timely – on-the-spot feedback has more value
- Honest – withholding negative feedback prevents growth and development
- Positive – a positive atmosphere is required for effective feedback

The above discussion indicates that monitoring teachers' performance regularly can have a positive impact on their quality of work. The principal can also follow whether teaching activities and management tasks are effective or need some altering. This helps the principal to be proactive rather reacting to crises all the time.

2.5.3.4. Performance evaluation

When a school manager evaluates teachers' work, he/she gets the opportunity to form an opinion about the quality of teaching taking place in his/her school. This means that through performance evaluation, a principal may determine whether the teaching that occurs is likely to lead to poor results or to good academic performance.

Liebenberg and Van der Merwe (1999:293) further state that measuring the performance of teachers may give principals the following advantages:

- They can identify the training and development needs of their teachers.
- They can give guidance to teachers and the senior management team.
- They can allocate work to teachers appropriately.
- They can communicate with their subordinates about work issues.

Generally, the discussion on performance management indicates that the principals of low performing schools and their senior management team members need to roll up their sleeves and put more effort into planning, monitoring and evaluating performance in their schools. However, performance management should not be viewed as a separate process independent from other school strategies aimed at turning around low performance. It is very important to integrate all efforts.

2.5.4. School-based management

South Africa is currently engaged in educational reforms which include the improvement of the quality of education that learners receive, especially in township and rural schools (Botha 2004:239). This improvement of education quality implies that teaching and learning have to be managed better so that low performing schools can become more effective.

One of the ways that is seen as having the potential to lead to education quality improvement is through a school-based system of management which includes decentralising power, authority and decision-making to schools (Botha 2004:239). This means that principals and school governing bodies should undertake increased responsibilities in order to manage and govern their schools' affairs effectively.

2.5.4.1. Decentralising school power

Steyn (2002:254) supports the decentralisation of power in schools by stating that the delivery of quality education can be achieved if principals allow teachers and parents to play an active and constructive role in the day to day management and governance issues of their schools. This will enable a principal to delegate some of his/her power and relieve him/her of the need to be the proverbial jack of all trades but master of none.

The quality of teaching and learning in low performing schools can improve when there is decentralisation of power to schools from education authorities to principals and from principals to other stakeholders. This implies that work performance can improve when the principal shares managerial tasks equitably with other appropriate stakeholders.

Principals of low performing schools can improve the management of their institutions when they allow other stakeholders to share in the school power. Such power-sharing may work better and it may help avert misunderstanding if there are clear guidelines with regard to roles and responsibilities, including who has the final word and on what issues.

On the other hand, not all South African school principals are coping with the new legislation of decentralising school power as stipulated in the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 (SA 1996). Steyn (2002:255) maintains that some principals are struggling to adapt to their new roles and to power-sharing, which may impact negatively on the performance in general.

It seems that one of the reasons why some principals struggle to share school power with

other participants, could be that they were not fully prepared in terms of how to delegate some duties without losing their authority as principals. Perhaps some are scared to lose their places as the centre of attraction, or they may feel weakened and threatened.

2.5.4.2. Practising participatory management

Singh and Manser (2002:22) believe that there should be more participatory management in low performing schools, because such participation by other role-players seems to contribute positively to the performance of a school. Principals need to value and show appreciation for the ideas of others on turning low performance around.

A principal who does not allow other stakeholders a reasonable voice in school matters runs the risk of losing out on the following critical issues that can improve performance (Steyn 1998:133; Singh & Manser 2002:60):

- A sense of ownership or belonging
- Job satisfaction amongst teachers
- High level of teacher performance
- More teacher commitment
- More inputs from teachers

The Report of the Task Team on Education Management and Development supports the assertion that principals of low performing schools need to include participatory management in their styles of running schools (Van der Westhuizen & Mosoge 1998:48), since the people inside an organisation are the ones who can make or break the institution.

An assumption can then be drawn that low performance in schools does not happen as something that is totally out of control; school members must have failed to do something correctly that ultimately resulted in poor performance. This assumption suggests that principals and other school participants can influence the performance of their school.

2.5.4.3. *The principal's role in practising participatory management*

A modern principal is required to include three active roles of leadership that may assist him/her in decentralising school power, which in turn may allow for improved participatory management in institution matters. Three areas of leadership may be deduced – the principal's instructional role, his/her facilitative role and his/her transformational role (Perez, Milstein, Wood & Jakes 1999: 8). Including these three areas of leadership in the everyday management of an underperforming school might help improve poor performance for the better.

Instructional role: According to this role, the principal of a low performing school needs to set clear expectations, maintain discipline and implement high standards. As an instructional leader he/she needs to be aware that his/her role is to improve the quality of teaching and learning. To do this, he/she needs to collaborate with other staff members in setting clear goals, maintaining discipline and implementing high standards for learners to emulate. In other words, the principal has to set a good example through his/her own actions and the quality of his/her own work.

Facilitative role: Because the principal is at the centre of the management of the school, he/she is better placed to facilitate participatory management by involving teachers, parents and learners in finding solutions to their school's problems. Middlewood (2003:171) supports the facilitative role of the principal, which can be achieved by establishing committees or teams in the school. Through teams or committees, stakeholders get the opportunity to take decisions that are relevant to their particular role, and which may remove some of the obstacles preventing high academic performance.

Transformational role: This role requires that a principal focus not only on establishing a positive culture of teaching and learning, but also on motivating, inspiring and uniting teachers, parents and learners behind a common school purpose. He/she can also help other stakeholders to accept educational changes and deal with them effectively and

efficiently. By playing this transformational role, the principal of low performing schools need to firstly transform their management and leadership styles, to prevent stagnation.

From the above discussion on school-based management, it seems that the establishment of self-managing schools requires patience, perseverance and educating others about their new roles and responsibilities. In addition, many township and rural school principals who have had to deal with strikes, boycotts and defiance campaigns, now have to play a leading role to help other stakeholders accept that self-managing schools require their full participation and support.

Furthermore, it seems that for self-managing schools to succeed, principals would be required to transform their management and leadership styles. This means principals would need to accept that power-sharing and participatory management are neither a waste of their valuable time nor an intrusion into their domain authority domains, but may actually relieve them of a lot of stress, especially if they refrain from shedding responsibilities for which management should by rights be accountable.

2.5.5. Synthesis

The discussion on theoretical strategies for the effective management of schools indicates that there is no one particular management strategy that can be applied to all low performing schools to help turn them around. Principals as managers also have their preferences of certain management and leadership styles that they feel comfortable with; in addition, all low performing schools face unique problems, and each school requires management strategies that are appropriate to its unique situation.

TQM can help principals of low performing schools focus on the continuous improvement of the performance of learners as the primary clients of the school. Performance management may also help principals get the best out their staff members, while school-based management could help principals to share school power and decision-making, which would improve stakeholder commitment toward organisational

goals.

2.6. Strategies of the Education Department to improve school performance

2.6.1. Introduction

The South African Education Department has developed strategies meant to improve the quality of teaching and learning in schools, as well as to help teachers perform better. Provinces have also developed measures to address poor academic performance in schools. However, all these national strategies and provincial measures seem to be of a general nature. These seem to address patterns of school performance such as (Gray & Wilcox , 1995:228) an effective school which is improving,

- an effective school which is deteriorating,
- an ineffective school which is improving,
- an ineffective school which is deteriorating, and
- effective schools which are neither consistently improving nor consistently deteriorating.

Some of the strategies to be looked at include Developmental Appraisal, Performance Measurement, Whole School Evaluation and the Integrated Quality Management System.

2.6.2. Developmental Appraisal

According to the Employment of Educators Act, 76 of 1998 (SA 1998), Developmental Appraisal is a process which seeks to develop the skills and career prospects of the individual educator as well as leading to improvement at school level. Furthermore, this process seeks to improve the quality of teaching and education management at schools. The process is also meant to be implemented by all South African schools, irrespective of academic performance, with the hope that low performing schools will derive some benefit from implementing Developmental Appraisal.

However, it seems that not all low performing schools are benefiting from the Developmental Appraisal system. It also seems unclear whether Developmental Appraisal actually helps poor performing schools to turn around their academic performance or make their managers more effective. It may be that school managers fail to implement the programme effectively, or that they fail to implement it altogether, perhaps due to lack of interest or because they do not quite understand the programme.

2.6.3. Performance Measurement

The ELRC Collective Agreement Number 1 of 2003 (ELRC 2003) states that Performance Measurement is intended to improve the quality of teaching and education management in schools. However, it seems that some teachers and principals in mainly township and rural schools are not benefiting from this process.

From the above discussion, it may be assumed that some schools have failed to implement Performance Measurement. It could be that the principals of such schools are unable to ensure that the performance of teachers is measured against the set standards, or that the measurement is of a very low standard and therefore has little or no positive impact on the quality of teaching, or that the principals themselves are not sufficiently supervised to be able to do effective performance measurements.

2.6.4. Whole-school Evaluation

Whole-school Evaluation was brought into place to bring about outcomes expected to improve the academic performance of township and rural schools. The intention of Whole-school Evaluation is to facilitate improved school performance by taking a closer look at the functionality of the whole school, including learners, school governing bodies, parents and the community in which the school operates (Department of Education, 2004:39).

Teu and Motlhabane (2005:54) discovered that the majority of schools did not complete their self-evaluation forms and that the implementation of baseline evaluation as expected from the various schools was not monitored, which may have undermined the intended effect of Whole-school Evaluation as a quality improvement programme. Based on these factors, it may be assumed that the process of Whole-school Evaluation has not been a success, since the quality of the academic performance of many township and rural schools still requires a lot of attention.

2.6.5. The Integrated Quality Management System

The process of the Integrated Quality Management System was introduced with the purpose of enhancing the performance of the South African education system by integrating three systems which were perceived to be operating separately and independently from one another (Education Labour Relations Council, 2003:1). This system is therefore an integration of three programmes, namely Developmental Appraisal, Performance Measurement and Whole-school Evaluation. The purpose of integrating these quality management programmes was to improve the quality of teaching and learning in South African schools.

Through the Integrated Quality Management System, the performance of educators, heads of departments, deputy principals and principals is evaluated according to a number of criteria for each post level. Support, training and advice is given to individuals who are not meeting the performance standards, as a way of improving their quality of work, which in turn could help to improve academic performance in general. There is a monetary reward of 1-3% for all those educators whose performance meet the standard requirements, with the aim of encouraging better performance.

However, Teu and Motlhabane (2005:17) have established that schools are struggling to implement the IQMS. It seems that educators do not fully understand how to implement the integrated approach to quality management in schools, which may make it cumbersome for educators to implement the system.

From the above discussion on departmental strategies it seems that some township and rural schools are not fully benefiting from the listed measures and continue to underperform and lose learners to suburban schools, which are perceived to be offering a better quality of education. However, it has to be noted that the above strategies are not the only measures taken by the Education Department to better the quality of education in schools.

2.6.6. Training of principals

According to Masitsa *et al.* (2004:222) principals receive in-service training from the Education Department on the changes taking place in education. Such training is intended to empower school managers and improve principals' performance and expertise so that they may take the process of education transformation forward (Kutu 1998:84). However, it seems that some principals fail to translate the training they receive into effective management practices that could have lead their schools to perform better academically. From the above it may be assumed that the failure by some principals to implement education changes could be a result of inadequate training, or a lack of leadership. Consequently, principals who feel that they have not been sufficiently trained could be feeling uncomfortable and not confident enough when they have to implement changes, and may therefore resort to doing a half-baked job, or may ignore the training given and continue with their old management practices.

2.6.7. Visiting of schools by education department officials

2.6.7.1. Visiting of schools by institution support coordinators

The purpose of the job of an institution support co-ordinator is to ensure that learning institutions perform and function effectively by providing educational support to schools and principals. These officials are appointed (Molale, 1995:155) –

to monitor and evaluate the implementation of educational policy and legislation

- to ensure that schools meet target dates
- to assist with strategic planning or developmental plans
- to orientate principals and train them if necessary
- to give support to principals and school management teams

However, according to Pretorius (2002:23), some of the low performing schools do not get real assistance and tangible support from some support co-ordinators. This suggests that the principals of such schools are left on their own to implement policies, new laws or collective agreements. They may also have to deal with complex school challenges on their own. It then becomes possible for teachers to take advantage of the principal's isolation.

2.6.7.2. Visiting of schools by subject advisors

The purpose of creating a subject advisory post is to ensure that institution-based educators have support in terms of curriculum implementation or successful teaching techniques (North West Education Department, *n.d*:3). The indication is that subject advisors are required to ensure that educators become effective facilitators of learning. They have to support teachers as well as to empower them with effective teaching techniques, but it seems that educators of low performing schools do not benefit sufficiently from subject advisory visits.

According to Maja (1995:58) educators who are not fully qualified to teach a particular subject may not benefit sufficiently from subject advisory visits. The North West Education Department Report (2002:4) agrees that teachers who are underqualified or compelled to teach other subjects for which they are not qualified may derive little benefit from the intervention strategies of subject advisors. This shows that there are other internal school management factors that affect the performance of teachers, despite the subject advisors' attempts to improve performance.

2.6.8. *The North West Education Department's Improvement Plan*

According to the North West Education Department (2005:1), the improvement plan is designed to address poor performance in grade twelve as well as to help low performing schools move out of the "trapped zone". The plan includes:

- monitoring providing material resources, eg. textbooks, old question papers,
- photocopiers
- filling vacant posts
- helping principals and teachers
- encouraging holiday schools and Saturday classes
- soliciting the support of parents.

2.6.9. *Implementing drastic measures*

Principals and teachers of low performing schools are continuously faced by various threats from education officials and some provincial politicians. Some such threats include taking radical measures against principals and teachers who fail to improve their school's performance. Govender (2006:8) states that such drastic measures include –

- charging principals with dereliction of duty
- forcing teachers to offer extra tuition to learners during weekends
- transferring teachers who underperform and are frequently absent from work
- redeploying principals of low performing schools
- demoting failing principals
- transferring the entire staff and replacing it
- ejecting failing principals from the education system
- relocating support co-ordinators who fail to turn around low performing schools.

2.6.10. The Education Action Zone Programme

The Education Action Zone Programme was initiated in Gauteng Province as a mechanism of turning around low academic performance in secondary schools. Fleisch (2006:370) states that the programme focused on –

- threatening teachers with disciplinary action
- regular surveillance
- regular monitoring of schools
- promoting orderliness
- punctuality
- monitoring teacher and learner attendance
- classroom inspections
- training sessions for teachers
- conducting lessons during winter school holidays

According to Fleisch (2006:379) the pass rates of schools that were identified for intervention improved spectacularly. This improvement in performance could be attributed to a top-down approach that was adopted to put a lot of pressure on teachers, learners, school management teams and principals. However, the fact that the improvement in the matriculation pass rates were accompanied by declining learner numbers, may be due to factors such as the exclusion of those perceived to be weak and some learners moving from higher grade to standard grade (Fleisch 2006:379).

From the above discussion, it seems that the performance of schools does improve when there is constant interaction between schools and education authorities, and that principals, teachers and learners all seem to pull up their socks when disciplinary action is taken against those not doing their part, and when educators are monitored regularly and are given support and advice. However, education officials are not always available to keep a close enough eye on principals, teachers and learners. This could suggest that long-term measures are required to ensure stability and cultural change in low performing

schools.

2.7. Conclusion

It is apparent from the above discussion about the management of low performing schools that poor leadership and a lack of management skills have negative consequences for many learners in township and rural schools. Good teachers and learners shun such schools in favour of better performing ones. Another result of poor leadership and management is that there is a perpetuation of poor performance when schools fail to attract good learners and teachers who could serve as positive role models. It may therefore be concluded that principals have a key role to play ensuring that their teachers and learners perform to their best potential.

CHAPTER 3: EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

3.1. Introduction

The previous chapter focused on the literature investigation into the nature of management in low performing schools. Firstly, the intention of this chapter is to gather data from selected secondary schools with regard to their management of teaching and learning activities. For this study, matriculation results are used as a key indicator of school performance.

Secondly, the intention is to gather data from teachers and school management teams in the abovementioned schools regarding the effectiveness of certain strategies implemented by the Education Department as measures to improve the matriculation results of schools.

3.2. Objectives of the empirical research

The objectives of this research are the following:

- To determine the views of educators and management teams on the management of teaching and learning activities in the selected secondary schools.
- To determine the views of teachers and school management teams regarding the effectiveness of the strategies adopted by the Education Department to improve the management of teaching and learning activities in the selected rural and township schools

3.3. Research Design

A research design is "a set of guidelines and instructions to be followed in addressing (a) research problem" (Mouton 2002:107) which lists procedures to be followed during the study, including when and from whom data will be obtained, and what methods of data collection are to be used (Mcmillan & Schumacher 2001:31).

3.3.1. Research Instrument

For this study, a questionnaire was used to gather information. This method of gathering data suited the researcher better because it saved a lot of time and expense in compiling and distributing. Secondly, the respondents were all educators who could complete the questionnaire by simply following the directives on the questionnaire itself. In other words, the respondents needed very little assistance from the researcher.

3.3.1.1. The questionnaire as a research instrument

A questionnaire is a printed or electronic list of questions distributed to a group of selected people who respond to the same set of questions or statements, in an order predetermined by the researcher (Anderson, 2000:166). There are two types of questionnaires, namely the closed form (structured) and the open form (unstructured).

In the closed form, subjects choose between predetermined responses, while in an open form the subjects respond in an unrestricted manner (McMillan & Schumacher 2001:260-261). The closed form questionnaire calls for brief responses, is easy to fill out and takes little time to complete, while an open form questionnaire calls for free responses and requires greater effort because the respondents have to use their own words (Best & Kahn 2003:301-302).

The structured form questionnaire was chosen for this research because the subjects could respond to the items more quickly and without direct supervision. Secondly, the amount of administration work that teachers and school management team members have to perform these days seems to have increased tremendously, and the structured form was therefore chosen to avoid taking too much of the educators' time.

Other reasons why a closed form questionnaire was chosen for this research included the points that as a commonly used research technique, it could assist the researcher to cover a wide spectrum of subjects. Furthermore, if it is properly constructed, a questionnaire

serves as a reliable method of collecting data from respondents (Mouton 2002:67). This means that a questionnaire may elicit more objective responses, which could also prove to be more valid.

3.3.1.2. Advantages of the questionnaire

A questionnaire has the following advantages (which influenced the researcher to make use of a questionnaire) (McMillan & Schumacher 2001:257):

- A questionnaire is relatively economic.
- It asks the same questions of all subjects.
- It ensures anonymity.
- It can elicit frank and more objective responses.
- Identical questions may bring about more comparable data.
- The inflow of data is quick and from many people.
- Respondents can complete questionnaires at a time and in a place that suits them.
- There is no interviewer bias.

3.3.1.3 Disadvantages of the questionnaire

The use of a questionnaire as a research technique has several disadvantages which cannot be ignored, such as (Tuckman, 1994: 229; Anderson, 2000: 168-169) –

- The response rate can be low.
- Questionnaires are restricted to people who can read and write.
- There is little or no opportunity for subjects to ask questions or clear up ambiguous items.
- Respondents may give misleading answers or fail to answer all the questions.
- Follow-ups are needed for unreturned questionnaires, which will have time and cost implications.

- The researcher is not able to probe beyond the answer that the respondent gives.
- There is no control over who really answers the questionnaire once it is out of the researcher's hands.

Even so, the above disadvantages do not make a questionnaire an unreliable tool for data collection. Questionnaires remain one of the most widely used data collection instruments.

3.3.1.4. Construction of the questionnaire

The questionnaire used in this research was constructed carefully, taking into consideration the following characteristics of a good questionnaire (Best & Kahn 2003:307):

- The questionnaire should be kept brief and should focus on essential data.
- It should be neat, attractively laid out and clearly printed.
- The questions should be easy to respond to.
- Each question should deal with only one idea.
- Embarrassing questions should be avoided.
- All items and pages should be numbered.
- The questions should follow a logical sequence.

3.3.1.5. Structure of the questionnaire

In this study the questionnaire requires principals, teachers and school management team members of rural and township schools to respond to 39 items. The questionnaire consists of three sections, namely Sections A, B, and C.

SECTION A: BIOGRAPHIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

This section is divided into 8 items. Items 2 to 5 require respondents to record their personal information, i.e. gender, age, present position at school, work experience, educational qualifications. Items 6 to 8 require the respondents to give information about his/her school, that is, its location, the number of learners in the school and the socio-economic status of the majority of the learners.

SECTION B: STRATEGIES FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

Section B is made up of 17 items. The items are focused on the management of teaching and learning activities at school level. The general aim of the items is to establish the extent to which the school management team leads and manages teaching and learning activities, in order to improve the matriculation results of the school. The answers to these questions will guide the researcher when drawing up recommendations for the management teams of low performing schools.

The items in Section B are divided into 4 categories of management tasks, as follows:

Planning – Items B1, B2, B3, B4 and B10

Organising – Item B6,

Leading – Items B5, B7, B8, B12 and B13

Controlling – Items B9, B14, B15, B16 and B17

SECTION C: EXTERNAL STRATEGIES EMPLOYED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Section C comprises 14 items, which are focused on the strategies designed by the Education Department as a way of dealing with poor performance in schools, especially in respect of matriculation results. Principals, teachers and the school management team

members indicate whether the strategies for the improvement of school performance have been effective or not.

The items in Section C are divided into two categories, namely internal (school-based) and external (Education Department) measures, as follows:

Internal – Items C8, C9, C11, C12, C13 and C14

External – Items C1, C2, C3, C4, C5, C6, C7 and C10

3.3.1.6. Distribution of the questionnaires and administrative procedures

A letter requesting permission to conduct research was handed to the Office of the Acting Superintendent General. A copy of this letter was also submitted to the Area Offices in the Central Region before the researcher could visit the selected schools.

The researcher delivered the questionnaires to selected schools personally, in order to ensure a good return of responses, but also to establish relationships with respondents where possible. Another reason for delivering the questionnaires was the fact that mailing them there and back would take too much time, and there would also be time and cost implications if reminders had to be sent.

During each visit to a school, the researcher would first meet with the principal or his/her deputy to present a letter of permission for research as well as to explain the purpose of the visit. It was important to secure their co-operation as managers of the school. During the visit, the researcher arranged to return to the school three days later to collect the completed questionnaires.

The questionnaires were only collected three days later in order to give the respondents time to complete them in their spare time rather than during lessons. The respondents were therefore not pressured to complete the questionnaires immediately, since that may have resulted in hasty or incomplete responses.

However, despite all the attempts by the researcher to ensure a maximum and timely response, some educators had not completed the questionnaires by the time the researcher arrived at their schools and made the researcher wait for some time for them to complete the questionnaires. There were also some principals who had not completed theirs, citing a busy schedule and workshops as their reasons.

Another difficulty the researcher encountered was that some educators who had been given the questionnaire to complete were absent or attending courses on the day of collection. Some claimed to have forgotten the questionnaire at home. A few educators were said to be on sick leave and therefore unable to honour their agreement to complete the questionnaire.

3.3.1.7. Reliability and validity of the research instrument

The researcher took care to use a reliable and valid research instrument. Reliability refers to the internal consistency of the question items within a specific category. De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport (2005: 163) refer to reliability as a way of ensuring that the instrument will produce the same or nearly the same result consistently over time. This implies that the study can be replicated or reproduced by other researchers. In this research, reliability was ensured by converting the management actions and strategies raised in the theoretical section (Chapter 2) into question items for the questionnaire.

The reliability of the instrument was also determined through the application of the Cronbach Alpha co-efficient. The results were as follows:

Table 3.1: Cronbach Alpha co-efficient

Section of the questionnaire	Co-efficient
Section B	0,92
Section C	0,88

It is clear from Table 3.1 that all categories registered co-efficients closer to 1, meaning that the instrument is reliable.

Validity, according to Coleman and Briggs (2002:61), refers to how accurately the question items of the questionnaire describe the construct that such questions are intended to measure. This refers to the correctness of choosing those specific questions for that category, since question items should give an accurate reflection of the construct. In this research, Sections B (management of teaching and learning activities) and C (external strategies employed to improve low performing schools) formed the major constructs. The validity of each question item was established by thoroughly checking the questions against the construct. In addition, a pilot study was conducted to test whether the question items were valid for schools. The pilot study respondents made useful suggestions regarding the relevance, format and common understandability of the question items. All these suggestions were effected in the final questionnaire.

3.3.2. *Study population and sample*

A population refers to all the cases (individuals, organisations) the researcher may wish to study (Gall, Gall & Borg 2003:167). In a study sample, the researcher selects some of the elements to represent the population that he/she wishes to study (Mouton 2002:135). In this research, the study population refers to 97 secondary schools in the Central Region of the North West Province. The list of schools was numbered from 1-97 and then, using the table of random sampling numbers, 40 schools were selected. This represented 41,2% of the schools in the region, which is an adequate sample to draw valid conclusions about the study population. From the 40 secondary schools, two members of the school management team, two educators and one principal were selected, i.e. (n=5) respondents per school (n=200).

3.3.3. *Response rate*

The questionnaires were distributed to the sample population of secondary schools in the Central Region of the North West Province Education Department. The table below indicates the distribution and the response rate:

Table 3.2 Distribution and response rate

Distributed		Retrieved	
F	%	F	%
200	100%	158	79%

The above table indicates that 79% of the questionnaires sent out to principals, school management team members and educators were retrieved successfully. This response rate is important, because it allows the researcher to draw reasonable and reliable conclusions from the study. According to Ary, Jacobs & Razavie (1990:453) and Tuckman (1994:243), a response rate of 70% is required to make valid and reliable conclusions. The response rate of 79% can be attributed mainly to the fact that the researcher delivered and collected the questionnaires personally.

3.4. **Pilot Study**

It is useful for a researcher to pilot a questionnaire before distributing it to the full sample. Tuckman (1994:235) states that during piloting, the researcher gets to hear the views and concerns of the people answering the questions, and to receive inputs regarding any difficulties the respondents may have experienced. This pretest helps the researcher deal with unforeseen problems such as the phrasing, sequence and length of the questions. In addition, some questions may be added while some others may be eliminated.

For this study, the questionnaire was submitted for comments and suggestions to two schools (n=2) that did not form part of the sample but had similar characteristics as the

target population. The questionnaire was also submitted to experts in education management and the Statistical Consultation Services of the North West University. Recommendations were accepted and changes were made before the final questionnaire was drawn up.

3.5. Ethical Considerations

The researcher ensured that the empirical research complied with the ethical considerations mentioned by various commentators (Coleman & Briggs 2002:79; Leedy & Ormrod 2001:107; Koshy 2005:23-24):

- **Informed consent:** An introductory letter explained the purpose of the research. In addition, the researcher gave the participants an oral explanation of what the research was all about.
- **Voluntary participation:** Participants took part in the research of their own volition and at a time and place that suited them, as they were allowed to take the questionnaires along and complete them in the comfort of their own homes. Participants were informed that they could withdraw from the research at any time without fear of sanction. Indeed, some of the participants never completed the questionnaire despite repeated reminders.
- **Anonymity:** Complete anonymity was ensured in that participants were not required to mention their names or the names of their schools. This fact was mentioned in the questionnaire.
- **Confidentiality:** Participants were assured that their responses would be treated with the utmost confidentiality. They were also assured that the research was being conducted as part of the studies of the researcher and that no information would be disclosed for any other purpose except for studies. The participants could ask to be given the research results once the study had been completed.
- **Commitment to honesty:** Participants were assured that the researcher harboured no sinister motives or hidden agendas against the participants. A

letter of consent from the Department of Education was shown to the participants as proof of the good intentions of the researcher.

3.6. Data Analysis

The retrieved questionnaires (n=158) were sent to the Statistical Consultancy Services Department of the North West University (Potchefstroom campus) for analysis. This analysis was done using the SAS Program (SAS Institute Inc., 2003), which reflects frequencies, mean scores and standard deviations. The research results are presented in the form of tables showing frequencies, mean scores and standard deviations. A t-test was also conducted in order to identify differences between the views of respondents in low performing schools as opposed to those in high performing schools; male as opposed to female educators; educators as opposed to members of SMTs; and urban as opposed to rural schools. The results of the t-test indicated that there were no statistically and practically significant differences. The t-test will therefore not be discussed in the interpretation and analysis of data.

3.7. Conclusion

This chapter focused on the empirical research of rural and township school management. The objectives of the research were outlined. A justification for the use of the questionnaire was highlighted, including the advantages and disadvantages of a questionnaire as a research instrument for gathering data.

The construction of the questionnaire was discussed, as well as its piloting. This was followed by a discussion of how the population was selected and the administrative procedures followed, including the distribution. A distribution and response rate summary was given in Table 3.2.

CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

4.1. Introduction

The main focus of this chapter is to present, analyse and interpret the data collected. The data will be presented in the form of tables that reflect question items, frequencies and percentages of responses and the interpretation thereof. A summarised view of the mean scores will be presented in the form of mean score rankings and will then be analysed and interpreted. This will be followed by findings with regard to the application of t-tests. The chapter will conclude with a summary.

4.2. Biographic and Demographic Data

This section presents the responses in terms of biographic and demographic data. These are based on Section A of the questionnaire, which consists of items A1-A8 in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1. Biographic and demographic information of the respondents

Item	Variable	Frequency	%
A1 Gender	Male	79	50
	Female	79	50
	Total	158	100

Item	Variable	Frequency	%
A2 Age	20-30	6	3,8
	31-39	77	48,7
	40-49	56	35,4
	50-55	15	9,5
	56-60	3	1,9
	60+	2	0,6
	Total	158	100

Item	Variable	Frequency	%
A3 Present position	Principal	23	14,6
	Deputy principal	14	8,9
	Head of department	42	26,6
	Educator	79	50,0
Total		158	100,0

Item	Variable	Frequency	%
A4 Number of years in position	0-5	37	23,6
	6-10	46	29,3
	11-15	48	30,6
	16-20	18	11,5
	21+	8	5,1
Total		157	100,0

Item	Variable	Frequency	%
A5 Highest qualifications	Diploma	49	31,0
	ACE	15	9,5
	Bachelor's degree	42	26,6
	Hons/B.Ed	43	27,2
	Master's degree	9	5,7
	Doctorate	0	0,0
Total		158	100,0

Item	Variable	Frequency	%
A6 School location	Township	62	39,5
	Village	79	50,3
	Farm	16	10,2
Total		157	100,0

Item	Variable	Frequency	%
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A7 Number of learners in school	0-200	13	8,6
	201-400	27	17,8
	401-500	19	12,5
	501-1000	66	43,4
	1000+	27	17,8
Total		152	100,0

Item	Variable	Frequency	%
A8 Socio-economic status of learners	Low	115	73,3
	Middle	36	23,3
	High	6	3,9
Total		157	100,0

4.2.1. Gender

The numbers of male and female respondents reflected in Table 4.1 come to 50% each. This is surprising, but could indicate that principals considered gender equality when they asked educators to complete the questionnaires. This could also suggest that the views of female educators are being taken seriously; female discrimination does not seem evident, therefore. The responses represent the views of male and female educators equally.

4.2.2. Age

Table 4.1 shows that the majority of respondents (48,7%) were 30 to 39 years old. This seemed to show that many mature educators had exited the education system through the early retirement and rationalisation packages that had recently (1994) been offered to educators. This finding is in agreement with the literature study (par. 2.4.4.3.) which indicated that many mature educators had taken early retirement when they could.

4.2.3. *Positions of respondents*

According to Table 4.1, 50% of the respondents were post level one educators while a total of 50,1% comprised the school management team (heads of departments 26,6%; deputy principals 8,9%; and principals 14,6%). This means that the views expressed by respondents represented post level one teachers and school management members equally.

4.2.4. *Number of years in present position*

Table 4.1 showed that the largest number of respondents (30,6%) had been in their positions for 11 to 15 years, while 29,3% of respondents had been occupying their present positions for 6 to 10 years.

The above data seems to indicate that many respondents, including school managers, do not stay in the same positions for long periods. It may therefore be surmised that the early retirement of highly experienced educators seems to have robbed the teaching profession of potential role models who could have mentored young and inexperienced educators, including school managers. The relatively low level of experience of respondents could be one of the reasons why the managers of low performing schools seemed to find it difficult to improve learner performance. The data may also suggest that educators are continuously looking for better positions in order to improve their lives.

4.2.5. *Highest educational qualifications*

Table 4.1 showed that most respondents (31,0%) had teacher's diplomas while a total of 69,0% had post teacher's diploma qualifications. However, there were no Ph.Ds. The data suggested that the majority of respondents met the minimum requirements (REQV 13). It would therefore have been reasonable to expect educators to satisfy the minimum performance standards. It should also be noted that the bulk of respondents had higher qualifications, which generated expectations that school performance could improve.

4.2.6. *School location*

The responses in Table 4.1 showed that 60,5% of the respondents worked in rural schools (village schools 50,3%; farm schools 10,2%) while only 39,5% worked in township schools, suggesting that the schools under investigation were mostly under-resourced schools. It may be expected that the performance of such schools may be negatively affected by the lack of resources (par. 2.4.5.1).

4.2.7. *Number of learners in schools*

According to Table 4.1 43,4% of respondents worked in schools with 500-1000 learners while 17,8% worked in schools with 201-400 and 17,8% in schools with more than 1000 learners. The majority of respondents (43,4%) worked in schools with an ideal number of learners, i.e. fewer than 1000. This could suggest that not many schools are overcrowded and that educators are therefore better positioned to maintain discipline and to keep regular control over their learners' projects, assignments and tests.

4.2.8. *Socio-economic status of learners*

Table 4.1. showed that 73,2% of the respondents worked in schools with learners who came from families with a low socio-economic status. The literature study (par.2.4.4.4) revealed that learners who came from lower socio-economic backgrounds may perform poorly academically due to a lack of sufficient study-time, over-crowdedness in the house and poor nourishment. The low socio-economic status of the community also implied that parents would find it difficult to pay school fees and if they did, the fees would be low. Consequently, the school may have been unable to supplement the resources supplied by the Education Department, and the Governing Body of the school may have failed to appoint additional educators in the so-called "SGB-posts". This implied that it may have been impossible to improve the academic performance of learners.

4.2.9. Conclusion

The above discussion indicated that the majority of schools under investigation had to deal with conditions that could have lead to poor learner performance, namely relatively low experience levels, a lack of higher qualifications, under-resourced schools and poor socio-economic backgrounds. Another disturbing factor was that educators who had retired early had taken with them the knowledge, valuable skills and much-needed experience that could have guided low performing schools toward better performance. Some conditions, however, such as low learner numbers, the relatively high academic and professional qualifications of educators, and the young age of educators, appeared to favour the attainment of high academic standards.

4.3. Management of Teaching and Learning Activities

Table 4.2 reflected the data obtained from respondents on the management of teaching and learning activities (Section B, items B1-B18). The aim in this section was to gather opinions on the extent to which teaching and learning activities were managed by the School Management Team. To answer these questions, respondents were required to indicate their views on a 1- 4 Likert scale, as follows:

1=No extent 2=Small extent 3=Adequate extent 4=Great extent

Table 4.2 Management of Teaching and learning activities

Item	1		2		3		4	
	F	%	f	%	f	%	F	%
The School Management Team								
B1... sets specific goals and objectives concerning learner achievement	2	1.3	16	10.1	93	58.5	48	30.2
B2... effectively communicates the goals and objectives on learner	4	2.5	25	15.6	84	52.5	47	29.4

achievement to educators and parents								
B3... communicates and implements a clear vision for learner achievement	3	1.9	26	16.4	80	50.3	50	31.5
B4... involves other staff members in formulating the mission and vision of the school	7	4.5	33	21.0	51	32.5	66	42.0
B5...adheres to the year programme of school activities	7	4.5	29	18.7	76	49.0	43	27.7
B6...provides adequate learning materials (e.g. textbooks, laboratory materials, etc)	7	4.4	45	28.5	75	47.5	31	19.6
B7... ensures that teaching starts on the first day of reopening	8	5.2	34	22.2	60	39.2	51	33.3
B8... ensures that educators and learners start their lessons on time.	5	3.2	23	14.6	76	48.1	54	34.2
B9... ensures that learners are attended to where and educator is absent from work	15	9.4	53	33.3	70	44.0	21	13.2
B10... sets high expectations concerning academic performance of learners	1	0.6	22	13.9	75	47.2	61	38.4
B12...recognises and awards merits to educators and learners who perform well	42	26.4	49	30.8	43	27.0	25	15.7
B13... sets a desirable example for teachers and learners to emulate through their actions and quality of their work.	6	3.8	39	24.7	77	48.8	36	22.8

B14... exercises effective coordination and control of educators work.	3	1.9	29	18.4	88	55.7	38	24.0
B15... monitors learners' performance in continuous assessment, tests and examinations.	3	1.9	14	8.9	71	44.9	70	44.3
B16...takes appropriate disciplinary action against learners who absent themselves without reason and those who bunk lessons.	20	12.6	43	27.0	60	37.7	36	22.6
B17... takes appropriate measures to reduce teachers' absenteeism and tardiness with regard to the school and their teaching periods.	7	4.4	27	17.0	91	57.2	34	21.4
B18... does not allow un-deserving learners to be promoted to the next grade.	14	8.9	34	21.5	59	37.3	51	32.3

4.3.1. Item B1: The school management team set specific goals and objectives concerning learner achievement

When asked whether the school management team set specific goals and objectives concerning learner achievement, the majority of the respondents (58,5%) marked "adequate extent", while 30,2% marked "great extent". However, this finding is not consistent with the literature study (par.2.4.2), which stated that there was a lack of clearly defined goals in low performing schools. It is possible that the respondents did not want to be seen as ineffective educators and managers. Only a small percentage (1,26%) of respondents stated that the school management team did not set specific goals and objectives concerning learning achievement.

4.3.2. Item B2: The school management team effectively communicated the goals and objectives in terms of learner achievement to educators and parents

When asked whether school management teams effectively communicated the goals and objectives in terms of learner achievement to educators and parents, many respondents (52,5%) said "adequate extent", while 29,4% marked "great extent". This finding seems to contradict the literature study (par.2.4.2) which stated that teachers, learners and parents of low performing schools were often oblivious of what their school was striving to achieve.

A smaller number of respondents (15,6%) indicated that the school management team communicated the goals and objectives in terms of learner achievement to educators and parents to a "small extent", while 2,5% marked "no extent". This finding was in line with the literature study (par.2.4.2).

4.3.3. Item B3: The school management team communicated and implemented a clear vision for learner achievement

When asked whether school management teams communicated and implemented a clear vision for learner achievement most respondents (50,3%) marked "adequate extent" and 31,5% "great extent". The literature study (par.2.4.2) contradicted this finding by revealing that educators in dysfunctional schools failed to articulate common goals.

When asked whether school management teams communicated and implemented a clear vision for learner achievement 16,4% of the respondents said "small extent" and 1,9% "no extent". This low response suggested that educators in low performing schools may have preferred not to reveal the real situation as that could have a negative impact on themselves.

4.3.4. Item B4: The school management team involved other staff members in formulating the mission and vision of the school

When asked whether school management teams involved other staff members in formulating the mission and vision of the school, many respondents (42,0%) marked "great extent", while 32,5% marked "adequate extent". This positive response may be attributed to the fact that most schools in the area of investigation had been assisted by outside agencies, engaged by the Education Department, in the formulation of the mission and vision of their school. Moreover, feedback was given to the Department throughout the schools by a team of researchers. This finding is not congruent with what the literature states. However, the literature study (par.2.4.3.4) revealed that some principals had not yet adopted a democratic management style. The low performance in schools could most likely be attributed to a failure to implement the vision and mission of the school.

4.3.5. Item B5: The school management team adhered to the year programme of school activities

When asked whether school managers followed the year programme of school activities, a high number of respondents (49,0%) marked "adequate extent", while 27,8% marked "great extent" (Table 4.2). This result was in contrast with the literature study (par.2.3.7.) because it appeared that educators in low performing schools had been mostly unable to follow the year programme due to constant disturbances and disruptions.

4.3.6. Item B6: The school management team provided adequate learning materials (e.g. textbooks, laboratory materials, etc)

When asked whether the school management team provided adequate learning materials, almost half of the respondents (47,5%) said "adequate extent", and 19,6% "great extent". This view of learning materials being adequate accounted for 67,1% of the respondents altogether. This view was supported by the fact that the Department of Education ensured

that schools had the required learning materials (par. 2.6.8). The question then would be why such schools continued to perform poorly... to which one might answer "The learning materials were not fruitfully used".

4.3.7. Item B7: The school management team ensured that teaching started on the first day of reopening

When asked whether their school management team ensured that teaching started on the first day of reopening, a high number of respondents (39,2%) marked "adequate extent", while 33,3% marked "great extent". This majority response (72,5%) could be due to the fact that schools were monitored by education authorities on the first day to ensure that teaching and learning was indeed taking place. However, the literature study (par.2.4.3.1) revealed that low performing schools struggled to finalise their timetables and were often battling with matters other than teaching when school reopened. As a result, schools were allowed to operate with tentative timetables at the time of reopening.

4.3.8. Item B8: The school management team ensured that educators and learners started their lessons on time

When asked whether the school management team ensured that educators and learners began their lessons on time, the majority of respondents (48,1%) chose "adequate extent" and 34,2% "great extent", but this finding was not in line with the literature study (par. 2.4.6.1. and par. 2.4.6.2.), which showed that late-coming was a serious problem in low performing schools. In addition, the literature study (par.2.4.3.1) revealed that low performing schools found it difficult to use teaching and learning time effectively, which seemed to have a negative effect on the academic performance of learners, because it meant that the time such learners spent on constructive tasks and activities was inadequate.

4.3.9. Item B9: The school management team ensured that learners were attended to where an educator was absent from work

When asked whether the school management team ensured that learners were attended to where an educator was absent from work, 44% of the respondents marked "adequate extent" and 13,2% "great extent". However, a significant number, totaling 42,8% indicated that the school management failed to carry out this task. This response was in agreement with the literature study (par.2.4.6.1), which confirmed that educator absenteeism was one of the factors that had a negative effect on school performance.

4.3.10. Item B10: The school management team set high expectations concerning the academic performance of learners

This item related to items B1, B2, B3 and B4, which dealt with the setting of goals, and creating a mission and vision for the school. The findings with regard to these items were that the school management team performed said tasks to a "great extent" and to an "adequate extent". The findings agreed with the findings concerning item B10 (Table 4.2) where respondents were asked whether the school management team set high expectations concerning the academic performance of learners; 47,2% said "adequate extent" and 38,4% marked "great extent". This finding emanates from the fact that education officials visiting schools required schools to set performance targets.

However, the literature presented a different view. According to par 2.3.3., teachers and learners in low performing schools did not know exactly what was expected of them. Thus, it seemed that schools actually failed not only to set targets in accordance with the demands of departmental officials, but also to adhere to them.

4.3.12. Item B12: The school management team recognised and awarded merits to educators and learners who performed well

When asked whether the school management team recognised and awarded merits to educators and learners who performed well, 30,8% of the respondents marked "small extent" and 26,4% "no extent". This perception is in agreement with the literature study (par. 2.3.7) which stated that one of the characteristics of a dysfunctional school was that it failed to recognise heroes and heroines, and resorted to blaming, shaming and negative criticism instead. However, 27,0% of the respondents marked "adequate extent" for this item, while 15,7% marked "great extent". From the above data it may be deduced that while the majority of schools did not give merit awards, a significant number of schools did. The contrasting but almost equally split opinions of respondents seem to relate to the fact that merit awards are often awarded at regional rather than at school level.

4.3.13. Item B13: The school management team set a desirable example for educators and learners to emulate through their actions and the quality of their work

When asked whether the school management team set a desirable example for educators and learners to emulate through their actions and the quality of their work, 48,7% of respondents marked "adequate extent" and 22,8% "great extent". The reason for this unexpected response probably lies in the fact that respondents wanted to give a culturally acceptable answer because a negative answer would put them in a bad light. It is therefore possible that in a low performing school, the actions of the school management team may in fact reflect insecurity and a lack of confidence, which may not be good for educators and learners, who require strong characters to lead the young. The response contradicts the literature study (par.2.3.3), which states that low performing schools are characterised by weak leadership on the part of both the school management team and the educators.

4.3.14. Item B14: The school management team exercised effective co-ordination of and control over the work of educators

When asked whether the school management team exercised effective co-ordination of and control over the work of educators, 55,7% of the respondents marked "adequate extent" and 24,05% "great extent". This view of the majority seems to contradict the literature study (par.2.3.2.2 and par. 2.4.4.1), which indicates that in fact a lack of co-ordination and control is one of the causes of low performance in schools.

One could therefore agree with the 20,3% of respondents who indicated that the school management team in fact failed to exercise effective co-ordination of and control over educators' work. It appears this minority of respondents chose to reveal the real situation.

4.3.15. Item B15: The school management team monitors learners performance in continuous assessment, tests and examinations

When asked whether the school management team monitored the performance of learners in continuous assessments, tests and examinations, many respondents (44,9%) marked "adequate extent" while 44,3% chose "great extent". This view seemed to stem from the practice in which low performing schools were required to submit monthly reports about their progress in terms of completing the syllabus. Moreover, subject advisors monitored continuous assessment marks in all schools. It was also common practice that schools had to submit their grade twelve statistics after every internal examination. However, this finding is not in line with the literature study (par 2.3.3.), which cites the failure to monitor learners' progress as the reason for low performance in schools. In view of the above responses, the reason for low performance therefore probably lies in the quality of teaching and learning.

4.3.16. Item B16: The school management team took appropriate disciplinary action against learners who absented themselves without reason and those who bunked lessons

When asked whether the school management team took appropriate disciplinary action against learners who absented themselves without reason and those who bunked lessons, 37,7% of respondents chose "adequate extent" and 22,6% "great extent". Considering that schools have been experiencing unprecedented disciplinary problems since the banning of corporal punishment (par. 2.4.6.2), this finding is baffling. The response might be based on the respondents' perception that they had indeed taken appropriate action, even though it had been either ineffective or inconsistent ... but actually suggests that not all educators take firm action against learner absenteeism and school-dodging and that in fact some educators may choose to turn a blind eye to such offences, thereby leaving the responsibility to a few of their colleagues who have the energy to be sticklers for discipline.

4.3.17. Item B17: The school management team took appropriate measures to reduce teacher absenteeism and tardiness with regard to the school and their teaching periods

When asked whether the school management team took appropriate measures to reduce teacher absenteeism and tardiness with regard to the school and their teaching periods, most of the respondents (57,2%) chose "adequate extent" and 21,4% "great extent". This response was surprising, because the literature study (par.2.4.6.1) indicated that teacher absenteeism and teachers regularly missing classes are common features in low performing schools. This could be one of the reasons why educators in low performing schools struggle to get through their syllabi and have to catch up during weekends and school holidays as a result. Learners are therefore often bombarded with too much information which they have to grasp in a very short time.

4.3.18. Item B18: The school management team did not allow undeserving learners to be promoted to the next grade

Asked whether the school management team refused to promote undeserving learners to the next grade, 37,3% of the respondents marked "adequate extent" and 32,3% "great extent". The reason for this response could be that learners are expected to move with their cohorts and that multiple repetition is discouraged. However, this suggests that there may be learners who are promoted to the next grade even though they have not mastered the basic skills of the previous grade (par.2.4.3.3).

4.3.19. Conclusion

From the above discussion it appears that the majority of responses with regard to the management of teaching and learning activities are positive, because most responses ranged from "adequate extent" to "great extent". Only one item (B12) was rated "small extent" and "no extent". However, most of these responses seem to be out of line with the literature study, perhaps because of the sensitive nature of the topic concerned, or because respondents did not want to portray their schools in a bad light. (This is a common problem with self-reporting measures by focal participants.)

However, in the light of the above findings it seems fair to conclude that SMTs do take appropriate action to ensure that schools achieve high academic performance. The reason for low performance could therefore lie in the low quality of teaching and learning rather than in poor management actions. In this study, however, this argument was not tested.

4.4. Strategies for Improving School Performance

Items C1-C14 (Section C of the questionnaire) were aimed at determining the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the strategies employed to improve school performance; the respondents were required to indicate their answers on a Likert scale, which indicated the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the strategies as follows:

1=Highly ineffective 2=Ineffective 3=Effective 4=Highly effective

Table 4.3. presents the responses to the questions.

Table 4.3: Responses to the question items on the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the strategies to improve school performance.

Item	1		2		3		4	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
C1...Provincial and Departmental awards for educator excellence	37	23,57	58	36,94	43	27,39	19	12,10
C2... Increase in salaries based on Integrated Quality Management System	16	10,32	54	34,84	64	41,29	21	13,55
C3... Implementation of sanctions against failing schools (e.g. dismissing the principal, redeploying teachers, demoting principals, charging the principals with dereliction of duty)	48	31,79	53	35,10	40	26,49	10	6,62
C4...Support, guidance and advice from the subject advisory services	7	4,46	37	23,57	79	50,32	34	21,66
C5...Training of educators and school managers through workshops organized by the Department.	3	1,94	30	19,35	80	51,61	42	27,10
C6... Provision of adequate teaching and learning material to the school by the Department	8	5,10	29	18,47	84	53,50	36	22,93
C7...Task teams from the Area office to monitor, advise and	26	16,88	37	24,03	59	38,31	32	20,78

support the low performing school on a daily or monthly basis.								
C8...Assessment of educators in accordance with contextual factors	17	10,97	49	31,61	65	41,94	24	15,48
C9... Designing and implementing Personal Development Plans of educators	16	10,26	49	31,41	64	41,03	27	17,31
C10... Assessment of the School's performance by the indicator of matriculation results only.	31	19,87	46	29,49	62	39,74	17	10,90
C11... Development and implementation of a school improvement plan	9	5,84	30	19,48	83	53,90	32	20,78
C12...Decentralising power in the school by allowing teachers and parents to play a meaningful role in management and governance issues of the school.	5	3,18	31	19,75	85	54,14	36	22,93
C13... Giving clear guidelines to every stakeholder about their roles and responsibilities in the school.	7	4,46	26	16,56	74	47,13	50	31,85
C14... Offering extended learning time to learners (e.g. extending the school day in the form of extra classes, afternoon study time, winter school.			16	10,19	69	43,95	72	45,86

4.4.1. Item C1: Provincial and Departmental Awards for Educator Excellence

According to Table 4.3. 37% of the respondents stated that the system of provincial and departmental awards for educator excellence are "ineffective", while 23,6% felt that they were "highly ineffective"). The possibility is that educators feel that the awards are ineffective because awards do not affect their salaries, and as a result have little or no impact on their lifestyles. The responses could also suggest that many educators do not receive any awards as only a few individuals would be chosen to receive awards. This finding is inconsistent with the literature (par.2.6.9) because awards are regarded as a source of motivation.

4.4.2. Item C2: Salary Increases based on the Integrated Quality Management System

The responses in Table 4.3 show that 41,3% of the respondents are of the opinion that salary increases based on the Integrated Quality Management System are "effective" or "highly effective" (13,6%). This finding seems to be consistent with Item C1, which shows that educators seem to support a practice which benefits them financially or directly. However, this view is rather baffling, because the salary progression based on IQMS is only 1-3%, which may be viewed as inadequate compared to those in other sectors, where salary increases were in the region of 5-8% annually even without being coupled to performance measurement.

It is significant to note that a number respondents viewed salary increases as "ineffective" (34,8%) or "highly ineffective" (10,3%). These negative views account for 45,1% of the responses, and are in agreement with the literature study (par.2.4.4.1), which states that some educators dislike classroom visits and are uncomfortable with having their work assessed by those in management.

4.4.3. Item C3: Implementation of sanctions against failing schools (e.g. dismissing the principal, redeploying teachers, demoting the principal, charging the principal with dereliction of duty)

The responses to this item (Table 4.3) show that the majority of the respondents believe that the system of sanctions against failing schools is "ineffective" (35,1%) or "highly ineffective" (31,8%). This view finds support in the perception that people generally dislike sanctions and punishment. Indeed, sanctions are unpleasant, threatening and devastating. This finding is contrary to the view that drastic measures and putting a lot of pressure on principals or educators can turn a low performing school around (par.2.6.9.).

4.4.4. Item C4: Support, guidance and advice from the subject advisory services

This item (C4) presents a different view from the previous one in that 50,3% respondents viewed the action as "effective" while 21,7% felt it was "highly effective". It appears the subject advisory services did achieve their aim of helping educators improve. It may be assumed that the majority of educators benefited from subject advisory visits to schools because they felt that they were being empowered to improve their teaching skills (par. 2.6.7.2).

4.4.5. Item C5: Training of educators and school managers through workshops organised by the Department

As with the responses to the above item that deals with help for educators (Table 4.3), this item lists the responses as "effective" (51,6%) and "highly effective: (27,1%) The finding implies that training for educators and school managers was successful in empowering them to perform their duties more effectively. However, the finding seems to contradict the literature study (par.2.4.3.4) which describes many principals and educators as suffering from what can be called "workshop overload". In addition, educators and principals are behind schedule because of the teaching time sacrificed for workshops and the resultant work overload.

4.4.6. Item C6: Departmental provision of adequate teaching and learning materials to schools

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Table 4.3 shows that 53,5% of the respondents stated that the Department was "effective" in its provision of adequate teaching and learning materials to schools, while 22,93% expressed the view that the provision was "highly effective". This finding was in line with Item B6, which stated that there had been positive efforts to provide schools with teaching and learning materials. The literature (par.2.6.8) also shows that, although there may have been shortages or late deliveries here and there, the Department had succeeded in providing adequate materials to schools.

4.4.7. Item C7: Task teams from the Area Office to monitor, advise and support low performing schools on a daily or monthly basis

Item C7 showed that 38,3% of the respondents felt that the abovementioned task teams were "effective", while 20,8% saw them as "highly effective". This finding seemed to be in agreement with the literature study (par.2.6.10), which suggested that regular monitoring improved school performance because it kept educators on their toes. However, the total here was lower than that for item C4, which took a more positive view. This seemed to indicate that schools were not in favour of daily monitoring as that curtailed the independence and autonomy of the educators. This may be why altogether 40,9% of the respondents regarded the monitoring as "ineffective" and "highly ineffective".

4.4.8. Item C8: Assessment of educators in accordance with contextual factors

Item C8 showed that 41,9% of the respondents were of the opinion that the assessment of educators in accordance with contextual factors was "effective", while 15,4% found it "highly effective". This could be because educators felt that their work situations varied,

and that therefore it was unfair to assess an educator without considering the unique circumstances prevailing at his/her school.

4.4.9. Item C9: Designing and implementing personal development plans of educators

Table 4.3. showed that 41,0% of the participants felt that the personal development plans of educators had been "effectively" designed and implemented, while 17,3% rated them as "highly effective". This response appears to be in line with item C8, because personal development plans accommodate individual differences. However, it is significant to note that a total of 41,7% of the respondents rated the designing and implementation of the personal development plans of educators as "ineffective" or "highly ineffective". This response could be attributed to the fact that personal development plans had to be monitored regularly. The literature also supported the view that most schools failed to implement the IQMS system correctly, in that personal development plans were neither designed nor implemented (par. 2.6.4).

4.4.10. Item C10: Assessment of a school's performance according to the indicator of matriculation results only

Table 4.3. showed that 39,7% of the respondents felt that a school could "effectively" be assessed according to its matriculation results only, while 10,9% rated the practice as "highly effective". The view of the majority of respondents seemed to confirm that matriculation results could be regarded as a major indicator of school performance. However, this could raise the question of which indicators can be used to judge the performance of primary schools. The use of matriculation results as the sole indicator of performance was denounced in the relevant literature (par.2), which may be why 49,4% of the respondents saw the practice of assessing performance according to matriculation results only as "ineffective" and "highly ineffective".

4.4.11. Item C11: Development and implementation of a school improvement plan

Item C11 showed that 53,9% of the participants felt that school improvement plans had been "effectively" developed and implemented, while 20,8% described the process as "highly effective". In most schools, such plans form part of a general evaluation of the school, which is carried out on a regular basis (par 2.6.4). The literature study (par.2.5.2.2) added that every school needed a realistic plan to guide it towards performance improvement.

4.4.12. Item C12: Decentralising power in the school by allowing educators and parents to play a meaningful role in the management and governance issues of the school

According to Table 4.3, 54,1% of the respondents felt that educators and parents were indeed allowed to play a meaningful role in management and governance issues ("effective") while 22,9% marked "highly effective". This finding seemed to agree with the literature study (par.2.5.4.1) that the quality of teaching and learning could improve when school power was distributed equitably among all stakeholders, and, more importantly, that parent involvement gave rise to better academic achievement (par. 2.4.7).

4.4.13. Item C13: Giving clear guidelines to stakeholders about their roles and responsibilities in the school

As shown in Table 4.3, 47,1% of the respondents felt that stakeholders had been given clear guidelines ("effective"), while 31,9% of the respondents marked "highly effective". From this, it may be concluded that educators tend to serve their schools better when they know their roles and responsibilities, and accept them. Given the conflicts between principals and members of the SGB (par.2.4.7), it was encouraging to see that so many respondents viewed the strategy as "effective" or "highly effective".

4.4.14. Item C14: Offering extended learning time to learners (e.g. extending the school day in the form of extra classes, afternoon study time, winter schools)

Respondents viewing this strategy as "effective" and "highly effective" came to 45,8% and 44,0% respectively. This overwhelmingly positive response of 90% was indicative of the enthusiasm displayed by educators in this regard. This finding agreed with the literature study (par.2.6.8) which stated that schools needed to offer holiday and Saturday classes to improve the performance of grade twelve learners. What is interesting is that many educators had been offering such extra lessons without payment.

From this finding, one could draw a general conclusion that learners were likely to perform better if they could spend more time on their school work; however, this required educators to be present to offer their support and guidance, sacrificing their time with their families to try and help grade twelve learners improve their performance.

4.4.15. In conclusion

From the above discussion, it seemed that most respondents opted for a positive response. This implied that respondents viewed measures instituted to improve results as more likely to lead to success. However, it should be noted that some items (Items C1, C2 and C3) were viewed in a negative light, i.e. respondents did not think that those measures contributed to the improvement of academic results. This may suggest that respondents were critical of certain issues, especially those measures instituted by the Department.

4.5. Application of the Mean Score Ranking Techniques to the Management of Teaching and Learning (Section B) and Management Strategies to improve Performance (Section C)

The mean score ranking technique was used in order to differentiate responses into high ranking and low ranking mean scores. Items with the mean scores of 1,00 to 2,99 were regarded as "low ranking", while items scoring 3,00 to 4,00 were seen as "high ranking".

4.5.1. *Application of the mean score ranking techniques to the management of teaching and learning activities in schools (Section B)*

Table 4.4 showed the mean scores in their ranking order.

Table 4.4. Mean score ranking on the management of teaching and learning activities

Rank	Variable	Mean
1	B15....monitors learners' performance in continuous assessment, tests and examinations.	3,31
2	B10....sets high expectations concerning academic performance of learners	3,23
3	B1....sets specific goals and objectives concerning learner achievement	3,17
4	B8.....ensures that educators and learners start their lessons on time	3,13
5	B4....involves other staff members in formulating the mission and vision of the school	3,12
6	B3....communicates and implements a clear vision for learner achievement	3,11
7	B2....effectively communicates the goals and objectives in respect of learner achievement to educators	3,09
8	B14...exercises effective coordination and control over educators' work	3,01
9	B7....ensures that teaching starts on the first day of reopening.	3,00
10	B5....adheres to the year programme of school activities	3,00

11	B17...takes appropriate measures to reduce teacher absenteeism and tardiness with regard to the schools and their teaching periods	2,95
12	B18...does not allow undeserving learners to be promoted to the next grade.	2,93
13	B13...sets a desirable example for teachers and learners to emulate through their actions and quality of their work	2,90
14	B6.....provides adequate learning material (e.g. textbooks, laboratory materials, etc.	2,82
15	B16...takes appropriate disciplinary action against learners who absent themselves without reason and those who bunk lessons	2,70
16	B9.....ensures that learners are attended to where an educator is absent from work	2,61
17	B12 ...recognises and awards merits to educators and learners who perform well	2,32

4.5.1.1. *Management activities with high ranking mean scores*

Table 4.4. showed that ten items had been ranked as high while seven items had been ranked as low. Management activities ranked as high were B15, B10, B1, B8, B4, B3, B2, B14, B7 and B5 respectively. The main feature of the ranking order is the absence of mean scores of 3,50 to 4,00, which would indicate that the management activities were rated as occurring "to a great extent". The highest ranking item had a mean score of only 3,31, while the lowest ranking item in this category had a mean score of 3,00. The relatively low mean scores in this category indicated an "adequate" occurrence of the management activities concerned.

The activity ranked number 1, with the mean score of 3,31, was item B15 (Monitoring learners' performance in continuous assessments, tests and examinations). By ranking item B15 number 1, the mean score indicated that learners' performance had been "adequately" assessed. However, the literature study (par.2.3.3) revealed a lack of monitoring in low performing schools, perhaps because educators in low performing

schools tended not to accept responsibility for poor learner performance and to blame such poor performance on factors other than themselves (Legotlo *et al.* 2002:115).

The two management activities that were ranked last (numbers 9 and 10) in this category, with a mean score of 3,00, were items B7 (Ensuring that teaching starts on the first day of reopening), and item B5 (Adherence to the year programme of school activities). The low ranking of item B7 seemed to be in line with what the literature study revealed (par.2.4.3.1), namely, that in low performing schools, teaching seldom started on the first day of reopening. The ranking of item B5 as the last in the "adequate extent" category is also in line with what the literature study revealed, namely that low performing schools were characterised by poor leadership and a lack of management skills (par. 2.3.7). This suggested that perhaps the school management team was not firm and consistent enough to make sure that other unplanned activities did not interfere with the year programme of the school.

4.5.1.2. Management activities with low ranking mean scores

According to Table 4.4, management activities with low ranking mean scores included items B17, B18, B13, B6, B16, B9 and B12. It was significant that the activity ranked the highest in this category (Item B17) had a relatively high mean score of 2,95, while the activity ranked lowest scored a relatively high 2,32. In fact, with the exception of this item, all the mean scores in the category ranged from 2,61 to 2,95. This means that respondents generally expressed the view that the management activities concerned had occurred "to a small extent". However, it is surprising that no items had mean scores of 1,00 to 1,95, which would have meant that such activities had not taken place at all ("to no extent"). The above observations seem to indicate that the mean scores leaned towards the adequate performance of the management activities concerned.

Item B17 (Takes appropriate measures to reduce teacher absenteeism and tardiness with regard to school and their teaching periods) ranked high in the category, but – surprisingly – Item B12 (Recognises and awards merits to educators and learners who

perform well) ranked last in the category. The above rankings seem to suggest that the managers in low performing schools did try to exercise control in their schools but neglected to recognise and praise good work among learners and educators. This finding is consistent with the literature study (par.2.4.8), which showed that there was neither praise nor recognition for pockets of excellence in low performing schools. This could imply that there was more focus on negative aspects than on positive, as stakeholders would tend to apportion blame for poor performance rather than collaborate to improve school performance.

4.5.1.3. In conclusion

The above discussion and Table 4.4. showed that there were two categories describing to what extent school management teams managed teaching and learning activities which ultimately impact on learner performance. The last response option, "small extent", showed that managers of low performing schools needed to find measures to reduce educator absenteeism, increase motivation levels and recognise good work where it does exist. Surprisingly, no item was ranked close to 4 ("great extent") or 1 ("no extent"), perhaps because respondents opted for socially acceptable answers for fear of depicting themselves and their schools in a bad light by telling the truth ("no extent"), or of being caught out in obvious lies ("great extent"). For low performing schools, it is critical that teaching and learning activities be managed to a "great extent" if there is to be any improvement in the academic performance of learners.

4.5.2. Application of the mean score ranking techniques on the management strategies to turn around low performance (Section C)

Table 4.5 displayed the mean score rankings in terms of strategies employed to turn around low performance.

Table 4.5. Mean scores: Strategies for improving school performance

Rank	Variable	Mean
1	C14...offering extended learning time to learners (e.g. extending the school day in the form of extra classes, afternoon study time, winter school)	3,35
2	C13...giving clear guidelines to every stakeholder about their roles and responsibilities in the school	3,06
3	C5...training of educators and school managers through workshops organised by the Department	3,03
4	C12... decentralising power in the school by allowing teachers and parents to play a meaningful role in management and governance issues of the school	2,96
5	C6...provision of adequate teaching and learning materials to the school by the Department	2,94
6	C11...development and implementation of a school improvement plan	2,89
7	C4....support, guidance and advice from the subject advisory services	2,89
8	C9...designing and implementing personal development plans of educators	2,65
9	C7...task teams from the Area Office to monitor, advice and support the low performing school on a daily or monthly basis	2,62
10	C8...assessment of educators in accordance with contextual factors	2,61
11	C2...Increase in salaries based on Integrated Quality Management System	2,58
12	C10....assessment of the school's performance by the indicator of matriculation results only	2,41
13	C1...Provincial and departmental awards for educator excellence	2,28
14	C3...Implementation of sanctions against failing schools (e.g. dismissing the principal, redeploying teachers, demoting principals, charging the principal with dereliction of duty)	2,07

4.5.2.1. Strategies with high ranking mean scores

Table 4.5. showed that only three items (Items C14, C13 and C5) were ranked high, in that order. The mean scores of these three high ranking items indicated that only three items were regarded as "effective" strategies. A distinct feature of the rank order was that there was no mean score ranging from 3,50 to 4,00 ("highly effective"). The highest ranking item had a mean score of 3,35, which was far below 3,50, while the lowest ranking item in the category had a mean score of 3,03. This implied that the respondents believed the strategies concerned could be "effective" measures for turning around a low performing school, but not "highly effective".

The highest ranking in item C14 (Offering extended learning time to learners, for example, extending the school day in the form of extra classes, afternoon study time, winter schools) indicated that maximised learning time could be an "effective" strategy to improve learner performance. The literature study also revealed that learners were likely to perform better academically when maximising their learning time (par. 2.4.3.1).

4.5.2.2. Strategies with low ranking mean scores

According to Table 4.5, the strategies with low ranking mean scores were items C12, C6, C11, C4, C9, C7, C8, C2, C10, C1 and C3, in that order. It is important to note that the highest ranking strategy had a relatively high mean score of 2,96 (almost 3,00), while the lowest ranking strategy had a relatively low mean score of 2,07 (above 1,99), i.e. most respondents regarded the strategies as "ineffective" in terms of turning around a low performing school.

The mean score ranking of item C3, as the lowest in this category, seemed to suggest that respondents viewed punitive measures in a negative light, regarded them as the most "ineffective strategy" in terms of bringing about school improvement, and would therefore probably resist such measures as solutions to the problem of poor learner

performance. However it is interesting to note that education authorities held a different view and believed that drastic measures would be effective in bringing about school improvement (par.2.6.9).

4.5.2.3 Conclusion

The above discussion indicated that educators differed from education authorities in respect of how effective drastic measures could be as a solution to the problem of low school performance. Respondents regarded the following strategies as "effective" ways of improving the academic performance of learners:

- maximising teaching and learning time
- giving clear guidelines to all stakeholders about their roles and responsibilities in the school
- training educators and school managers through workshops

In addition, respondents regarded the following as "ineffective" but not "highly ineffective" strategies:

- assessing a school 's performance according to the indicator of matriculation results only
- provincial and departmental awards
- implementing sanctions against failing schools

4.6. Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the analysis and interpretation of the data. Firstly, the biographic and demographic data was presented, analysed and interpreted, followed by an analysis and interpretation of data on managing teaching and learning activities, and then strategies for improving school performance. The mean score ranking techniques were then applied to the management of teaching and learning activities, and then to

management strategies aimed at turning around low school performance. Lastly, strategies with high ranking mean scores and low mean scores were identified.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present a general summary of the study. This will be followed by the findings drawn from the literature and the results of the empirical study. Finally this chapter will provide recommendations in terms of managing low performing secondary schools.

5.2. Summary

Chapter 1 outlined how the South African community is affected by the low performance of rural and township secondary schools, showing that principals and management team members needed to be empowered so that they could improve the quality of teaching and learning in their schools through effective and efficient management and supervision. This was followed by a discussion of structure that the study would take, including aspects such as research questions, the aims of the study, the research design and chapter divisions.

The nature of management in a dysfunctional school was discussed in chapter two. A discussion on the theories that explain characteristics of and possible reasons for low performing schools were described, followed by an identification and discussion of the characteristics of low performing schools (par. 2.3.7). The challenges faced by the managers of low performing schools were also identified and then closely examined to show their impact on the academic performance of schools. The second part of chapter two dealt with general management strategies aimed at improving performance, such as total quality management, performance management and school-based management. The chapter also discussed the strategies employed by the Education Department to improve school performance, such as Developmental Appraisal; Performance Measurement; Whole-school Evaluation; the Integrated Quality Management System; principal training; support from subject advisors and institution support coordinators; the North West

Education Department Improvement Plan; drastic measures; and the Education Action Zone Programme.

Chapter three contained an empirical study on the extent to which SMTs implemented internal management strategies aimed at improving school performance. The aims of the research were outlined (par 3.2), two hundred educators (N=200) targeted as the population of the research, and a sample of 158 respondents was reached and involved in the research (par.3.7). The sample included both school management team members and educators. A closed structured questionnaire was used as the research instrument to gather the desired data. The construction of the questionnaire was discussed, as well as its advantages and disadvantages. This discussion included administrative procedures, the distribution of the questionnaire, and the response rate and data analysis.

The data analysis and interpretation were presented in chapter four. Firstly, the biographic and demographic data of respondents was presented with the aim of gathering information that might help the researcher understand the responses. Secondly, the frequencies and percentages of responses were presented and interpreted. This included responses to management activities aimed at achieving high academic results or at least turning around low performance in schools. This section also included responses concerning the implementation of strategies for improving academic results in schools, with the aim of differentiating between effective and ineffective strategies. Thirdly, the mean score ranking technique was applied to the data in Sections B and C in order to cast more light on the findings in previous sections. Major findings were given in each of the sections of the empirical research.

5.3. Research Findings

This section presented a summary of the major findings of the research with regard to the aims of the study (par.3.2). The research findings were derived from the literature study as well as the empirical research.

5.3.1. Findings on Aim 1: To determine the nature of management in low performing schools

Findings with regard to Aim 1 are based on the literature study in Chapter 2. These findings could easily be divided into three categories, namely theories underpinning low performance in schools, the nature of management in low performing schools, and internal and external strategies employed to turn around low performance.

5.3.1.1. Theories regarding low performance in schools

The following findings were arrived at with regard to theories on low performance in schools:

- Theories dealing with ineffectiveness seemed to give a better explanation for the unique situation at low performing schools than theories on effective schools that explain the ideal situation that "should" exist at such schools (par. 2.3)
- The ineffectiveness model explained indicators that served as obstacles to the basic functioning of a school (par 2.3.1)
- The multilevel model showed that the different levels of a school work in tandem, so that dysfunction on one level caused all other levels to be less effective (par 2.3.2)
- The instructional model defined management activities that SMTs could perform to counteract ineffectiveness (par 2.3.3)

5.3.1.2. Management challenges facing SMTs in low performing schools

With regard to management challenges facing SMTs in low performing schools, the following major findings were presented:

- Many mature educators and school managers retire early due to rationalisation

or because they are seeking greener pastures (par.2.4.4.3). Consequently young educators and school managers do not get the opportunity to benefit from the inputs of mature educators. As a result, many schools are often left with inexperienced educators and managers.

- Some schools seem to lack the capacity to implement their vision and mission statements even though they have them on paper. Teachers, parents and learners are often unaware of what their school stands for (par.2.4.2). Their priorities and actions are therefore unlikely to be congruent with the school's vision and mission statement.
- Low performing schools struggle to follow the year programme due to constant disturbances and disruptions (par 2.4.3.1), which sometimes emanate from community issues (par.2.3.7).
- Schools often fail to arrange substitute teachers for educators who are absent from work, which has a negative impact on the learners' progress and their ability to complete the set syllabi (par.2.4.6.1).
- There is little or no recognition for heroes and heroines, which means that learners lack positive role models and that all stakeholders become increasingly negative and criticise and blame rather than recognise each other (par.2.4.8 and par. 2.4.3.3).
- The work of educators and learners is not co-ordinated or controlled, which contributes to poor school performance (par. 2.4.4.1) and makes it difficult to improve the quality of teaching and learning.
- The failure of educators and school managers to act firmly and in unison against learner ill-discipline may have a negative effect on teaching and learning (par. 2.4.6) and can cause victimisation of those educators who are perceived to be strict.
- Parental support can have a positive impact on a child's learning achievements (par. 2.4.4.4 and par. 2.4.7).

5.3.1.3. Internal management strategies employed to manage low performance in schools

The following findings were arrived at with regard to internal management strategies employed to manage low performance in schools:

- Implementation of Total Quality Management principles changes a negative school culture of low performance to a positive culture of success (par. 2.5.2.2).
- A performance management system can help SMT members plan, monitor and evaluate educator performance on a continuous basis (par. 2.5.3).
- Participatory management leads to the involvement of all stakeholders in the decision-making process, thereby increasing their commitment and gives them ownership of the decisions taken. This serves to involve all stakeholders in improving the performance of the school (par. 2.5.4.3).

5.3.1.4. Strategies employed externally by the Department of Education

The description of external strategies employed by the Department of Education, specifically to deal with low performing schools, brought to light the following:

- In-school support and assistance provided by the Institution Support Coordinators and the subject advisory services is aimed at improving managerial and teaching aspects (par. 2.6.7.1 and 2.6.7.2). Through the Education Action Zones, departmental officials provide support and assistance to schools on a daily basis (par. 2.6.10).
- Whole-school Evaluation is employed in all schools as a strategy for developing educators and SMTs and to help prevent schools that perform well from backsliding while low performing schools are thereby improved (par. 2.5.4).
- Specific training for principals in low performing schools is a strategy aimed at helping principals and SMTs manage low performance better (par. 2.6.8).
- The institution of drastic measures and sanctions can bring about improved

school performance (par. 2.6.9).

5.3.2. Findings on aim no. 2: To determine the views of educators and school managers empirically on the management of teaching and learning activities

The findings with regard to Aim 2 were:

- The population in the area of investigation has characteristics that may impair performance because the majority of learners come from poor socio-economic backgrounds (par. 4.2.8) and because the educators are relatively young and inexperienced (par. 4.2.2; 4.2.4).
- Stakeholders are likely to perform better when they understand their roles and responsibilities clearly (Table 4.3. and par. 4.4.13). This implies that it is imperative for principals to discuss guidelines, job descriptions, roles and responsibilities with teachers, parents and learners alike.
- Learners are more likely to perform better academically if their learning time is maximised in a constructive way (Table 4.3 and par. 4.4.14).

5.3.3. Findings on aim no. 3: determine the views of teachers and school management teams regarding the effectiveness of certain strategies implemented by the Education Department as measures to improve the matriculation results of schools

- Educators seem to support salary increases based on the Integrated Quality Management System (Table 4.3 and par.4.4.2), despite the fact that such increases are meagre, and range from 1 to 3%.
- In terms of improving school performance, educators and school managers seem to prefer measures that give support, advice and training to drastic measures (Table 4.3, and par. 4.4.4 and par. 4.4.5).
- Many educators view Provincial and Departmental awards for educator excellence as ineffective (Table 4.3 and par. 4.4.1).
- Educators and school managers view the implementation of sanctions against

failing schools as an ineffective strategy, while education authorities seem to believe that drastic measures can bring about improved school performance (Table 4.3 and par. 2.6.9).

5.4. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations arose from the abovementioned literature study and empirical research findings:

Recommendation 1

The Education Department should make serious attempts to ensure that mature educators do not exit the teaching profession earlier than at retirement age.

Motivation

It is the responsibility of the Education Department as employer to ensure that mature and experienced educators stay in the teaching profession as long as possible. This can help create stability and provide positive role models for young, inexperienced educators and school managers. Mature educators should guide less experienced colleagues, and should share and transmit their knowledge and teaching skills with them. This could have a positive impact on the performance of a school.

Recommendation 2

Schools should be encouraged to employ temporary staff members to substitute for absent educators.

Motivation

It is the responsibility of the school manager to ensure that learners receive tuition when they are at school. It is therefore essential that school managers should employ temporary staff members to substitute for absent educators. Principals need not wait for the approval of the Education Department (which often takes long) and should have the authority to employ such substitute teachers for more than the regulatory 30 days if need be. School funds can be used to finance such short term vacancies. In addition, principals should not need to follow all the appointment procedures of shortlisting and interviews in such cases.

Recommendation 3

Principals should recognise and praise good work frequently.

Motivation

No school can possibly be dysfunctional in every way, and human beings generally need to know that their efforts are appreciated. Therefore it is incumbent upon principals to be on the look-out for pockets of excellence in curricular and co-curricular activities, and then to highlight these to everyone. Principals should comment honestly about any positive activity observed during assembly, staff meetings, briefing sessions, et cetera. Positive reinforcement has the potential to cultivate confidence in others and inspire them to try harder.

Recommendation 4

School management team members should co-ordinate and control the work done by educators and learners regularly.

Motivation

School management team members are also instructional leaders who must help the principal ensure effective teaching and learning in the subjects under their control. This requires that they should – for instance – conduct subject meetings where joint planning can be done, and should draw up subject policies and year programmes which specify how often the work of learners and educators should be controlled.

Recommendation 5

Educators and school managers should act firmly and in unison against learner ill-discipline.

Motivation

Educators are also class managers, who must ensure that their classes behave in a disciplined manner. They therefore need to form a united front against ill-discipline with school management team members. The principal needs to conduct staff development training sessions during which educators can be motivated to support the school management team in sustaining good discipline and all its endeavours to improve school performance.

Recommendation 6

Each principal has to take the lead in implementing the vision and mission statement of his/her school.

Motivation

The actions of educational leaders can influence learners and educators to subscribe to the mission of their school. The principal needs to keep learners and educators

focused on the school goals by emphasising the vision and mission of the school. In this way, the principal can hold up an attractive alternative situation that both learners and educators can strive for.

Recommendation 7

Educators should benefit directly and reasonably from awards and from the Integrated Quality Management System.

Motivation

The Education Department can make its educator awards more appealing if such educators benefit directly from reasonable salary increases. As it is now, the awards are not taken seriously. Salary increases based on the IQMS also need to be raised to at least 5%, as a measure to encourage educators to work harder.

Recommendation 8

Poor performing learners should be given academic assistance.

Motivation

Learners who experience problems with their academic work need to be helped promptly. Such assistance can be structured as supplementary reading, mathematics or science lessons, extended study time or after-school work that will benefit learners. Such interventions can only benefit learners when educators are actively involved and give guidance and support.

Recommendations for further research

The aim of this study was to determine the management of teaching and learning activities in low performing schools as well as to take a closer look at some school improvement strategies. The following aspects came to light as possibilities for further research:

- There should be more research on the opinions of educators concerning their collective self-efficacy as a way of improving academic results.
- Retention strategies to prevent the attrition of mature and experienced educators could be investigated.
- There should be more research on methodologies such as ethnographic methods including observations, interviews, focus-group discussions and a study of school records to counteract the effects of inadequate self-report measures.
- More research is needed to investigate strategies that are more suitable to schools in low socio-economic communities.

5.5. Chapter Summary

Chapter five gave a summary of chapters one to four. The research findings on Aim 1 of the study were outlined, followed by findings on Aim 2. This was followed by the recommendations and motivations derived from the literature study and the empirical research. Recommendations for further research were made and finally the chapter ended with concluding remarks.

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APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAMS AND EDUCATORS

(For official use only)

Questionnaire no:

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(1)

1. DIRECTIONS FOR COMPLETION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

- You need not enter your name, the name of your school or stamp of the school. This means your honest answer will not affect you or your school negatively.
- Kindly give honest answers or opinions because confidentiality of your responses is guaranteed and assured.
- It is important to read the instructions to each section carefully, before answering it.
- Lastly, I would like to thank you for your cooperation in completing this questionnaire.

SECTION A:
BIOGRAPHICAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Kindly complete the following questions by marking with an X in the box that corresponds with your choice.

A1 Gender

Male	
Female	

(2)

A2 Your age in years

20 - 30	
30 - 39	
40 - 49	
50 - 55	
56 - 60	
60+	

(3)

A3 Your present position

Principal	
Deputy principal	
Head of department	
Educator	

(4)

A4 Your number of years in present position

0 - 5	
6 - 10	
11 - 15	
16 - 20	
21+	

(5)

A5 Highest educational qualifications

Teachers diploma	
ACE	
Bachelors degree	
Hons \ B.Ed	
Masters degree	
Doctors degree	

(6)

A6 School location

Township	
Village	
Farm	

(7)

A7 Number of learners in your school

0 - 200	
201 - 400	
401 - 500	
501 - 1000	
1000+	

(8)

A8 Socio-economic status of most of the learners

Low	
Middle	
High	

(9)

PLEASE TURN OVER

SECTION B:

MANAGEMENT OF TEACHING AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Indicate with "X" the number that closely reflects your opinion on the extent to which each of the following activities is carried out in your school.

1. No extent 2. Small extent 3. Adequate extent 4. Great extent

The School Management Team...	1. No extent	2. Small extent	3. Adequate extent	4. Great extent	
B1... sets specific goals and objectives concerning learner achievement.					(10)
B2... effectively communicates the goals and objectives on learner achievement to educators and parents					(11)
B3... communicates and implements a clear vision for learner achievement					(12)
B4... involves other staff members in formulating the mission and vision of the school					(13)
B5... adheres to the year programme of school activities.					(14)
B6... provides adequate learning materials (e.g. textbooks, laboratory materials, etc)					(15)
B7... ensures that teaching starts on the first day of reopening					(16)
B8... ensures that educators and learners start their lessons on time.					(17)
B9... ensures that learners are attended to where an educator is absent from work					(18)

B10... sets high expectations concerning academic performance of learners					(19)
B12... recognises and awards merits to educators and learners who perform well					(21)
B13... sets a desirable example for teachers and learners to emulate through their actions and quality of their work.					(22)
B14... exercises effective coordination and control of educators work.					(23)
B15... monitors learners' performance in continuous assessment, tests and examinations.					(24)
B16... takes appropriate disciplinary action against learners who absent themselves without reason and those who bunk lessons.					(25)
B17... takes appropriate measures to reduce teachers' absenteeism and tardiness with regard to the school and their teaching periods.					(26)
B18... does not allow un-deserving learners to be promoted to the next grade.					(27)

Please turn over

SECTION C

STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

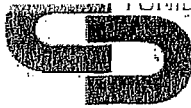
Indicate the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the following strategies in improving the performance of your school by putting a cross (X) in the box that closely reflects your opinion in each of the following statements..

1. Highly ineffective 2. Ineffective 3. Effective 4. Highly effective

	1. Highly ineffective	2. Ineffective	3. Effective	4. Highly effective	
C1... Provincial and Departmental awards for educator excellence					(28)
C2... Increase in salaries based on Integrated Quality Management System					(29)
C3... Implementation of sanctions against failing schools (e.g. dismissing the principal, redeploying teachers, demoting principals, charging the principals with dereliction of duty)					(30)
C4... Support, guidance and advice from the subject advisory services					(31)
C5... Training of educators and school managers through workshops organised by the Department.					(32)
C6... Provision of adequate teaching and learning material to the school by the Department					(33)

C7... Task teams from the Area office to monitor, advise and support the low performing school on a daily or monthly basis.					(34)
C8... Assessment of educators in accordance with contextual factors					(35)
C9... Designing and implementing Personal Development Plans of educators					(36)
C10... Assessment of the School's performance by the indicator of Matric results only.					(37)
C11... Development and implementation of a school improvement plan					(38)
C12... Decentralising power in the school by allowing teachers and parents to play a meaningful role in management and governance issues of the school.					(39)
C13... Giving clear guidelines to every stakeholder about their roles and responsibilities in the school.					(40)
C 14... Offering extended learning time to learners (e.g. extending the school day in the form of extra classes, afternoon study time, winter school.					(41)

Thank you very much for your participation.



Regional Executive Manager
Central Region
MAFIKENG

School of Education

Tel (018) 018 299 1887
Faks (018) 018 299 1909
E-pos 480222 5582 084@puk.ac.za

14 Maart 2007

Dear Mr/Madam

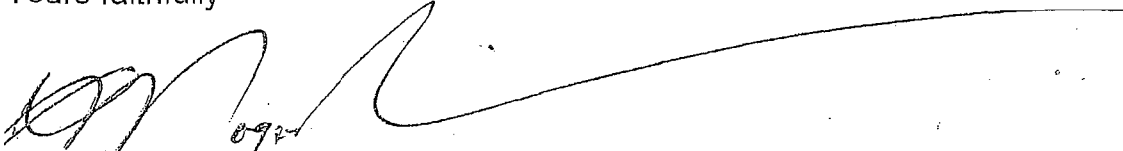
REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

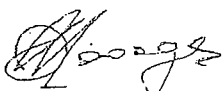
I am doing a M.Ed-degree at the above institution and wish hereby to request for permission to conduct research in the schools under your jurisdiction. This will consist of requesting principals and educators to complete a questionnaire. The respondents will remain anonymous and the schools' names will also not be reflected in any questionnaire or on the final report. The topic for my research is:

"Management strategies for low performing schools in the North West Province."

I promise to abide by any conditions that you may set for carrying out this research.

Yours faithfully


M.V. Mogonediwa


Prof M.J. Mosoge
Research Supervisor

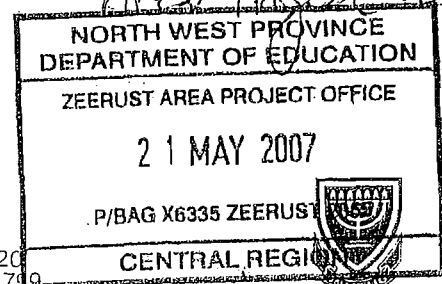
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Permission granted

Area Project leader



POTCHEFSTROOMKAMPIJS
Privaatsak X6001, Potchefstroom, 2520
Tel: (018) 299-1111 • Faks: (018) 299-2799
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14 Maart 2007

Dear Mr/Madam

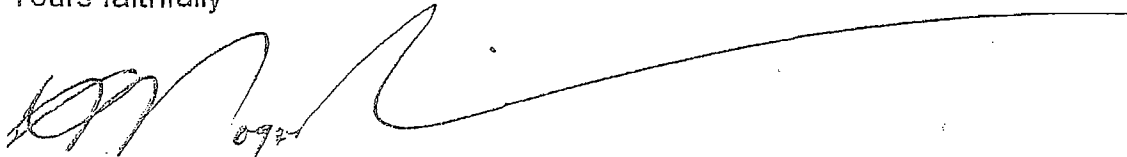
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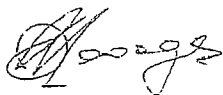
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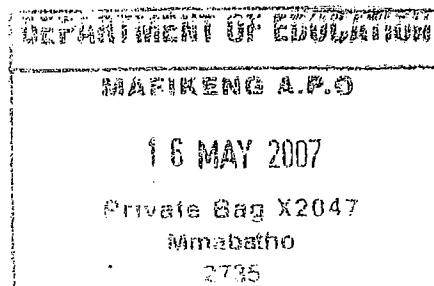


M.V. Mogonediwa



Prof M.J. Mosoge
Research Supervisor

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Permission to conduct a research is granted.
M. J. Mosoge CAPD leader
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