# EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF HIGH FAILURE RATES
# IN GRADE NINE CLASSES:
# A CASE STUDY OF THE MAMABOLO CIRCUIT


## BY


## MANKALEME EMILY RAMOSHAI


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## SUPERVISOR:  Professor M.M KANJERE


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**DECLARATION**

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the dissertation **"Effective management of high failure rates in grade nine classes: A case study of the Mamabolo circuit"** submitted to the University of Limpopo for a Masters Degree in Public Administration, is my own work and that all sources consulted have been indicated and acknowledged. This work has not been previously submitted by me at this university or any other institution of higher learning.

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       **SIGNATURE**                                                   **DATE**

# DEDICATION

I dedicate this piece of work to my late parents, Makgomo Anna and Mokgotli Johannes Maponya. They constantly encouraged me to further my studies.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

# ABSTRACT

This study is an investigation of effective management of high failure rates in grade nine classes in selected schools of the Mamabolo circuit. The study was prompted by several factors such as repetition rate, overcrowding and over-aged learners experienced in grade nine classes. The problem statement provides the foundation within which the aim and objectives are described. The causal factors of grade nine failure rates and how the management of schools was affected were not overlooked. The main targets were the School Management Teams of selected schools in the Mamabolo circuit.

A qualitative research method was used. Various methods of data collection were used such as face-to-face interview, observation and document analysis whereby the summary of learner performance, collected from the circuit office, was analysed.

Key findings of this research suggest that the School Management Teams are faced with great challenges that emanate from high failure rates in grade nine classes. The majority of the schools in the Mamabolo circuit are characterised by very low school enrolment which affects the post establishment and results in management overload. Congestion in the classrooms is experienced in grade nine classes (see figure 4.5). Most of the School Management Teams consist of one principal and one HOD, while other members are post level one educators who are senior educators (see table 3.1). This situation, in some instances leads to reluctance in performing management duties as compared to the schools where the School Management Teams are constituted by appointed principal, deputy principal/s and HODs only.

Grade nine classes are not effectively managed due to various challenges such as overcrowding, lack of furniture, shortage of Learner Teacher Support Material, over-aged learners, low morale, discipline problems, poor involvement of parents, teenage pregnancies and drop-outs. Furthermore, the study revealed that very few School Management Teams seem to

acknowledge that they also contribute to the failure rate in grade nine. This was clearly indicated when the School Management Teams were responding to the question on the causes of poor academic performance in grade nine classes. Learners, parents, educators, some departmental policies and the Department of Education itself were mentioned as contributing factors to poor performance.

The following conclusions were drawn from the study findings: There are serious challenges facing the School Management Teams in the Mamabolo circuit, which are emanating from high failure rates in grade nine classes. The School Management Teams find it difficult to effectively manage high failure rates. High failure rates have a negative impact on the management of schools and affect the functionality of the school as an institution of learning. Finally, although the School Management Teams in the Mamabolo circuit fail to effectively manage high failure rates in grade nine, this investigation indicates that they are very aware of their responsibilities as members of the School Management Teams.

In order to improve the effective management of the School Management Teams, to eliminate the challenges experienced and to increase learner attainment in grade nine classes, the following recommendations should be considered: skills development workshops, planning, implementation and monitoring of curriculum activities, provision of human and physical resources and parental involvement.

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# ACRONYMS

DoE – Department of Education

GET – General Education and Training band

HOD – Head of Department

IAE – International Academy of Education

IIEP – International Institute for Educational Planning

LTSM - Learner Teacher Support Material

NQF – National Qualification Framework

SASA – South African Schools Act

SGBs – School Governing Bodies

SMTs – School Management Teams

# CHAPTER ONE
# GENERAL ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

The education systems across the globe are faced with numerous challenges such as high failure rates, lack of resources and increased numbers of drop-outs. Modisaotsile (2012:1) states that in South Africa there are many signs that show that there are challenges in the management of education. Despite the government's efforts by increasing the education budget annually, the quality of education remains poor and the output rate has not improved. This is also evident in the Mamabolo circuit where productivity in grade nine has decreased. These challenges have put an enormous pressure on the School Management Teams. Accountability compels the School Management Teams to ensure that learners perform well at school. Nieuwenhuis (2007:132) states that accountability from educational perspective refers to the assurance that all education stakeholders accept responsibility and hold themselves and each other responsible for every learner having full access to quality education, full opportunity and enough support to learn so that all learners can academically achieve at excellent levels.

It has been a trend in South Africa to put more emphasis on performance in higher grades to the detriment of lower grades. This is quite evident from the noise that is made when the Department of Basic Education announces grade12 results every year after the end of year examinations.  The words "Matric Results" would form the headlines of the media. This situation places more pressure to the School Management Teams and educators who teach specific subjects in matric. In contrast, very little and sometimes nothing is being said about the results in the lower grades. However, the Department of Basic Education (2010:5) argues that good performance in higher grades is chiefly influenced by performance of learners in the lower grades. It is therefore the responsibility of the school managers to redirect their focus to improving performance in grade nine classes. Van der Westhuizen (2007:302) states that

the attitudes and activities performed by the top management have an important influence on the culture of the school as an organisation.

The School Managers are expected to create an enabling and motivating environment to educators and learners in order to produce quality results. The decisions and strategies of school managers are critically important and influence their school performance, their success as managers and the likelihood that they will stay longer at those schools (Nieuwenhuis 2007:132).

Empirical investigation will provide more findings on the challenges causing high failure rates, how they affect the management of schools and various ways of managing them.

## 1.2  STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The School Management Teams in the Mamabolo circuit find it difficult to effectively manage high failure rates in grade nine classes. Louw, Bayat and Eigelaar-Meets (2011:4) state that high failure rates and grade repetition result in overcrowded classrooms, an increased pressure on human, physical and financial resources and a negative reputation of the school as a centre of education. They further indicate that sixty-two per cent of all grade repetitions at underperforming schools occurred in secondary school level, particularly grades eight and nine. Modisaotsile (2012:1) states that there are a number of factors that hinder learners from receiving a good standard of education and that of all the learners enrolled in grade one, only half reach grade twelve. This situation raises concern to the Department of Education, parents, learners and every stakeholder interested in education.

The consequences of a high failure rate are far reaching to the School Management Teams. Congested classrooms result in the decline of the quality of teaching and learning as well as monitoring and support by the School Management Teams. Moreover, there will be a shortage of furniture and textbooks to cater for substantially greater numbers of repeaters. The school will lose its competitive advantage because parents will transfer their children to

performing schools while new parents will lose interest in bringing their children to a school characterised by a high failure rate (Bisschoff, Du Plessis & Smith, 2004:2).

## 1.3 MOTIVATION

The researcher is an educator and manager in the area under investigation and is also experiencing overcrowded classes at school. Management as a responsibility forms part of the daily routine of the researcher and for that reason, it is essential for the researcher to investigate the management-related challenges caused by a high failure rate. The previous studies conducted on high failure rates have focused on the causal factors in grade twelve classes. It is therefore necessary to investigate the effective management of high failure rate in grade nine classes so as to fill in the knowledge gaps.

## 1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study is essential because the possible solutions suggested in terms of the findings of this research will help in the development and improvement of the schools under study. Other schools with similar challenges in other circuits can also benefit from the study. The study will provide an insight into the management challenges whose solutions might assist the School Management Teams on how to effectively manage underperformance. It can also assist policy makers when developing policies in terms of curricular development and curriculum management. Researchers and other scholars can be able to identify the knowledge gap provided by this study which can serve as the base for further research.

## 1.5 AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of the study is to investigate how effectively high failure rates are managed in grade nine classes in the Mamabolo circuit.

## 1.6 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport (2011:94) state that the objective is the more concrete, measurable and more speedily attainable conception of the plan that needs to be achieved. They further indicate that the objectives define the steps one has to take, one by one, realistically at grass-roots level, within a certain period, in order to attain the aim. The following are the objectives of this research:

a) To investigate the challenges experienced by the school management teams in relation to high failure rates in grade nine classes.

b) To determine the effect of high failure rates in grade nine classes on the management of secondary schools in the Mamabolo circuit.

c) To provide possible solutions in the management of high failure rates in grade nine.

## 1.7 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

a) What are the challenges experienced by the school management teams due to high failure rates in grade nine classes?

b) How do high failure rates in grade nine classes affect the management of secondary schools in the Mamabolo circuit?

c) How best can high failure rate in grade nine be managed?

## 1.8 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

The following concepts need to be understood as explained below for the purpose of this study:

### 1.8.1 School Management

Management is about efficiency and effectiveness. Clarke (2007:3) states that management is about getting systems to operate effectively. Therefore school management is ensuring effective teaching and learning and efficient utilisation of resources.

### 1.8.2 School Management Team

The idea of collective management and leadership has grown in South African schools through the concept of School Management Teams (SMT). The management responsibilities in a school are normally arranged in hierarchical order with the principal, the deputy principal and heads of departments (HODs) occupying managerial positions. Together they form what is called the School Management Team. The SMT is responsible for managing the school as an organisation. The team must built healthy relationship with stakeholders, induct and orientate new staff members, submit quarterly written report about their departments and execute some delegated School Governing Body (SGB) responsibilities (du Preez 2003:115).

### 1.8.3 General Education and Training Band

The South African education and training band is divided into three bands reflecting the three main Education and Training sectors. The General Education and Training (GET) is the lowest band, starting from grade R to 9. Within the GET band there are three phases, namely the Foundation Phase (grades R to 3), the Junior Phase (grades 4 to 6) and the Senior Phase (grades 7 to 9) (Jacobs, Vakalisa and Gawe 2004:56).

### 1.8.4 Curriculum

In Booyse and Du Plessis (2008:3), National Education Policy Institute, define curriculum as the teaching and learning activities and experiences which are

provided by schools. The curriculum encompasses the aims and objectives of the education system, selection of content to be taught, ways of teaching and learning, and the forms of assessment and evaluation used.

### 1.8.5  Assessment

According to the National Policy on Assessment and Qualifications for Schools in the GET band (Government Gazette no.29626), assessment is a continuous planned process of identifying, gathering and interpreting information about the performance of learners. Assessment can be formal or informal.

### 1.8.6  National Qualification Framework (NQF)

According to Olivier (1998:1), the National Qualification Framework provides the means to enable anybody who enters learning to receive nationally recogniand internationally comparable qualifications. The NQF consists of eight NQF levels which provides for General Education and Training, Further Education and Training and Higher Education and Training bands.

### 1.9  PRELIMINARY LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature review refers to the scrutiny of all relevant sources of information  It provides the existing body of knowledge about the research topic (De Vos, Srydom, Fouche & Delport, 2011:137).

Even though,legislation is not literature per se,it is necessary to indicate briefly what it says about the provision of quality education which is one of the responsibilities of the School Management Teams. Brief discussion on the factors affecting the management of schools that result into high failure rate will be given.

**1.9.1 Legislative Framework**

Education provision in South Africa is governed by a number of legislations. Just to mention a few, there are: the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, (hereafter referred to as the Constitution) and the South African Schools Act, no. 84 of 1996. The Constitution is the supreme law of the Republic of South Africa and it forms the basis of all other legislations. A brief account of what each of the above mentioned legislations entails will be given and more information will be provided during practical research.

*1.9.1.1 The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996*

In terms of Section 29 of the Constitution every learner has the right to basic education irrespective of their condition or environment. It is the responsibility of school managers to create positive learning environment. The Constitution grants learners the right to education and emphasises that opportunities to learn must be made available to them. It sets the expectation and  therefore places a duty on learners to make use of this right by committing them to learn and not to act in a manner that will prevent other learners from enjoying the right to education (Nieuwenhuis 2007:115).

*1.9.1.2 South African Schools Act (SASA), Act 84 of 1996.*

The South African School Act, no. 84 of 1996 states that the responsibilities of the School Management Teams are to ensure effective teaching and learning, to manage curriculum delivery and perform tasks in support of the School Governing Bodies. The Department of Education indicates that school managers are in the frontline of the struggle to develop new ways of managing schools and that SMTs  have to equip themselves on how to deal with management challenges (DoE, 2000:2). The School Management Teams, Educators, SGBs and the state need to account to learners and their parents for the quality of the education provided (SASA, Act 84 of 1996, Section 20(1)).

## 1.9.2 Grade nine and its significance in General Education and Training Band

The National Department of Basic Education has categorised schools into General Education and Training (GET) and Further Education and Training (FET) Bands. In accordance with the structure of the National Qualifications Framework, grade nine falls within the GET Band which is the lowest band with three school phases: Foundation, Intermediate and Senior phases (Jacobs, Vakalisa & Gawe, 2004:55). Grade nine forms part of the Senior phase. According to Jacobs *et al.* (2004:55), upon completion of grade nine learners receive a General Education and Training Certificate which allows them to leave school and look for work or to continue studying for FET Certificate.

The Constitution, 1996, states that education is free but compulsory until grade nine. Grade nine is the exit point of the GET band and it is also the end of compulsory schooling. The GET certificates should have been awarded for the first time to learners who passed grade nine in 2008. The truth is that until recently, no learner received the General Education and Training Certificate after passing grade nine. It is therefore crucial for grade nine learners to proceed with schooling until grade twelve because that is where they will have their first certificate after twelve years of continuous school attendance which will serve as evidence to their education level. Alternatively, some learners can pursue their studies at FET colleges.

## 1.9.3 Curriculum Management

Curriculum management is the implementation, supervision, monitoring, evaluation and quality assurance of teaching and learning activities and the experiences which are provided in schools (Booyse & Du Plessis, 2008:3). It is necessary for schools to have some way of measuring performance on a regular basis. Clarke (2007:223) concurs stating that since the core business of the school is learning, every school needs to have in place some system of measuring the learning outcome of its learners and of evaluating its results as a means of assessing the performance of the school in providing effective teaching

and learning. This is essential in the sense that one of the responsibilities of school managers is effective curriculum management and ensuring that academic performance is of acceptable standards.

Secondary schools have curriculum choices so as to meet the career needs of their learners and the community they serve. Reduction in learner enrolment will result in a reduced number of educators and compels the school management to reduce the subject choices so as to alleviate workload of educators. If some subjects are no longer offered at a school, learners who had interest in following a career which needs the cancelled subjects as a prerequisite will transfer to other schools and if the curriculum is relevant to only a few then the rest are going to look for other schools with the more relevant curriculum.

### 1.9.4  Curriculum changes

Literature also indicates that one of the challenges that led to poor performance in grade nine classes is curriculum changes. "In March 1997, the South African Government announced the new system of education which would be based on outcomes. The government needed to create a system that would heal the division of the past and establish a society based on democratic values. The government also wanted to do what was already happening in leading countries worldwide which is developing curricula that are more participative and outcomes directed. The new curriculum was called curriculum 2005" (Jacobs, Vakalisa & Gawe, 2004:58). Currently the curriculum that is implemented is called Curriculum Assessment and Policy Statement (CAPS). The School Management Teams were not excluded from the frustration as they had to support educators who were demoralised. They had to continue motivating educators, monitoring and controlling their work. The changes in curriculum left some educators confused and frustrated.  Workshops and trainings which were conducted were not sufficient to bring about an understanding of the gist of the matter (Jacobs *et al.*, 2004:58).

The factor contributing most to the difficulty in understanding the new curriculum was new terminology. Terminologies like aims and objectives were called outcomes which indicated the goals the learner should achieve, unlike aims and objectives which were based on the teacher's achievable goals (Jacobs *et al.*, 2004:59). The word *evaluation* was called *assessment*, *pupils* were called *learners* ,*subjects* were called *learning areas* and *schools standards* were called *grades*. Every curriculum adopted by the Department of Education has unique terminologies even though some are retained. The new terminology confused the educators who transferred the confusion to the learners.

## 1.9.5 Overcrowding

Louw, Bayat and Eigelaar-Meets (2011:4) indicate that overcrowded classrooms result in educators being overworked with the decline in the quality of teaching and learning. More information about overcrowding and its consequences will be collected when writing chapter two.

## 1.10   CHOICE AND RATIONALE OF RESEARCH DESIGN

The researcher used a qualitative research approach. Qualitative research approach in this study will enable the researcher to realise the set objectives. Moore (2000:102) states that qualitative research is concerned with information about things that are less easily understood by counting them, while quantitative research methods collect information about things that one can count. According to Lowe (2007:13), qualitative research produces detailed field notes, transcripts of semi-structured or unstructured interviews and observations while quantitative research produces numerical/statistical information. The topic of the research informs the research design because it seeks to discover the management challenges. The design is exploratory.

## 1.11   STUDY AREA

The study area is basically the demarcated zone where the research was conducted. In this research, the area of study covers all secondary schools of the Mamabolo circuit which are found around the rural areas of Mamabolo Tribal Authority, the area known as Mankweng. It is located east of the University of Limpopo and amongst other villages includes, Mentz, Segoreng, Thabakgone, Komaneng, Segwashi, Spitskop, Thune, Mongwaneng, Monywaneng, Kgwara, Masealama, Malahlela and Tshware. The Mamabolo circuit has nine secondary schools that are situated far apart from each other distributed within some of the villages mentioned above. It is the smallest circuit in the Mankweng cluster based on the number of schools.

## 1.12   POPULATION

Population is a term that sets boundaries on the study units. Welman, Kruger and Mitchell (2005:53), define population as a group of potential participants to whom the researcher want to generalise the results of a study. It is a set of cases from which a sample is taken. The relevant population for this study as guided by the research topic is the School Management Teams in the Mamabolo circuit.

## 1.13   SAMPLE AND SAMPLING METHODS

A sample is the element of the population considered for the actual inclusion in the study. A sample is a small portion of the total set of objects, events or persons which together comprise the subject of the study, ( De Vos,Strydom, Fouche & Delport, 2011:223). Sampling is the process of selecting the cases to observe or study. There are different types of sampling methods. The researcher will confine this study to purposive sampling method. This type of sample, according to De Vos *et.al* (2011:392), is based on the entire judgement of the researcher, in that a sample is composed of elements which contain the most characteristic, representative or typical attributes of the population. The

population sample would consists of four members of the School Management Teams from the selected secondary schools in the Mamabolo circuit.

## 1.14  DATA COLLECTION METHODS

The researcher used both primary and secondary data.  Since the study followed qualitative research approach, the researcher used unstructured interviews, observation and documentation to collect data. According to Welman *et al* (2006:166), unstructured interviews are informal and are used to explore a general area of interest in depth. The advantage of unstructured interviews is that the interviewee is given the opportunity to talk freely about events, behaviour and beliefs in relation to the topic.

## 1.15  DATA ANALYSES

When data is analysed, the researcher is looking for patterns, groupings, similarities and differences, (Lowe, 2007:114). Lowe also indicates that as a researcher you need not let your preconceived ideas about the subject inform your interpretation of the data. For the purpose of this research, qualitative data analyses method was employed.

## 1.16  ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

According to Lowe (2007:19), when a person carries out a research the following ethical guidelines need to be ensured: respect for person, respect for knowledge, respect for democratic values and respect for the quality of educational research. Action research is carried in the real world and involves close and open communication with different participants. The actions of the researcher should therefore be guided by ethical considerations. Lowe (2007:20) further indicates that in order to ensure ethics in research, the researcher should adopt the following responsibilities:

- To inform the participants about the aim and purpose the research;

- To admit the responsibility of maintaining confidentiality;
- To make the research findings available to the people involved in the research;
- To inform the participants that participation in the research is voluntary and that they have the right to withdraw from the research at any time;
- To inform the participants that they have the right to remain anonymous;
- To avoid fabrication, falsification or misinterpretation of evidence, data, findings or conclusions;
- To report research ideas, procedures, outcomes and analyses accurately to allow other people to understand and interpret them; and
- To ensure that the relationship between the researcher and the participants is characterised by honesty and openness.

The researcher has adopted the above ethical considerations as outlined by Lowe (2007) in order to yield appropriate and quality research results. The success of a research is determined by the type of the relationship that exists between the researcher and the participants and the degree to which the researcher maintains the research ethics.

## 1.17  OUTLINE OF RESEARCH

The chapter outline gives an idea of the structure of the research project by indicating the chapters as indicated below:

### Chapter one

This chapter deals with the general orientation of the study. The research proposal is outlined in this chapter. According to Brynard and Hanekom (2006:25) a research proposal is a comprehensive written plan of action compiled by the researcher. It precisely indicates how the researcher intends to undertake a particular research project. Brynard and Hanekom (2006) further state that the aim of the research proposal is to convince the promoter or reviewing committee

of the proposal that the researcher is capable of completing the study successfully.

**Chapter two**

Chapter two gives the literature of what you are researching. The review of related literature establishes important links between the existing knowledge and the problems being studied and also provides essential information about the methodology that can be incorporated into a new study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:73). Reviewing literature will assist the researcher to gain knowledge of what other scholars have done and reported.

**Chapter three**

Chapter three is research design and methodology. McMillan and Schumacher (2010:20) state that research design describes the procedures for conducting the study. It indicates the general plan of how the research is set up, what happens to the subject and the method of data collection. Data collection involves the techniques for gathering information. There are several types of data collection methods and the researcher will only use those that are fit for the purpose of the research.

**Chapter four**

This chapter gives the details on the processing, analysis and interpretation of data.Data analysis involves organising, accounting for, and explaining the data; briefly it means making sense of data in terms of participants' definitions of the situation, noting patterns, themes, categories and regularities (Cohen *et al.* 2007:183).

**Chapter five**

Chapter five presents the findings and recommendations. McMillan and Schumacher (2010:467) indicate that this section includes evaluation and interpretation of the findings, weaknesses or limitations of the study, conclusions, and implications for further research and professional practice. The importance of the study can also be mentioned in this section.

## 1.14  CONCLUSION

This chapter has introduced the problem to be investigated and highlighted the methodology, key concepts and the layout of the study. The next chapter will review literature on the effective management of high failure rates and related matters.

**CHAPTER 2**

**THE CAUSE AND EFFECT OF HIGH FAILURE RATE ON THE MANAGEMENT OF SCHOOL**

## 2.1  INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter provided the general orientation of the study. The problem statement, motivation, significance of the study, the aim and objectives of the study were outlined. Chapter three will focus on the methodology and research design.

School children are the future workers, citizens and leaders of the nation. Education is a tool by which these children can become empowered and the social, economic and personal well-being of all the population of a country increases. High failure rates in schools are likely to decrease the chances of having an educated nation. It is therefore the responsibility of the school managers to ensure that the failure rate is effectively managed to promote quality education.

This chapter focuses on the effective management of high failure rates as well as the challenges emanating from high failure rate in schools. The review will be divided into four sections in order to bring about a detailed understanding of the aforementioned objectives: The first section will examine the legislative framework on the provision of basic education and related literature. The second section will deal with the factors that affect learner performance. The third section will address the challenges caused by high failure rates in schools. The fourth section will focus on the effective management of high failure rates.

## 2.2  LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK ON THE PROVISION OF EDUCATION

Education provision in South Africa is governed by a number of legislations. For the purpose of this study only the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, the South African Schools Act, no. 84 of 1996 and National Curriculum Policy will be discussed in detail in the following sections.

### 2.2.1  Constitution of the Republic of South Africa,  1996

In terms of Section 29 of the Constitution every learner has the right to basic education irrespective of their condition or environment. It is the responsibility of school managers to create a positive learning environment. The constitution grants learners the right to education. It emphasises that opportunities to learn must be made available to learners. It sets the expectation and therefore places a duty on learners to make use of this right by committing them to learn and not to act in a manner that will prevent other learners from enjoying the right to education (Nieuwenhuis 2007:115). In chapter 3 section 41 subsection 1c of the Constitution, it states that all spheres of government and all organs of the state will provide effective, transparent, accountable and coherent government for the country as a whole. Responsibility goes with accountability. School managers are therefore bound to account for failure to perform the duty entrenched to them which is ensuring effective teaching and learning as the core business of the school.

### 2.2.2. South African Schools Act (SASA), Act 84 of 1996

SASA, Act  84 of 1996 states that the responsibilities of the SMTs are to ensure effective teaching and learning, to manage curriculum delivery and perform tasks in support of the School Governing Bodies. The Department of Education indicates that school managers are in the frontline of the struggle to  develop new ways of managing schools and that SMTs  have to equip themselves on how to deal with management challenges (DoE: 2000:2). SASA, Act 84 of 1996, Section 20(1) states that the educators, SGBs and the state need to account to learners and their parents for the quality of the education provided. Russo, Beckmann and Jansen (2005:268) affirm the above statement by indicating that accountability applies to equal educational opportunities of everyone in the country and it is owed to everyone including parents and children. However, high failure rates in schools increases pressure  on the side of the School Management Team.

### 2.2.3  National Curriculum and Assessment Policy

Underperformance can demoralise learners and therefore needs to be curbed. Learners who underperform are those who do not meet the pass requirements as stipulated by the Department of Education and subsequently have to repeat a grade. According to the National Policy Pertaining to the Programme and Promotion Requirements of the National Curriculum Statement Grades R-12, to progress to the next grade, a grade nine learner must meet the following minimum requirements: Adequate achievement (50%) in Home Language, moderate achievement (40%) in one of the official languages and in mathematics, moderate achievement (40%) in any three of the subjects offered and elementary achievement (30%) in any two required subjects( Department of Basic Education: 2011:16). These progression requirements look very easy and simple at face value, but the majority of learners fail to meet them. This is confirmed by a report of the Western Cape Department of Education (2011:1) which indicates that grade nine learners who wrote the systemic tests for the first time in 2011 achieved a language pass rate of 44,2% and 10,4% in Mathematics. High failure rate was experienced in grade nine classes in the majority of the schools in the Western Cape Province.

The minimum promotion requirements for grade nine which is regarded as the exit-point of the GET band is comparatively higher than that of grades in the FET band. As stated in the National Policy Pertaining to the Programme and Promotion Requirements of the National Curriculum Statement Grades R-12, the minimum promotion requirements for grades 10-12 are: achievement of 40% in three subjects, one of which is an official Home Language and 30% in any three of the other subjects. These minimum requirements are normally referred to as three 40s and three 30s (Department of Basic Education 2011:21).

## 2.3 FACTORS THAT AFFECT LEARNER PERFORMANCE

The literature indicates that there are several factors that affect learner performance in schools. Modisaotsile (2012:1) alludes to the fact that factors which affect learner performance include lack of parental participation in education and the weak functioning of the SGB. Louw *et al.* (2011:6) state that inappropriate policies, school related factors and socio-economic factors are also profound causes of underperformance.

### 2.3.1 Poor Curriculum Management

The report for the National Planning Commission (2011:3) indicates that effective schools require well selected individuals as principals together with management teams that understand and fulfil their roles as leaders and managers of curriculum, ensuring that an organised environment which is conducive for learning exists. Curriculum management is an important function of the entire Department of Education. At school level, the principal, the SMT and educators are to execute their functions in a way that contributes to effective curriculum management. Poor curriculum management by SMTs affects learner performance. The quality education is supported and informed by sound management practices. Within the whole school development, all planning and management should be a collaborative effort involving all role players wherein curriculum plays a central role. The Department of Basic Education states that the duties and responsibilities of the School Management Team in curriculum management include the following:

- Ensure that school policies are implemented;
- Ensure that opportunities are provided for learners to acquire knowledge, skills and values;
- Assess and evaluate learner performance;
- Provide parents with feedback on learner performance;
- Visit teachers in their classrooms in order to provide support and advice;
- Ensure that both teachers and learners honour their classes;

- Ensure that timetables for various activities are developed, implemented and monitored;

- Collect data and information that would improve teaching and learning activities;

- Assist the principal in ensuring that workloads are equitably distributed among the staff;

- Provide guidance and support to inexperienced staff members; and

- Ensure effective management of learner-teacher material (Department of Education 2000:26).

Failure to execute these responsibilities effectively by the School Management Team constitutes poor management of the curriculum.

The Minister for Education in KwaZulu Natal, Mchunu (2012) reported that the following are some of the contributing factors to underperformance in schools:

*i) Poor supervision and monitoring by School Management Teams*

The SMTs seem to lack strategy for monitoring the implementation of curriculum policy at classroom level. The Department of Education states that the SMTs have the responsibility of organising the school activities in a manner that the process of teaching and learning can best bring about the vision of the school.

*ii) Job vacancies that impact on curriculum delivery*

Curriculum management strategies cannot work if there are no teachers, curriculum advisors and other relevant experts to support teaching in schools. Curriculum delivery requires that teachers are appointed and vacancies wherever they exist are addressed immediately. In most instances subjects are not taught for some periods while waiting for a vacancy to be filled.

iii) *Absenteeism*

Learner and educator absenteeism in schools have a negative impact on the academic performance of learners, syllabus coverage and quality teaching.

Hence there are no procedures to assist learners who were absent for valid reasons to catch up with the lost time and tasks and there are no processes of discouraging learners and educators from absenteeism. Louw *et al.* (2011) affirm the effect of absenteeism by indicating that absenteeism has a profound impact on learning in the classroom and time on task spent at school.

*iv) Lack of content knowledge among teachers*

Underperformance of schools and learners is an indication that some educators are not yet excellent in dealing with all the content areas and this creates knowledge gaps in the level of achievement of learning objectives by learners. This is further depicted by underperformance in the National Annual Assessment and the National Senior Certificate.

It is therefore necessary for schools to have some way of measuring performance on a regular basis. Clarke (2007:223) concurs with the above statement when he states that since the core business of the school is learning, every school needs to have in place some system of measuring the learning outcome of its learners and of evaluating its results as a means of assessing the performance of the school in providing effective teaching and learning. This is essential in the sense that one of the responsibilities of school managers is effective curriculum management and ensuring that academic performance is of acceptable standards.

## 2.3.2  Curriculum changes

The literature indicates that one of the challenges that led to poor performance in schools is curriculum changes. Hoadley, Jansen, Reed, Gultig and Adendorff (2012:179) state that in March 1997  the South African Government announced the new system of education which was based on outcomes. The government also needed to create a system that would heal the division of the past and establish a society based on democratic values. Further the government wanted

to do what was already happening in leading countries worldwide which is developing curricula that are more participative and outcomes directed. The new curriculum was entitled *Curriculum 2005*. Hoadley *et al.* (2012:180) also indicated that *Curriculum 2005* discouraged written tests and examinations and emphasised practical tasks, interviews and self-assessment. It was unsuccessful because there was lack of support and resources for teacher training. Little attention was given to the teachers' own comprehension of the subject content and too much emphasis was given to getting to know the design features of the curriculum. Furthermore the language and design features of *Curriculum 2005* were too clumsy and difficult for teachers to interpret and manage. Curriculum 2005 was replaced by National Curriculum Statement (NCS).

In 2003 there was training of teachers in preparation of the National Curriculum Statement. Outcomes-based education was the core organising feature of NCS. Senior Certificate examination based on the outcomes-based curriculum was administered to the first group of learners in 2008. When *Curriculum 2005* was reviewed and replaced by the National Curriculum Statement, the assessment policy was not reviewed. Continuous assessment and formative assessment remained. Continuous assessment refers to assessment that takes place at intervals throughout a period of learning while formative assessment refers to an assessment which is intended to establish learners who need special help and not to promote learners to the next grade. Hoadley *et al.* (2012:202) state that since the NCS did not always specify clearly what needed to be learnt and assessed, there was a lack of alignment between the intended curriculum and what was tested. The National Curriculum Statement was characterised by an overload in assessment requirements as well as demanding requirements for the recording and reporting of assessment. There was serious criticism made against the NCS such that the Education Minister of that time, due to pressure, was compelled to establish a Ministerial Review Committee in 2009 to research on the challenges brought about by NCS. Recommendations of the Review

Committee lead to the development of another curriculum called Curriculum Assessment and Policy Statement (CAPS) (Hoadley *et al.* 2012:187).

The changes in curriculum left some educators confused and frustrated. Workshops and trainings which were conducted were not sufficient to bring about an understanding of the gist of the matter. The most contributing factor to the difficulty to understand the new curriculum is the new terminology. Terminologies like *aims and objectives* were called *outcomes* which indicated the goals the learner should achieve, unlike aims and objectives which were based on the teacher's achievable goals (Jacobs *et al.*, 2004:59) The word *evaluation* was called *assessment*, *pupils* were called *learners*, *subjects* were called *learning areas* and schools *standards* were called *grades*. Every curriculum adopted by the Department of Education had unique terminologies even though some are retained. The new terminology confused the educators who transferred the confusion to the learners.

Mamphela Ramphele, the former vice-chancellor of the University of Cape Town and World Bank director, in her call for the immediate stop of outcomes-based education said, "They can't read, they can't write, they can't speak coherently even in their mother tongue and they are ashamed to acknowledge it", referring to black learners whom she regarded as the majority of those being failed by the education system (Hoadley *et al.* 2012:187).

In addition to all other factors that contribute to poor learner performance, poverty is not excluded. Underperformance of learners is associated with the economic status of the family and the school.

### 2.3.3 Poverty

Studies indicate that there is correlation between high poverty rates and academic performance of learners in schools. The International Academy of Education and International Institute for Education Planning indicate that low achievement patterns tend to be associated with poverty indicators at both the school and the family levels. Lack of resources in poor rural schools contribute to high failure rates (Brophy, 2006:6)

These factors that are affecting learner performance are critical and therefore need serious intervention to curb the continued high failure rate in grade nine classes.

## 2.4 CHALLENGES CAUSED BY HIGH FAILURE RATES IN SCHOOLS

Poor academic performance in schools creates serious challenges to the school management and the school in general.

### 2.4.1 *Overcrowded classrooms*

Louw *et al.* (2011:4) indicate that overcrowded classrooms result in educators being overworked and in the decline in the quality of teaching and learning. Overcrowding of classrooms is a situation where the learner-teacher ratio is higher than the provincial average of 30 learners per educator. Some of the consequences of overcrowding are outlined below:

i)     *Discomfort*
       Discomfort is caused by the prevailing atmosphere in a populated classroom which in most cases is without air conditioning. The atmosphere influences health and comfort more especially during the late hours of the day.

ii)     *Educator-learner interaction*

Furniture is congested in the classroom and disables the educator to reach every learner particularly those who are seated in the middle of the classroom as well as those at the back. Open space is limited and the educator can hardly move around during teaching. Lesson duration does not allow for individualism in a crowded classroom instead learners are grouped to facilitate teaching.

iii)    Feedback

Feedback is not effective since it is given after the long time taken by the educator to mark test scripts or assignments. According to du Plessis *et al.* (2007:77) feedback should be immediate and provide a detailed description of what a learner has achieved and areas in which the learner needs support.

iv)     Noise

Overcrowded classrooms are characterised by noise because sometimes the educator's voice is not audible to learners at the back. Learners are attention seekers and when the educator is not audible they start making noise.

v)      Examination malpractices

Examination malpractices are encouraged by poor seating arrangement in the classrooms. Unprepared learners are tempted to cheat during test administration because invigilators cannot move around and assessment results portray a wrong picture of academic performance.

## 2.4.2  Discipline

The literature on discipline in schools indicates a number of behavioural problems portrayed by learners who have failed and are repeating a grade. This include increased rate of absenteeism, late-coming, learners not writing homework, classwork, assignments, projects and tests as well as dodging. The

involvement of parents in the lives of their children helps to improve disciplinary problems at home and at school. Discipline at home has direct influence on discipline at school. The absence of parental warmth and a positive involvement with the child as well as weak control were, among others, responsible for behavioural problems during middle childhood and adolescence (Oosthuizen (2010:77) .

### 2.4.3  Grade repetition

According to the International Academy of Education (IAE) and the International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) grade repetition refers to a situation where a learner has to be retained in the same grade for an extra year rather than being promoted to a higher grade along with his/her age peers. They further indicate that the application of grade repetition brings extra costs and long-term negative and social consequences to the learner, educator, school management and parents. Some of the effects of grade repetitions are:

- academic performance is affected;
- affect learner self-esteem, peer relationships and attitude towards schooling;
- lead to increased risk of dropping out;
- affect school operation;
- due to large age differences among learners, classroom management problems arise; and
- Increased number of drop-outs.

Brophy (2006:5) states that the repetition rates are high in the developing countries. They alluded that the highest rates were in the sub-Saharan African countries where 21% of the secondary school learners were repeating their grades. Learners from poor families are at risk for grade repetition because their home backgrounds leave them less prepared for success and they are likely to miss lessons due to absenteeism. Louw *et al.* (2011:4) state that repeating learners tend to experience problems with self-confidence and develop negative attitude towards education and school.

The following section discusses the factors that could assist in uplifting learner performance and reduce failure rates in schools.

## 2.5 EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF HIGH FAILURE RATES

Good academic performance in schools can be maintained by restoring the school culture that emphasises and enables learning and teaching. The main task of curriculum managers is to influence the environment within which effective learning and teaching take place. The school should establish a unique culture which is based on common values, beliefs and attitude (Naidu, Joubert, Mestry, Mosoge & Ngcobo, 2008:183). These are some management responsibilities that can contribute to effective management of underperformance:

### 2.5.1 Monitoring the curriculum

Monitoring assists the schools assessing whether they are achieving targets and teaching standards, and indicates where improvement is needed. Naidu *et al.* (2008:192) state that monitoring is largely formative in that feedback from the process may provide opportunities to reinforce good practice or to make improvements to the existing practice.

### 2.5.2 Shared curriculum leadership

Naidu *et al.* (2008:193) state that the most effective schools are those that are involving the educators in decision-making regarding the implementation of the curriculum. It is also essential to respect and understand the different views of the staff members.

### 2.5.3 Climate that is conducive for learning

An environment which provides for security and encouragement to learners is organised to meet the learning needs and enables learners and educators to access a range of resources. An environment that is conducive for learning and

teaching is the one that supports creativity, team-building and participation in problem-solving (Naidu *et al.*, 2008:187).

### 2.5.4  Promoting a culture of learning and teaching

According to Naidu *et al.* (2008:183), the culture of a school refers to the shared ideologies, values, assumptions, beliefs, expectations, attitudes and norms that join the educators, learners and parents together. A culture of learning and teaching takes time to develop but once it is developed it stays for years. The generation of a productive learning culture is very important for the success of any learning institution.

### 2.5.5  Parents involvement

The parents are the primary educators of their children while educators are secondary educators. The parent-educator interaction focuses on the exchange of information about a learner's performance at school. Parents' involvement in the education of their children helps to improve academic performance of learners at school and contribute to the decline in discipline problems. Oosthuizen (2010:77) states that where parents do not become involved in disciplining children at home, the school's efforts in this regard do not bear much fruit. Further, parental involvement is the first essential step in making the learner to accept responsibility for his/her own behaviour.

The above-mentioned management responsibilities, if well executed, can assist in managing the high failure rate in schools. Learners, parents, educators and the School Management Teams are together responsible for ensuring good academic performance in schools.

### 2.6  CONCLUSION

This chapter reviewed literature on the effective management of high failure rates, challenges emanating from high failure rates as well as some factors that affect learner performance. It is evident from this chapter that high failure rate is partly attributed to absenteeism of both educators and learners and poor

curriculum management. Education is indeed a societal issue. Disciplinary problems that are displayed by learners, which also affect their academic performance, can partly be addressed through parental involvement. It is the responsibility of the School Managemnt Team to create the schooling environment that is conducive for teaching and learning. The next chapter deals with research methodology and design.

# CHAPTER 3

# METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

## 3.1  INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a description of the research design for empirical investigation used in this study. Furthermore it presents a detailed explanation of the research approach, data collection and method of analysis. Babbie and Mouton ( 2001:51) state that research methodology focuses on the process and the kinds of tools and procedures used whereas research design looks towards what the end product will be.

## 3.2  RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Henning, Van Rensburg and Smit (2004:36) explain methodology as the coherent group of methods that complement one another and that fit together to deliver data and findings that will reflect the research question and suite the research purpose. Qualitative research approach was used in this study in order to achieve the set objectives in paragraph 1.6 hence  it  is flexible, unique and progresses throughout the research process.

## 3.3  RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design is a strategic framework for action that serves as a bridge between research questions and the implementation of the research. It provides a plan that specifies how the research will be executed in a manner that answers the research questions (Terre Blanche *et al.*, 2006:34).The concept design in a qualitative study includes the entire process of research from the initial stages of conceptualisation of a problem to the writing process. There are two commonly known research methodologies that determine the route of a research project from its inception throughout to the final stage of report writing, namely the qualitative and quantitative research methodologies.

According to Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (2006:47), a qualitative research approach allows the researcher to study selected issues in the categories of information that emerge from data. In the case of this study a qualitative research approach was adopted. It was selected because it contains several features that enable the researcher to access information-rich sources, attain in-depth information and meaningfully analyse the data for a better understanding of the problem under study, which is the effective management of high failure rates in grade nine classes. The researcher in this case, collected information from members of the School Management Teams of the institutions under study. Qualitative research design is flexible, unique and evolves throughout the research process. Therefore, there are no fixed steps that should be followed and cannot be exactly replicated.

## 3.4 AREA OF STUDY

The study area is basically the demarcated zone where the research will be conducted. In this research, the area of study is clearly illustrated by figures 3.1 and 3.2 below. These two maps were compiled by Ndivhaleni Nevondo, Polokwane Municipality. The study area covers all secondary schools of the Mamabolo circuit which are found around the rural areas of the Mamabolo Tribal Authority, known as Mankweng. It is located east of the University of Limpopo and amongst other villages includes, Mentz, Segoreng, Thabakgone, Komaneng, Segwashi, Spitskop, Thune, Mongwaneng, Monywaneng, Kgwara, Masealama, Malahlela and Tshware. The Mamabolo circuit has nine secondary schools that are situated far apart from each other distributed within some of the villages mentioned above. The nine secondary schools form part of the three wards of the Polokwane Municipality; ward 28, ward 30 and ward 34 as shown in figures 3.1 and 3.2. The study area forms a boundary between the Mopani District and the Capricorn District. The Mamabolo circuit is the smallest circuit in the Mankweng cluster amongst the five circuits, based on the number of schools.

Figures 3.1 and 3.2 have been used in order to provide a better understanding and picture of the area under study. The area is hilly, mountainous and

characterised by valleys. A legend has been provided so that people will be able to read the map.

Figure 3. 1 Study area map

**Legend**

- Schools
- Rivers
- Roads
- R71
- Dam
- Villages
- Municipal Baundary
- Wards

SCALE= 1:100 000

Compiled By: Ndivhaleni Nevondo
Date: November, 2015

For information use only

POLOKWANE MUNICIPALITY: MAMABOLO CIRCUIT

Polokwane Municipality

Masealama Sec.

M.R Mamabolo Sec.

Seolwane Sec.

Daasno Sec.

Manhlweng High

Mathukana Sec.

Nkoshlo High

Motlakano Sec.

Makome Sec.

30

28

34

R71

0    1,75   3,5    7    10,5    14
Kilometers

Figure 3.2 Study area map

## 3.5 POPULATION

Brynard and Hanekom (2006:55) refer to population as all the subjects that the researcher wishes to investigate in order to establish new knowledge. Population is a term that sets boundaries on the study units. Welman, Kruger and Mitchell (2005:53) define population as a group of potential participants to whom the researcher wants to generalise the results of a study. There are nine secondary schools in the Mamabolo circuit and for the purpose of this research, the population will be the members of the School Management Teams (SMTs). The table 3.1 below depicts the management structure of the schools in Mamabolo circuit which constitutes the population from which a sample has been taken.

Table 3.1: Study population

| School Name | No. of Principals | No. of Deputy Principals | No. of HODs | No. of Senior Teachers | Total No. of SMT |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Doasho | 1 | 1 | 4 | 6 | 6 |
| 2. Makome | 1 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. Mankweng | 1 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. Masealama | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 4 |
| 5. Mathukana | 1 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 4 |
| 6. Motlakaro | 1 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 4 |
| 7. M.R. Mamabolo | 1 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. Nkoshilo | 1 | 1 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 9. Seolwana | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 4 |
| Totals | 9 | 2 | 15 | 35 | 43 |

**SOURCE**: Mamabolo Circuit Office

The schools with only two or three people in the SMT normally select some senior teachers from the staff members to form part of the SMT depending on the total number of teaching staff. Such senior teachers will be added to form the total population.

## 3.6  SAMPLE AND SAMPLING METHOD

The use of relevant sampling techniques in qualitative research is significant in order to collect the richest data.

### 3.6.1  Sample

In conducting this research a sample was used. A sample is the element of the population considered for the actual inclusion in the study. It is a small portion of the total set of objects, events or persons which together comprise the subject of the study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:129). Sampling is a technique used to select a small group with the view of determining the characteristics of a large group. The sample that has been selected passionately will portray similar characteristics of the larger group (Brynard & Hanekom, 2006:56).

Bless, Higson-Smith and Kagee (2006:98) state the following as the main advantages of sampling:

- Gathering data on a sample saves time because only a representative part of the population is interviewed instead of the entire population;
- The expenses of research are proportional to the duration taken on data collection and as such gathering data on a sample is less costly;
- Sampling is a practical way of collecting data when the population is unlimited or tremendously huge; and
- Sampling may be the only practical method of data collection in cases where the property under investigation necessitates the destruction of an object; for example, the lifespan of an electric bulb.

### 3.6.2  Sampling methods

There are different types of sampling methods. Therefore, for the purpose of this investigation, the researcher adopted purposive sampling method which is also known as judgemental sampling method. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007:114), state that in purposive sampling the researcher handpicks the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of his or her own judgement and builds up a sample that is satisfactory to meet specific needs. Purposive sampling is used in order to access relevant people who have an in-depth knowledge of issues to be addressed by the study, maybe by virtue of their professional role or experience. In this research the SMTs are regarded as the relevant people with an in-depth knowledge of the problem under study.

The research investigates the effective management of high failure rates in grade nine classes. The SMTs are an appropriate sample for this study because they are responsible for the effective management of the day-to-day activities in the school, curriculum management as well as academic performance of all learners. Any dysfunctionality in the schools is accounted for by the SMTs with the school principals as the chief accounting officers.

### 3.6.3  Sample size

Cohen *et al*. (2007:101) state that there is no clear-cut answer for the size of the sample because it depends on various factors such as the purpose of the study, the nature of the population under scrutiny and the style of the research. McMillan and Schumacher (2010:328) indicate that the understanding generated from qualitative research depend more on the information richness of the cases and the analytical capabilities of the researcher than on the sample size. They further suggest that qualitative samples can range from 1 to 40 or more.

The population sample for this research was taken from six secondary schools in the Mamabolo circuit. The six schools were purposively sampled based on their

grade twelve results which the researcher contemplated that might have a link to performance in the lower classes.The information was obtained from the Mamabolo circuit office .  The population sample comprised of one principal, one deputy principal and two HODs of each of the schools under study. In cases where the school had no deputy principal, two HODs and one senior teacher were selected and in cases where the school had one HOD, two senior teachers, who are members of the SMT, were selected. The two HODs selected for this sample were those who occupied post number six and thirteen. Table 3.1 indicates that majority of the schools in the Mamabolo circuit are small schools and do not have the second HOD which is post number thirteen. In such cases, the sample would consist of the principal, one HOD, who occupies post number six and the two most senior teachers according to the post establishment, who are members of the School Management Team. Basically, from each selected secondary school, there were four participants from the SMT. Together they constituted a total sample of 24 participants.

## 3.7  DATA COLLECTION METHODS

The procedure for collecting data entailed gaining access to all the six secondary schools (**see appendix A**) and getting permission from the school principals and SMT members who were to be interviewed **(see  appendix C and D)**. The data were collected using both primary and secondary sources of information.

A data collection method is simply the procedure used by the researcher to gather data. Leedy and Ormrod (2005:143) state that data collected in the beginning of the research often influence the kinds of data that the researcher subsequently accumulates. They also alluded to the fact that data collection in a qualitative study takes a greater deal of time irrespective of the kinds of data involved. In qualitative research, the following data collection methods can be used to answer the research questions: observation, secondary data and interviews. In this study, the researcher used the methods indicated below to collect data.

### 3.7.1 Face-to-face interview

Bless *et al.* (2006:116) state that an interview involves personal contact with the participant who is asked to answer questions relating to the research problem. Cohen *et al.* (2007:349) regard the interview as a flexible tool for data collection, enabling multi-sensory channels to be used such as verbal, non-verbal, spoken or heard.  Interviews could last for thirty minutes to one and half hours. The face-to-face, in-depth interview is conducted in an unstructured or semi-structured way and an interview schedule is used to guide the researcher on questions to be posed to the interviewees (Bless *et al.* 2006:122).

The researcher selected this type of interview in order to answer the research questions on the effective management of high failure rates in grade nine classes. The SMTs of the schools under study are an appropriate focus group in the sense that they are a homogeneous group of participants that share similar experiences of ensuring quality teaching and learning through effective management of curriculum in their institutions. The researcher arranged for a convenient date and time that would suite the interviewees. According to Welman *et al.* (2005:166), unstructured interviews are informal and are used to explore a general area of interest in depth. The advantage of unstructured interviews is that the interviewees are given the opportunity to talk freely about events, behaviour and beliefs in relation to the topic and the interviewer poses questions as listed on paper so as to facilitate the discussion.

In all the institutions that the researcher visited to conduct interviews, the participants acknowledged the use of a voice recorder which really alleviated the researcher from too much of writing. Therefore, a voice recorder was used and the researcher took some notes during elaborations. McMillan and Schumacher (2010:360) state that the use of voice recorder in an interview ensures completeness of the verbal interaction and provides material for reliability checks. They further indicate that taking notes assist in reformulating questions and probes and recording of non-verbal communication. According to De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport (2011:359), field notes are a written account of the

things the researcher hears, sees, experiences and thinks about in the course of interviewing.

### 3.7.2  Interview Schedule

De Vos *et al.* (2011:186) state that an interview schedule is a questionnaire written to guide interviews (**see appendix E**). It is also known as an interview guide. The researcher reads the questions to the respondent as they appear on the questionnaire and records the responses. De Vos *et al.* (2011:352) indicate that an interview schedule provides the researcher with a set of predetermined questions that might be used as an appropriate instrument to engage the participant. In this study an interview schedule was prepared and used to ensure that similar basic ways of enquiry are followed with each person interviewed and to assist the interviewer to stay focused on the main objectives of the study. The questions were constructed in such a way that the respondents would have much latitude to express themselves while addressing the research objectives.

### 3.7.3  Participant observation

De Vos *et al.* (2011:330) state that participant observation is a qualitative research procedure that studies the natural and everyday set-up in a particular community or situation. It is a procedure of recording and observing conditions, events, feelings, physical settings and activities through looking rather than asking. When adopting a participant observation method of collecting data, the researcher can be a complete participant or complete observer depending on the objectives of the study (De Vos *et al.* 2011:330). In this study, the researcher took the role of a complete observer and only took some notes because becoming involved was not really significant in as far as the research objectives were concerned.

## 3.8  DATA ANALYSIS

Lowe (2007:114) states that when data are analysed, the researcher is looking for patterns, groupings, similarities and differences and that as a researcher one shold not let one's preconceived ideas about the subject inform the interpretation of the data. De Vos *et al.* (2011:397) state that data analysis involves reducing the volume of raw information, sifting significance from trivia, identifying significant patterns and constructing a framework for communicating the essence of what the data reveal. Terre Blanche *et al.* (2006:322) state that data analysis involves reading through the collected data repeatedly and engaging in the activities of breaking the data down building it up again in unique ways.

Data analysis can be qualitative or quantitative. For the purpose of this research, a qualitative approach was adopted. A descriptive and interpretative analysis was used to analyse the data. The responses of the interviewees were summarised and sorted in a meaningful way in line with the thematic areas determined according to the research objectives. McMillan and Schumacher (2010:367) state qualitative data analysis as an inductive process of classifying data and identifying patterns and relationships that exist. They also indicate that in qualitative research analysis is done during data collection as well as after all the data has been gathered. Cohen *et al.* (2007:461) state that qualitative data analysis involves organising, accounting for and explaining the data, making sense of data in terms of the participants' definitions of the situation, noting patterns, themes, categories and regularities. Although various authors used different words to explain data analysis, they all create the same idea of what data analysis is.


## 3.9  ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

According to Lowe (2007:19), when a person carries out a research there are ethical guidelines that need to be ensured such as respect for person, respect for knowledge, respect for democratic values and respect for the quality of educational research. Bloor and Wood (2006:64) define ethics as  guidelines or a

set of principles for good professional practice, which serve to advise and steer researchers as they conduct their investigations.

In this study, the researcher strictly adopted the following ethical aspects:

### 3.9.1 Informed Consent

The researcher obtained permission from the participants to conduct an interview. The aim and purpose of the study was explained (**see appendix D**).

### 3.9.2 Respect for autonomy of the participants

The participants were informed that participation in this study is voluntary. They had to choose whether to participate or not. They were also informed of their right to withdraw from the research participation at any time if they so wished **(see appendix D**).

### 3.9.3 Confidentiality

The researcher assured the participants that information collected during interviews would remain confidential and would only be used for the purpose of this study **(see appendix D)**.

### 3.9.4 Anonymity

The identity of the participants was kept anonymous throughout the investigation process **(see appendix D)**.

### 3.9.5 Honesty and openness

The researcher ensured honesty and openness by creating a sound relationship with the participants. The research findings were reported without any fabrication or misinterpretation of data. According to Lowe (2007:20), the success of a research is determined by the type of the relationship that exists between the researcher and the participants and the degree to which the researcher maintains the research ethics.

### 3.9.6 Trust

The researcher created the relationship of trust by reassuring the participants of the confidentiality and privacy of the information they provided. Bloor and Wood (2006:173) state that a relationship of trust between the interviewer and the interviewee is a necessary condition for the continuing conduct of research and for the accurate collection of data. Trust, once established, was not easily shaken and provided an unproblematic foundation for data collection.

### 3.10  VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

Bless *et al.* (2006:157) state that validity is the degree to which a study measures what it purports to measure while reliability is an estimate of the accuracy and internal consistency of a measurement instrument. Validity tells the researcher if the measure actually measures what it is intended to measure whereas reliability enables the researcher to have confidence that the measure taken is closer to the true measure. Therefore, to ensure validity of the research, the researcher used appropriate sample size. A voice recorder was used during interviews so that no information stated by the participants was left out and the collected data were properly transcribed, recorded and filed. Furthermore a summary of the interview was provided to the participants to do what is called member check. Reliability was ensured by preparing an interview schedule and careful usage of simple language during interviews.

### 3.11  CONCLUSION

This chapter has dealt with the research design and methodology for the study. Motivation for adopting a qualitative research approach and data collection techniques was given. The next chapter will focus on analysis and interpretation of data.

# CHAPTER FOUR

# DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

## 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The main aim of this study was to investigate effective ways of managing high failure rates in grade nine classes of the Mamabolo circuit. The previous chapter focused on research methodology and how the research was undertaken. This chapter focuses on reporting the results of the empirical investigation. The report provides answers on how the School Management Teams in the Mamabolo circuit manage high failure rates of grade nine learners and related matters as guided by the objectives of the study. Six secondary schools out of nine in the Mamabolo circuit were selected for this study.

The presentation of data in this study will be done through tables, graphs and figures. A discussion of data collected from the interview participants and documents will be presented in narrative form.

## 4.2 RESEARCH FINDINGS

Research was conducted on the effective management of high failure rates in grade nine classes. The following secondary schools in the Mamabolo circuit were selected for the study: Doasho, Makome, Mathukana, Motlakaro, M.R. Mamabolo and Seolwana. The data were collected by using qualitative research methods which included face-to-face interviews, observation and documented sources. Interviewed participants were informed of their rights and they were assured of anonymity. Twenty-two SMT members were interviewed instead of twenty- four. The other two SMT members from two different schools were absent during the data collection period and it was not easy to secure an appointment with them. However, that did not compromise the credibility of the study. Analyses and reports of the results are based on the main categories which emerged from data that was collected during the interviews.

### 4.2.1  Biographical information

The biographical information of respondents includes gender, age, management experience and highest academic qualifications. This information is essential because it provides an overview picture of a member of the School Management Team who is expected to provide effective management in this case. A highly qualified person who is experienced is more likely to add value to the occupation involved in. As a researcher it is important to understand whether the people holding managerial positions in schools are suitably qualified for those positions or not. This is for the fact that high qualifications and high performance are compatible. The biographical information of participants is presented below in the form of figures.

#### 4.2.1.1  Gender

Figure 4.1 below indicates that the school management teams in the secondary schools of Mamabolo circuit are dominated by females rather than by males. Females constitute 59% and males 41%. This shows a shift from male dominated management in secondary schools, but slight deviation from the gender equity of 50/50. However, it reflects the demographics of women in South Africa.
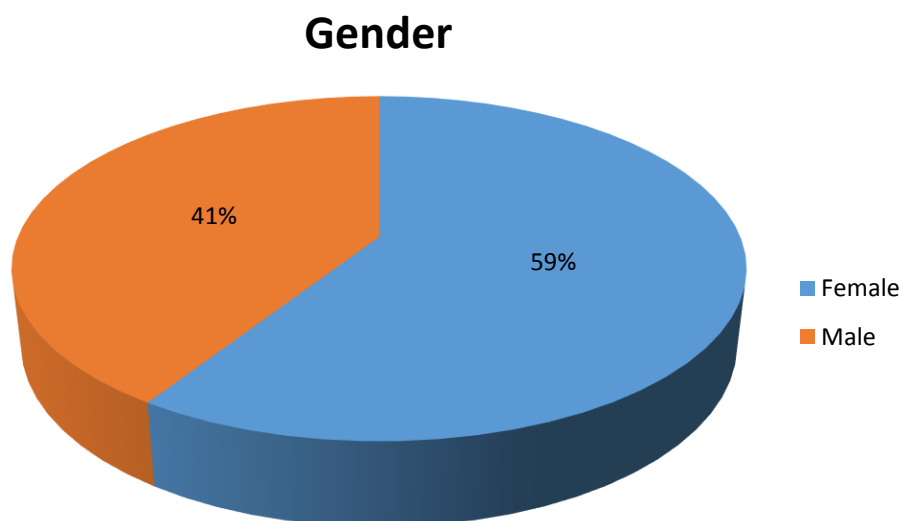
**Gender**



Figure 4.1 Gender of respondents

#### 4.2.1.2  Age

Age affect the skills and creativity of individuals. Knowledge of the ages of employees is essential in giving an idea of whether the employees are still at bfetheir early ages or approaching retirement and also to be able to provide them with the necessary support.

Figure 4.2 below, indicates that the majority of the SMT members form part of the economically inactive group which constitute 32% (41 to 50) and 41% (51 and above) of the school management. People falling within the ages 31 to 40 years are regarded as economically active and productive group. They constitute 22% only. Young and economically active group of the ages 25 to 30 are very scarce in the school management as shown by figure 4.2. This is attributed to the fact that five to seven years teaching experience is required for one to qualify for Head of Department, Deputy Principal and Principalship posts. These are the people who constitute the School Management Team.
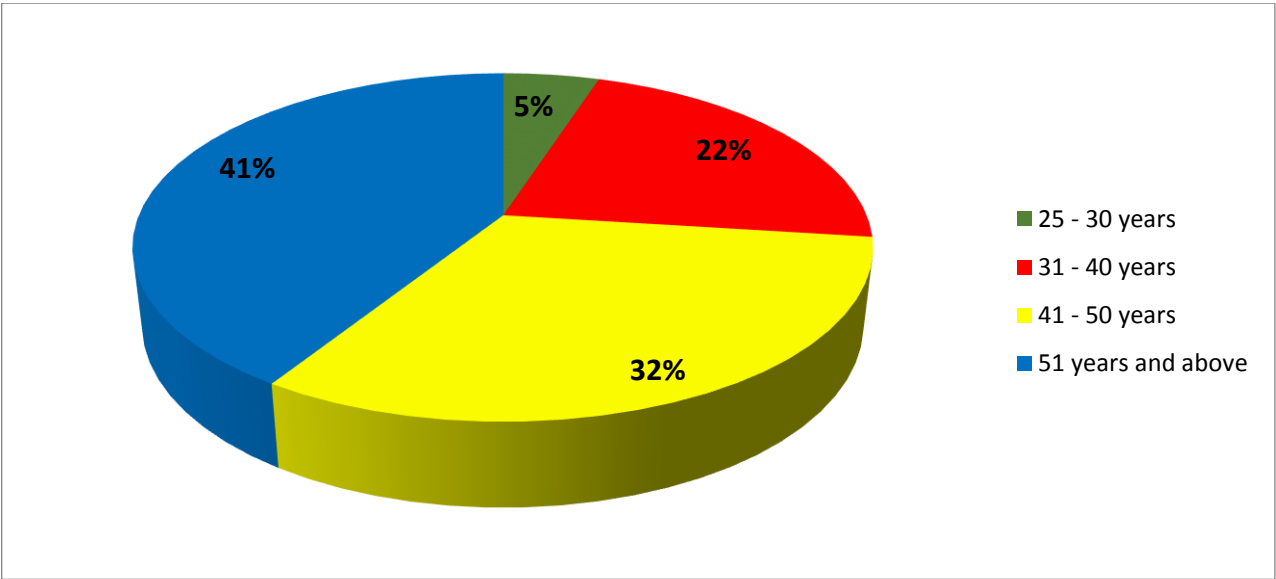


Figure 4.2 Age of respondents

### 4.2.1.3 Managerial experience

Figure 4.3 indicates that the majority of the School Management Teams are in their early years of managerial experience. SMTs who are within 1 to 5 years of experience and 6 to 10 years constitute 40,9% each which are rather high percentages. The SMT members who are 11 to 15 years experienced and those

who are 21 years and above experienced constitute 9,1% each. The figure shows that there is no member of the SMT with 16 to 20 years of experience. Generally, the figure depicts that the schools in the Mamabolo circuit are managed by people with little management experience. When the researcher compares figure 4.2 and figure 4.3 realised that the largest of SMT members are well over fifty years of age but with one to ten years managerial experience.
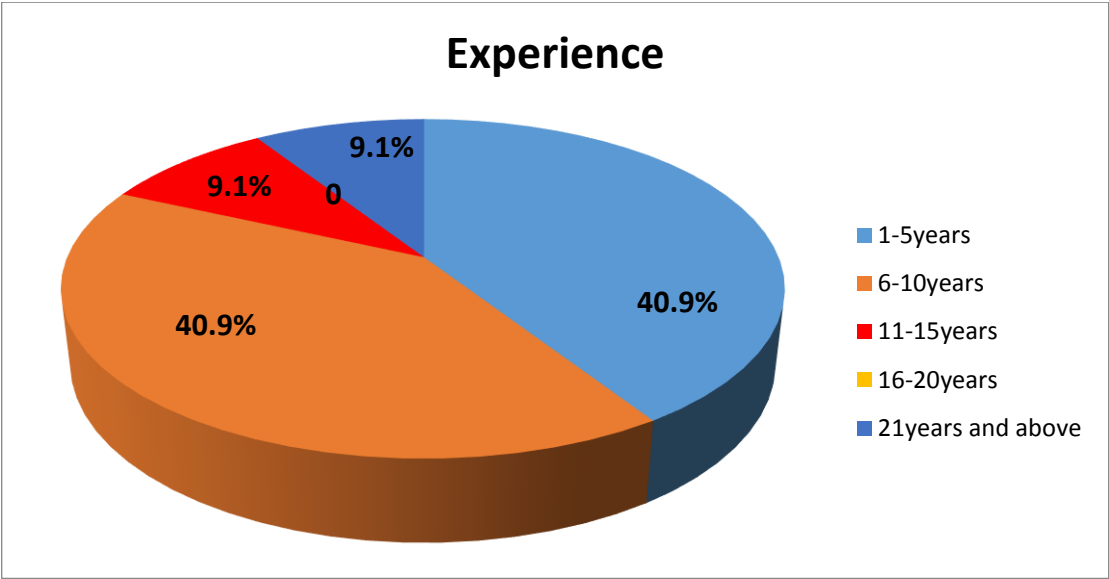


Figure 4.3 Experience in managerial position

*4.2.1.4  Qualifications*

Figure 4.4 indicates the qualifications of the School Management Teams in the Mamabolo circuit. It shows that all SMT members have qualifications that are above matric plus three years training (M+3). 32% of the SMT members have matric plus four years training (M+4) qualifications while 68% of them have matric plus five years training (M+5) qualifications. None of the SMT members have qualifications above matric plus five years (M+5). They are not underqualified and yet not highly qualified. They are suitably qualified to occupy managerial positions in schools.
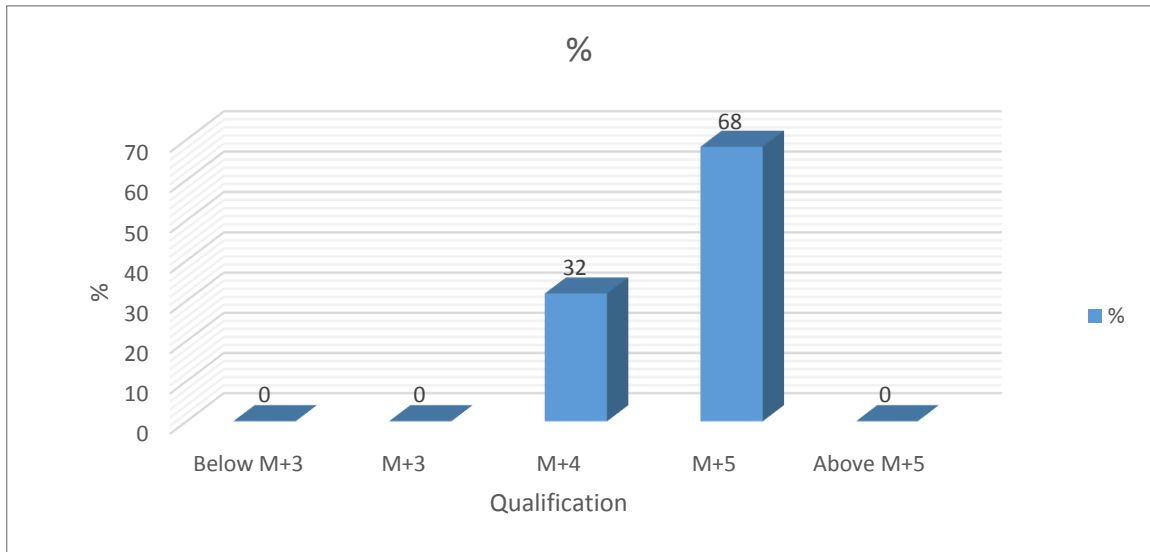
Figure 4.4 Highest qualification of respodents

## 4.3 EXPLAIN GRADE NINE ENROLMENT AND ITS ACADEMIC PERRFORMANCE

### 4.3.1 Enrolment

The participants were requested to give the enrolment of grade nine learners in their schools and the number of classes for those learners. Learner enrolment assists the researcher to have an understanding of teacher-learner ratio in the schools of the Mamabolo circuit. Figure 4.5 below depicts grade nine enrolments.
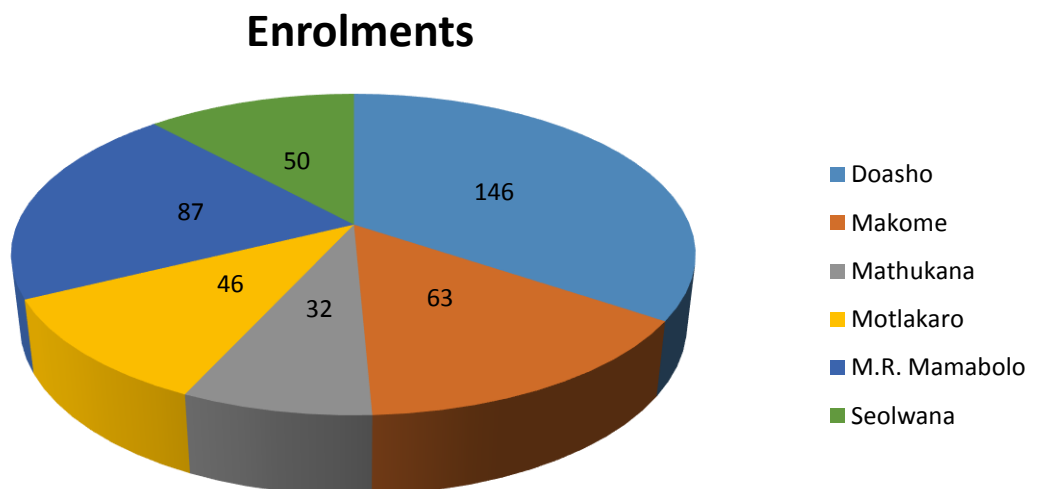


Figure 4.5 Grade nine enrolments

The research findings indicate that an average grade nine class in Mamabolo circuit is 61 learners. An average of sixty-one learners in a classroom portrays overcrowding. The respondents from the schools in the figure stated that they have only one grade nine class except for Doasho where the participants alluded that grade nine is divided into two classes. The teacher-learner ratio as indicated in figure 4.5 is far above the norm of 1:35.

## 4.3.2  Grade nine academic performances

All SMT members who were interviewed indicated that grade nine learners are generally not performing very well academically in school based assessments and in the Annual National Assessment. The subject which was commonly mentioned by interviewees as poorly achieved subject was Mathematics. Mathematics and English are the only two subjects that are assessed by Annual National Assessment in grade nine. One participants said: "*in our school in 2014, learners produced an average pass of 1,2% in Mathematics and 29% in English during the administration of ANA".* The same participant further indicated that their school had prepared their learners thoroughly for the 2015 ANA but unfortunately it was not administered, not only in their school but in the whole of South Africa.

Table 4.1 below  indicates grade nine results from term one to four in 2015. This information was collected from the circuit office. It gives a picture of how grade nine learners are performing. This confirms the responses of the SMT members when they state that grade nine learners are academically performing poorly.

Table 4.1: Gradew7, nine results.

| Name of school | Term 1 | | | Term 2 | | | Term 3 | | | Term 4 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No wrote | % pass | % fail | No wrote | % pass | % fail | No wrote | % pass | % fail | No wrote | % pass | % fail |
| Doasho | 146 | 1.4 | 98.6 | 148 | 7.4 | 92.6 | 145 | 23.4 | 76.6 | 146 | 44.5 | 55.5 |
| Makome | 63 | 1.6 | 98.4 | 64 | 0.0 | 100 | 61 | 29.5 | 70.5 | 61 | 86.9 | 13.1 |
| Mathukana | 33 | 33.3 | 66.7 | 32 | 25.0 | 75.0 | 32 | 18.8 | 81.2 | 32 | 56.3 | 43.8 |
| Motlakaro | 46 | 28.3 | 71.7 | 46 | 0.0 | 100 | 46 | 17.4 | 82.6 | 46 | 41.3 | 58.7 |
| M.R. Mamabolo | 86 | 60.5 | 39.5 | 87 | 55.2 | 44.8 | 87 | 29.9 | 70.1 | 87 | 75.9 | 24.1 |
| Seolwana | 51 | 45.1 | 54.9 | 50 | 12.0 | 88.0 | 50 | 40.0 | 60.0 | 50 | 86.0 | 14.0 |

Source: Mamabolo circuit office, 2015 results.

The table shows that from term one to term three percentage passed is less than percentage failed for most of the schools. Drastic and or slight improvement in performance is depicted in term four of the year. These performances really need interventions because there are cases in some schools where all learners fail to meet the promotion requirements. One needs to remember that grade nine is the exit-point for the GET band. Learners who pass grade nine are expected to further their studies in the FET colleges or continue in the FET band, that is grade 10-12 in schools. Multiple failures of learners may cause frustrations, drop-outs and behavioural problems. This confirms the negative perspective associated with high failure rate.

During the interviews, the participants indicated that the reason for the slight improvement in the results during term four is because marks for grade nine learners are being adjusted to influence a pass. This statement was confirmed by the National Assessment Circular number 3 of 2015 as outlined in paragraph 4.5.6. Participants also indicated that "the national curriculum and assessment policy states that no learner should remain in a phase for more than four years; meaning that if a learner has already repeated grade seven or eight in this regard, he/she will not repeat grade nine. Instead he/she will be progressed to

the next grade which is grade ten based on the principles outlined in paragraph 4.5.6". The Department of Education (2011:10) indicates that learners that have been progressed should be given the necessary support to close the achievement gap and to improve their performance The policy apply up to grade eleven. Grade 12 learners who fail to meet the promotion requirements are not progressed even if they have spend four or more years in the phase. The policy seem not to be helping learners nor the broad education system in South Africa.

### 4.3.3  Causes of poor academic performance in grade nine classes

Participants indicated several factors which contribute to poor academic performance of grade nine learners which the researcher during the analysis grouped into two categories, namely family-related factors and school-related factors. The majority of SMT members attributed poor learner-performance to learners and parents only while very few SMT members included educators and management related factors. These factors are outlined below.

### 4.3.4  Family-related factors

#### 4.3.4.1  *Lack of parental guidance and support*

The majority of SMT members who were interviewed indicated that learners lack support and guidance from their parents. They further alluded that the majority of learners are heading families, taking care of themselves and their younger brothers and sisters. This is caused by the fact that some parents are employed far from home while other parents have passed on. Such learners do not have someone at home to assist them with their school work and have been identified by educators as having learning difficulties and most frequently not doing their home activities.

In one school the SMT members indicated that the majority of their learners are raised by their grandparents many of which cannot read nor write and as such fail to provide the necessary education support to their grandchildren.

### 4.3.4.1.  Lack of parental involvement

This factor has been noted by the researcher as the most common problem as it was highlighted by many SMT members from different schools. It was indicated that the majority of parents and guardians do not attend meetings even when invited well in advance. "*It is a policy of the Department of Education that parents be given quarterly report on learners' academic progress but even during these types of meetings parents do not form a quorum. Some parents can even spend the whole year without collecting their children progress reports".* This statement was made by one participant. This particular SMT member wanted to underscore the fact that some parents do not have interest in the education of their children. Langsberg (2005:221) states that parents' own perceptions and experiences of education can influence their family involvement. The parents' perception of education is linked to their children's achievements. Oosthuizen (2010:81)  also indicates that parent participation at school has a positive influence on the child's scholastic achievement.

### 4.3.4.3. Teenage pregnancy

Teenage pregnancy was stated as one factor that contributes to poor performance in the schools under study. The SMT members indicated that pregnant learners are always absent because they attend the ante-natal clinic and even after giving birth they would stay at home for one or more weeks depending on their health condition. One participant also said *"now that they are young parents, their rate of absenteeism increases further during the period when their babies are not feeling well and when they have to go and collect the social grant".* These many days of absenteeism make them to miss tests, assignment, projects and even examinations and as such affect their academic performance. Table 4.1, which shows grade nine results from term one to term four, also reflects different enrolments each term which is the absenteeism.

*4.3.4.4.   Ill-disciplined learners*

These are learners with challenging behaviours. Participants indicated that these learners do not write class and home activities and if they attempt to write, they do not finish the task. They are said to be frequently disruptive and troublesome.

## 4.3.5   School-related factors

*4.3.5.1 Learner-teacher support material (LTSM) shortages*

▪ Textbooks

Almost all participants indicated that grade nine learners share textbooks. In some schools two learners share one textbook whereas in other schools three learners share a textbook. One SMT member stated that on several occasions educators brought many learners who did not write home activities to his office and the learners gave reasons like: *"it was not my turn to take the textbook with me home"; "the other learner with whom I share the textbook said he does not see the book or left the book at home"; "we no longer have a textbook because one learner with whom we share lost it".* The same SMT member further indicated that the shortage of textbooks is sometimes used as a scapegoat by lazy learners who do not write class as well as home activities even if the subject educators try to improvise.

When participants were asked for the reason of textbook shortages particularly in grade nine, many of them stated the unpredictabe nature of the grade nine enrolments due to their zigzag performance. Yearly, learners from grade eight will find a considerable number of repeaters in grade nine and results is an increased enrolment and  LTSM shortages.

▪ Furniture

The majority of participants stated that first preference in allocating desks or tables and chairs is given to the FET band.  The GET band, which includes grade

nine is given second preference. One participant indicated that when new furniture arrives at school, it is taken to senior classes and the lower classes are given the old furniture. A participant from another school stated that at their school two learners share a single combination desk while three learners share a double-combination desk and that makes writing difficult for leaners. The same participant also indicated that some desks have only the sitting part without the table part and learners put exercise books on their thighs when writing. In such circumstances some learners are in so much discomfort that they are unable to concentrate on the class activities. This situation as mentioned by participants is not conducive for effective teaching and learning.

Shortages of LTSM and furniture act as a barrier to teaching and learning.

### 4.3.5.2 Departmental policy on promotion and progression

The majority of the participants indicated that the promotion requirements for grade nine are higher than those of grade ten, eleven and twelve. Furthermore, grade nine learners know that if they have already repeated a grade in a phase they qualify for progression and they therefore do not study or work hard to meet the promotion requirements. Hence there is high failure rate of first timers in grade ten and eleven. One participant said: *"it is like the Department does not want these learners to be retained even if they do not perform well because the procedure manual for promotion states that to retain a learner who has already spent four years in a phase the school should have held several consultative meetings with the learner's parent, keep minutes of the meetings and also keep records of the learner's activities at school. This is not an easy task to do because grade nine has high enrolment and as an SMT member I also teach or manage other grades in the school. Therefore, what happens is that majority of grade nine learners simply progress to grade ten at the end of the year"*. The last statement of the respondent is reflected in table 4.1 which reflects a high pass rate in the fourth term of the year as compared to the other terms. Another point which was highlighted by the majority of participants was that promotion and progression in grade nine has a long lasting effect because it affects the pass

rate in grade twelve where learners cannot progress or be promoted on the basis of having spent more than four years in the phase but they have to meet the promotion requirements and nothing else.

### 4.3.5.3 Lack of library facilities in schools

Schools in the Mamabolo circuit do not have libraries and the nearest community library is in Mankweng township, about fifteen kilometres away. Participants indicated that due to distance learners are not able to access the library services. Assignments and projects that require some research become a challenge to the majority of learners since they cannot access information and as such they perform poorly.

### 4.3.5.4 Shortage of human resource

All SMT members interviewed complained of under-staffing. Of the six schools which were selected for the study, five have a minimum of seven educators and maximum of twelve. One participant indicated that working under such conditions where the teacher would stand the whole day without any free period is frustrating and demotivating. The participant acknowledged that some teachers do not attend some of their classes when they are tired. Others absent themselves from school. Some educators who are more frustrated by the work load go to an extent of resigning. These conditions affect teaching and learning as well as learner performance. During the interviews it was discovered that the majority of SMT members are acting in their positions as Principals and Heads of Departments because the previous occupants of the posts left the school due to various reasons. This results in a situation where the whole team is constituted by novice people who are expected to manage the school effectively.

### 4.3.5.5 Non-commitment of educators

The majority of participants indicated that educators are no longer committed to teaching and as such cannot even improvise to ensure that teaching and learning takes place despite the challenges. One participant stated that some educators

use common transport and cannot remain after school to supervise study or to offer extra lessons to learners. Extra lessons or catch-up programmes are important because there are times where some educators are absent from school because of illnesses, family matters, workshops or subject briefings, union matters and motivation sessions. During all these periods of absence learners are left unattended and not taught. This resulted in the syllabus not being completed on time and learners who are to write the examinations are not well prepared, hence the result is underperformance.

### 4.3.5.6    Misplaced Learners who are Over-aged

Some of the participants complained that there are misplaced learners in grade nine who are not supposed to be in the mainstream. These learners are admitted in grade nine already over-aged because they have been repeating grades and then qualified for progression. These learners attend school well and are very cooperative but do not cope with the mainstream work. They can hardly read or write but can do well in sports and handwork. They contribute to increased failure rate.

### 4.3.5.7  Poor Curriculum Management

Some members of the SMT who were interviewed from various schools acknowledged that they do not manage the curriculum properly. They indicated that they do not support educators through class visits, they do not control written work which helps to monitor curriculum coverage and also provide evidence of work taught, they do not hold Departmental meetings and subject meetings. When these participants were asked to provide reasons for not taking care of these responsibilities, one said: "*I am overloaded with work and I can only manage to teach and to moderate question papers before they are administered to learners*". Another said: "*I am just a senior teacher and I need to be trained on how to manage curriculum because the principal co-opted me in the SMT to be responsible for languages".* The researcher observed during the interviews that SMT members who are not HODs by appointment, show lack of confidence in

management. Curriculum management is one of the core business of SMTs and if not properly implemented could negatively affect the performance of learners.

### 4.3.5.8    Culture of the School

Du Plessis *et al.* (2007:134) describe culture as the dominant values adopted by an organisation. In simple terms, culture is the way things are done in an organisation. One of the school cultures that are perceived by participants to be contributing to poor performance in grade nine classes is stated below.

- Absenteeism of learners during examination period

The majority of participants indicated that it is the culture of the schools that during examination period, whether mid-year or end-of-year, learners do not stay at school. They only come to school when they have to write an examination.. On days where no examination is scheduled, the learners only come to school during break time to get their food. Learners do not remain in their classrooms and study. Even those who arrive early at school on the day of writing an examination are seen playing around the school yard. Some SMT members from other schools state that it is not easy to keep the grade nine learners at school and in the classrooms during examination period. This affects learner performance largely because the majority of these learners do not study even at home.

## 4.4    CHALLENGES THAT THE SCHOOL ENCOUNTERS DUE TO  HIGH FAILURE RATE

Participants' responses to this question revealed that schools that are performing poorly academically experience similar challenges. This was noticed when some challenges were cited repeatedly by participants in various schools. The challenges that are faced by SMTs in the schools of the Mamabolo circuit are also responsible for high failure rate and as such they have been discussed in section 2.3 . Below are some of the challenges that can be added to those already highlighted.

### 4.4.1 Overcrowding in the classrooms

Overcrowding is the results of grade repetition. Learners who have been promoted from grade eight to grade nine find repeaters in the classroom hence the congestion. This is confirmed by the enrolments in figure 4.5.

### 4.4.2 Increased workload

Some SMT members indicated that their teaching workload makes it difficult to manage the curriculum, to monitor the work of educators and to support them. The workload is also increased by the fact that SMT members perform administrative duties as the majority of the schools in the Mamabolo circuit do not have administrators.

### 4.4.3 Withdrawals of learners

Due to the failure rate in grade nine, some SMT members reported that parents transfer their children to other schools. This withdrawal of learners by their parents results in decreased enrolment which affects the post provisioning of the school. Good academic performance serves as an attracting tool to draw learners to the school, while poor performance has the opposite effect..

### 4.4.4 Curriculum changes

Participants indicated that managing a new curriculum is challenging but what makes it worse are the workshops that are organised during school days, such as a strategy to training for educators on new developments in curriculum. Learners are most of the time left unattended when educators attend these workshops. Literature has indicated that sufficient training and workshops are essential for SMTs and educators to master a new curriculum.

## 4.5  WAYS OF MANAGING HIGH FAILURE RATES IN GRADE NINE

This section provides various strategies that can assist the School Management Teams to effectively manage high failure rates in grade nine classes. The data about these strategies were collected from secondary sources as well as during the interview process. A brief explanation is given below.

The School Management Teams in the Mamabolo circuit can manage high failure rates by effectively managing the curriculum and providing sound leadership. Bush and Bell (2002:157) state that effective management of the curriculum includes processes such as planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. These processes are interrelated and one cannot lead to effectiveness without the other three.

### 4.5.1 Planning Curriculum activities

Planning of curriculum management by the School Management Teams embraces activities such as drawing the programme of class visits to support educators, a programme of meetings, the time-table for lesson attendance, an assessment timetable, dates to control written work and provide feedback, moderation programme, dates for reporting learner performance to parents, programmes of departmental school based workshops and motivation. This paragraph suggests that if the School Management Teams in the Mamabolo circuit can implement planning as outlined by Bush *et al.* (2002:157), one step towards good performance would have been taken.

### 4.5.2  Implementation

The implementation of curriculum plans proceed in a logical and systematic way from policy to putting plans into action (Bush *et al.,* 2002:158). The School Management Teams should act as direct support to the implementation of all the plans in order to enhance effective curriculum delivery and quality results in grade nine classes. In the process of putting the plans in action, the School Management teams should control written work and give feedback, hold

departmental meetings as a way of engaging teachers in decision-making, visit educators during lesson presentation to give support and report learners' performance to parents.

### 4.5.3   Monitoring

Monitoring of curriculum activities by the School Management Teams simply implies ensuring that plans are being put into practice. Monitoring as a tool of supervising the implementation of curriculum delivery can be done through conducting classroom observation, moderating tests and examinations as well as looking at the learners' work (Department of Education, 2000a:10). Proper monitoring assists the School Management Teams to detect areas that need immediate intervention in order to improve teaching and learning, thereby improving learner attainment.

### 4.5.4   Evaluation

According to Bush *et al.* (2002:158), effective evaluation is the management process through which School Management Teams verify that deviations from the planned activities are kept to a minimum so that the schools' objectives may be accomplished with as little interruption as possible. Verification is done by means of assessing and regulating the learning and teaching activities. If the School Management Teams control the implementation of curriculum management effectively, they will be able to track and determine early warnings of the challenges that cause poor learner achievement and provide suitable solutions to deal with the challenges identified.

### 4.5.5   Extra-curricular activities

Bisschoff, Du Plessis and Smith (2004:11) state that extra-curricular activities involving sport and culture contribute to enhancing the opportunities of leraners for achieving individual determination in personal excellence. During interviews when the majority of SMTs were complaining of the workload, the researcher observed that on their personal timetables sports periods did not appear.

Therefore it was evident that extra-curiicular activities were ignored in the schools of the Mamabolo circuit. Bisschoff *et al.* (2004:12) continue to indicate that during sports days parents would come to school to support their children and thereby being involved in the activities of the school. They concur with the idea of Oosthuizen in paragraph 4.3.4.1 when he states that participation of parents at school has a positive influence on the scholastic achievement of their children.

The majority of the interview participants highlighted the fact that they theoretically know their responsibilities as described by Personnel Administrative Measures in the Employment of Educators Act 76 of 1998, but they find it difficult to implement because of their workload. They indicated that too much focus is given to teaching and too little to monitoring and supporting educators. They further stated that they are more than willing to execute their duties and responsibilities as the School Management Team members.

### 4.5.6 Mark Adjustment

The principles and procedures to be followed in adjusting marks for learners in grades seven, eight and nine are clearly stipulated in the National Assessment Circular no.3 of 2015. The purpose of mark adjustment is to assist in the finalisation of the promotion in these grades. This is a strategy for the National Department of Education to increase the pass rate in the GET band. If the School Management Teams in the Mambolo circuit can successfully manage the the process, indeed high failure rates can be reduced. Below the researcher has outlined the principles of mark adjustment process as discussed in the National Assessment Circular no. 3 of 2015:

a) Mark adjustment will be on individual subjects and not on overall pass rate of the school in a grade.
b) Mark adjustment will only be applied on a maximum of three subjects per learner.
c) The adjustment will be applied only to a subject with a mark which is within a 7% range of the pass requirement.

d) The adjustment must be prioritised in the fundamental subjects of Home Language, First Additional Language and Mathemetics. If a learner does not require adjustment in the fundamental subjects, adjustment may be applied in the elective subjects separately or in combination with the fundamental

e) Mark adjustment must only be effected where it leads to a learner satisfying the overall promotion requirements (See section 2.2.3).

## 4.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter has dealt with research analysis and interpretation of the research results. It is evident from the analysis in this chapter that effective management of high failure rates is a challenge to the School Management Teams in the Mamabolo circuit. Despite their commitment and hard work in striving for effective management they still encounter several challenges. The next chapter concludes the study and presents the findings, recommendations and conclusions.

# CHAPTER FIVE

## SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a summary of the findings in previous chapters, to draw conclusions and to make recommendations from all the preceding chapters with regard to the effective management of high failure rates in grade nine classes. Education is indeed a societal issue. All stakeholders need to join hands in order to improve learner performance in schools. The School Management Teams also require support from the Department of Education in terms of training and workshops to enhance and strengthen their skills and knowledge in school management.

### 5.2 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The secondary schools in the Mamabolo circuit are located far apart from each other as depicted in figures 3.1 and 3.2 and therefore distance limited the researcher to interviewing participants of two different schools per day. Where more time was needed to conduct interviews, for example, only one school was visited per day. During that one day visit, not all SMT members were able to be interviewed and that resulted in a situation where an institution was visited more than once.

It is a common practice amongst workers to use common transport when going to work and from work. The situation is the same for employees in the schools of the Mamabolo circuit. This made it impossible to interview some SMT members after school. The researcher was compelled to make appointments during working hours particularly during lunch time. McMillan and Schumacher (2010:16) state that human beings are affected by a wide range of influences as they are uniquely different. Unlike animals or plants, human beings are unpredictable and this affected appointments. The appointments which were well

arranged in time and agreed upon were turned down several times by various prospective participants providing various reasons. Therefore appointments were most of the time rescheduled due to some reasons highlighted above.

The research sample consisted of 24 participants and only 22 were interviewed. The other two who were not interviewed were not from the same school. Data collection was done during November 2015, January and early February 2016. Those were, of course, the busiest months in the education cycle where SMTs, amongst other things, were engaged in managing examinations, finalising admissions, preparing for the closing of schools and the commencement of the new academic year.

## 5.3  SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH

This study was constructed upon five chapters. Each chapter provided a specific subject that was to be addressed in order to achieve the study objectives. This section provides a reflection on the contents of the chapters as an overview of this study.

**Chapter one** outlined the orientation of the study. It provided the background, aim, and objectives of the study. The research method, design, significance of the study and ethical considerations were clarified. Chapter one served as a plan for undertaking research and provided the platform through which all proposed research chapters unfolded.

**Chapter two** dealt with the review of literature and the theoretical underpinnings related to the aim of the study. The literature was explored on the effective management of high failure rates in grade nine and how the management of schools are affected. The following headings were used to guide the discussions in this chapter:  Legislative framework on the provision of basic education; factors that affect learner performance; challenges caused by high failure rate in schools and the effective management of high failure rates.

**Chapter three** focused on the research design and methodology used to investigate the research questions. The chapter provided details of how the study was conducted, how the sample was selected for the face-to-face unstructured interviews, the instrument and methods of collecting data as well as the data analysis method, validity, reliability and ethical considerations were explained.

**Chapter four** considered the analysis and interpretation of data collected during the interviews. The collected data were properly transcribed to convey real meaning provided by the interview participants. Research revealed that although SMTs are striving to manage effectively, there are overwhelming challenges that impede their progress and as such create loopholes for underperformance. Effective management of schools requires joint efforts of staff members, learners and parents. The research also revealed how poor academic performance affects the management of the school. The causes of underperformance were analysed as provided by the participants.

**Chapter five** concluded the study and presents the findings, recommendations and conclusion.

## 5.4 FINDINGS

This section presents the findings of the research on the management of high failure rate in garde nine.. Based on the findings, the following headings are discussed in relation to the objectives of the study:

### 5.4.1 Challenges for the School Management Teams

Objective number one in paragraph 1.6a is realised through data collection. The respondents stated several factors that resulted in high failure rate in grade nine classes which in turn constituted management challenges experienced by the School Management Teams in the Mamabolo circuit. Some of the findings are lack of parental involvement , teenage pregnancy, lack of library facilities, poor curriculum management , congestion and shortage of LTSM..

*5.4.1.1 Conclusion*

The conclusion reached in this study is that there are indeed serious challenges facing the School Management Teams in the Mamabolo circuit which are emanating from high failure rates in grade nine classes. Overcrowded classes, shortage of furniture, increased workload and learner withdrawals are some of the serious challenges encountered by the SMTs.

*5.4.1.2 Recommendations*

These recommendations are stated in order to address the challenges faced by SMTs and to improve learner performance in grade nine classes.

- Create smaller class sizes.
- Organise motivation sessions for grade nine learners. Motivation should include grade nine educators.
- Reward good performance in grade nine as a strategy to encourage independent study, hard work and to the improve pass rate. The reward should be for both learners and educators in the form of certificate and trophies.
- Establishment of vocational training centres in Mamabolo circuit or nearby areas. This will help learners who are not academically gifted to pursue a career and earn a living.
- The Department of Education should provide physical resources such as libraries, classrooms and furniture while at the same time the school should raise funds and ask for donations to meet its needs for the effective running of the institution.
- Since the majority of the schools in Mamabolo circuit are small schools, the issue of workload can be addressed by reducing the number of curriculum streams. That is offering one stream instead of two or three.

## 5.4.2  The effect of  high failure rate on the management of schools

Objective number two as stated in section 1.6b  is realised. The respondents, who are members of the School Management Teams in various schools, whose core business is to manage the curriculum and to ensure good learner attainment, clearly indicated that they are failing to effectively execute their responsibilities. Some of the contributing factors are ill-dsciplined learners who are frequently absent, lack of parental involvement, increased workload and lack of human and physical resources.

### 5.4.2.1 Conclusion

 The School Management Teams find it difficult to effectively manage high failure rates. Therefore, high failure rates in grade nine classes have a negative effect on the management of the schools.

### 5.4.2.2 Recommendations

These recommendations are based on the second objective.

- Parental involvement should be fostered by developing strategies to accommodate working parents; such as parent workshops where they learn more about new curriculum and how to support their children with homework and preparation for tests and examinations; and organising parent meetings over weekends instead of evenings during the week.
- To deal with challenging behaviours of learners, a strategy of mentorship should be considered. Every educator should adopt five or six learners in grade nine acting as their mentor. Any negative or positive behaviour will be addressed by the mentor before reporting  it to the parents. The mentor-menter relationship of the educator and the learner in grade twelve has produced positive behaviour and performance.
- The Department of Education should revise their method of post provisioning. This should be based on both the number of subjects that are offered in schools and the number of learners enrolled. This will alleviate the work load and enhance productivity in schools.

### 5.4.3  Managing high failure rate

The third objective as stated on section 1.6c is also realised. The respondents suggested various ways that can assist the School Management Teams in the Mamabolo circuit to effectively manage high failure rates in grade nine classes. These are addressed in paragraph 4.5.

### *5.4.3.1 Conclusion*

The conclusion reached is that even though the School Management Teams in the Mamabolo circuit are aware of their duties and responsibilities, they still fail to effectively manage high failure rates in grade nine.

### *5.4.3.2 Recommendations*

- The School Management Teams in the Mamabolo circuit should be equipped with the skills and knowledge through workshops and training to improve their capacity to manage the curriculum and the school as an organisation. The professional development programme can be employed to address the professional growth of the School Management Teams basically concerning their needs in curriculum management and the management of the school as a whole.
- The school management should redirect their focus to grade nine as an exit-point of the GET band equally so as they do to grade twelve which is the exit-point of the FET band.
- Ensure that grade nine syllabus is completed earlier  by offering extra lessons so that there is enough time for revision. This can help to improve performance.
- Effective management of class attendance by both educators and learners through the usage of period attendance register. This will assist the SMT members to have evidence of class attendance and provide the necessary support.

- SMTs should design class visitation programmes for grade nine classes. This will assist in identifying weaknesses that contribute to poor performance so that intervention strategies are put in place.

- The Department of Education should institute a strategy for managing the performance of the school principals and School Management Teams. There must also be a strategy to fill vacant post within the prescribed period. This would deal with problems of acting post holders. The majority of people who are acting are not firm in implementing policices and taking decisions.

- The Department of Education should appoint school based psychologists who will assist grade eight learners on their arrival at secondary schools. Misplaced learners can easily be identified early and be referred to relevant institutions through the help of psychologists.

- The Department of Education should develop proper sporting facilities, such as soccer field, tennis court etc, to support extra-curricular activities in schools.

## 5.5 CONCLUSION

The research indicated that the SMTs require proper training for them to be able to manage the curriculum and the performance in schools. Parental involvement, extra-mural activities, learner commitment, planning of curriculum acivities, provision of resources, motivation sessions for both learners and educators, effective curriculum management and skills development workshops for SMTs can help to improve the performance of the School Management Teams and reduce high failure rate. This mini dissertation serves as the guideline to the relevant stakeholders in improving the functionality of the school management whereby performance in grade nine will also be improved.

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**APPENDIX A**

<div align="right">
Nkoshilo High School
PO Box 981
SOVENGA
0727
21 October 2015
</div>

The Circuit Manager
Mamabolo Circuit

SIR

**REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE SCHOOLS OF MAMABOLO CIRCUIT**

I, Ramoshai Mankaleme Emily, hereby request for permission to conduct research in the secondary schools of Mamabolo circuit. I am a Masters student in the Faculty of Management and Law at Turfloop Graduate School of Leadership. Practical Research is a prerequisite for the completion of this degree. My research topic is**: EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF HIGH FAILURE RATES IN GRADE NINE CLASSES: A CASE STUDY OF THE MAMABOLO CIRCUIT**. The study population is the SMT members.

I believe that the findings of this research will assist the Department of Education in areas that need improvement in Mamabolo circuit. The suggested possible solutions will help in the development and improvement of the schools under study and other schools with similar challenges in other circuits.

I am very aware that the fourth term of the year is a very busy period for learners, educators, SMTs and principals because they will be finalising term four tasks, doing revision and preparing for the start of the end of year examinations. I therefore promise not to impede the activities of the schools but to make proper arrangement with individual schools so that I can fit into their agenda and also to abide by the ethical considerations of conducting research.

Hoping for a positive response.

Yours faithfully

Ramoshai M.E. (076 633 4680)
Email: mankalemee@gmail.com
Signature:

**APPENDIX B**

# LIMPOPO
### PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT

Private Bag x 1108
SOVENGA
0727

Tel: 015 267 5641
Fax: 015 267 5642

### DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
### MAMABOLO CIRCUIT

INQ. TSUTSA SM
CONTACT: 082 087 6369
           082 954 3575
DATE:      09 NOVEMBER 2015

TO: THE PRINCIPAL
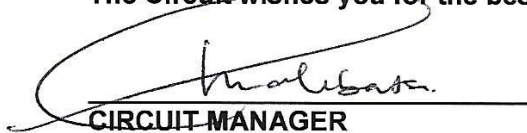     NKOSHILO SECONDARY SCHOOL

**MADAM**

**YOUR REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE SCHOOLS OF MAMABOLO CIRCUIT**

This serves as an acknowledgement of the receipt of your application as stated above. It is in the interest of our Circuit to promote and appreciate any endeavour by any individual who pursue to develop in the educational sphere. The Circuit also appreciates the fact that the outcome of your Research will in particular benefit our Circuit as well as the Department of Education in general.

We therefore, without any reservation, approve of your request and give you the permission to conduct your Research in our Circuit and schools as long as your exercise will not interfere and hamper the programmes that are currently running in our schools as well as those of the Department of Education.

Schools are also requested to render their premises accessible to the applicant for this purpose as long as the visits are not interfering with activities such as invigilation, marking, mark recording, moderation, etc.

The Circuit wishes you for the best in your endeavours.

CIRCUIT MANAGER

LIMPOPO PROVINCE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
POLOKWANE DISTRICT OFFICE
MAMABOLO CIRCUIT OFFICE

2015 -11- 0 9

PRIVATE BAG X1108
SOVENGA, 0727

KGORO YA THUTO LIMPOPO PROVINCE

**APPENDIX C**

Nkoshilo High School
PO Box 981
SOVENGA
0727
11 November 2015

The Principal


Sir / Madam


**REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN YOUR SCHOOL**


I am a Masters student in the Faculty of Management and Law at the Turfloop Graduate School of Leadership who is currently engaged in an academic research project. My research topic is: **EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF HIGH FAILURE RATE IN GRADE NINE CLASSES: A CASE STUDY OF THE MAMABOLO CIRCUIT.**


I humbly request permission to conduct an interview with individual SMT members in relation to the research topic.


Your co-operation will be highly appreciated.


Yours faithfully


_____
 RAMOSHAI M.E.

**APPENDIX D**

Nkoshilo High School
PO Box 981
SOVENGA
0727
11 November 2015

The School Management Team Member


SIR/MADAM

I am a Masters student in the Faculty of Management and Law at the Turfloop Graduate School of Leadership who is currently engaged in an academic research project. My research topic is: **EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF HIGH FAILURE RATE IN GRADE NINE CLASSES: A CASE STUDY OF THE MAMABOLO CIRCUIT.**

I humbly request for your participation in an interview in relation to this research topic.

Your co-operation will be highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully


_____
 RAMOSHAI M.E.

**APPENDIX E**

## CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS

You are requested to participate in the study entitled: **"Effective management of high failure rates in grade nine classes: A case study of the Mamabolo Circuit".**

Your participation is voluntary and you are free to withdraw your participation at any time you wish to do so without any prejudice. Your identity and that of the school will be kept anonymous and all information obtained from the interview will be confidential. You will not incur any cost as a result of your participation in this study. You are free to ask any question concerning this study at any time prior to your participation, during and after your participation.

AUTHORISATION: I have read the above and understood the nature of the study. I give my consent to be interviewed.

Participant's signature: _____

Date: _____

**APPENDIX F**

## INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

In-depth interview on the **EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF HIGH FAILURE RATE IN GRADE NINE CLASSES: A CASE STUDY OF THE MAMABOLO CIRCUIT**.

## A. INTRODUCTION

- The researcher introduces herself to the participants.
- **The purpose of the interview**:  To acquire information and knowledge in relation to the effective management of high failure rates in grade nine classes to be used for academic purpose. The SMT members are regarded as the most relevant source of information for this topic by the researcher because their day-to-day activities are to ensure curriculum delivery and good academic performance of learners.
- **Confidentiality clause**: "The participants' identity and that of the institution will be kept anonymous and all information obtained from this interview will be confidential."

## B. BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

1. Gender:

| Female | Male |
|--------|------|

2. Age :

| 25 -  30 years | |
|----------------|--|
| 31 – 40 years | |
| 41 – 50 years | |
| 51 years and above | |

3. Experience in managerial position:

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 – 5 years | |
| 6 – 10 years | |
| 11 – 15 years | |
| 16 – 20 years | |
| 21 years and above | |

4. Highest academic and professional qualifications in the table below:

| | |
|---|---|
| Below Matric + 3 years training | |
| Matric + 3 years training | |
| Matric + 4 years training | |
| Matric + 5 years training | |
| Above  Matric + 5 years training | |

## C.  INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How many grade nine learners do you have in the school and how do they perform academically?

2. Can you briefly share with me the causes of poor academic performance in grade nine classes?

3. What are the challenges that the school encounters because of high failure rate?

4. How best can high failure rate in grade nine be managed?

## D.  CONCLUSION

- Is there anything that you still wish to add?
- THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION.

**APPENDIX G**

Revd. Dr. Lutz Ackermann
(Independent Researcher)
Mankweng, Zone A, Stand 506
Tel: +27 72 3487010
e-mail: DRLA4 @ directbox.com

10 May 2016

**TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN**

This is to confirm, that I, Dr Lutz Ackermann, have read the Research Thesis entitled

**"EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF HIGH FAILURE RATES IN GRADE NINE CLASSES:
A CASE STUDY OF THE MAMABOLO CIRCUIT"**

by Mrs MANKALEME EMILY RAMOSHAI

(student number 200208413) and that I am satisfied with the quality of work she has produced in terms of structuring the document, in terms of style, grammar and spelling. Suggestions for suitable corrections and improvements have been made to the candidate.

*Lutz Ackermann*

(Rev. Dr. Lutz Ackermann, Mankweng)