

**POSSIBLE FACTORS THAT CAUSE UNDERPERFORMANCE IN
GRADE 12: A CASE OF CEBISA AND ITHAFA SCHOOLS, IN ERMELO,
MPUMALANGA PROVINCE.**

By

SIPHO KENNIE MOTHA

MASTER OF EDUCATION

In

CURRICULUM STUDIES

In the

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

(School of Education)

At the

UNIVERSITY OF LIMPOPO

SUPERVISOR: Prof. L.T Mabasa

2021

DECLARATION

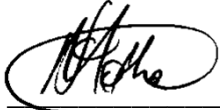
I declare that the dissertation hereby submitted to the University of Limpopo, for the degree of Masters of Education in Curriculum Studies has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other university; that it is my work in design and in execution, and that all material contained herein has been duly acknowledged.

Motha S.K (Mr)

08 December 2020

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the Lord who helped me through the challenges encountered in writing the report. I thank him for the strength and courage that He gave me.



Motha S.K

11th Dec 2020

Date

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly, I would like to thank Prof L.T. Mabasa giving me guidance in writing this report. He has been very helpful and supportive. I thank you Prof for helping me to acquire research skills that I did not have.

Secondly, I would like to extend my gratitude to my wife Lettie Portia Motha for encouraging me always and supporting me throughout the years of my study. You have been my pillar of strength. To my kids Nokwanda, Yenziwe and Mongezi, thank you for your valuable inputs. Thanks to my friend Ronald Mpofu for his support and assistance. Thank you very much for showing interest in my work.

I also thank the Department of Education of Mpumalanga Province, the Msukaligwa 1 Circuit Manager, Dr. D.R. Mango for granting me permission to conduct the research. I also would like to thank parents, educators and learners who participated in the study. Without you the study would not have been possible.

I also thank my mom, Thembile Margaret Motha and my late father Thomas Phumaphi Motha for nurturing me. Thanks for giving me the foundation and encouraging me always.

Last but not least, I thank God Almighty.

ABSTRACT

Learners' academic achievement occupies a very important place in education as well as in the learning process. This study was therefore conducted to investigate factors causing the underperformance of grade 12 learners in secondary schools in Ermelo, Msukaligwa 1 circuit in Gert Sibande district Mpumalanga Province.

The qualitative approach was used. Qualitative data generation techniques (semi-structured face to face, observations and document analysis) were used to solicit the understanding of parents, grade 12 learners, grade 12 teachers and heads of department with regard to the phenomenon being studied. The sample size of 22 participants (6 parents, 6 learners, 4 heads of departments and 6 grade 12 teachers) were selected through purposive sampling technique.

Data generated through interviews was analysed by using thematic analysis approach. Findings revealed that there are possible factors that cause poor academic performance in Grade 12. Factors include home related factors, school related factors, teacher related factors, parent related factors and learner related factors. Identified home related factors were the size of the family, unpredictable environment at home as well as low financial income. School related factors included overcrowded classrooms, shortage of textbooks, planned and unplanned programmes. Teacher related factors included non-attendance of classes, inadequate content coverage, non-implementation of subject improvement strategies and excessive code switching. Learner related factors included late coming and attitude towards learning. Parent related factors include poor parental support and inadequate level of education. Based on the findings, the study recommends that appointed heads of department should be responsible for the management of subjects they are qualified to manage. Again, the department of education revisits the implementation of the policy of progression so that only learners deserving to be promoted to the next grade are promoted.

Keywords: Underperformance, Learner related factors, Parent related factors, and Educator related factors, Departmental issues and Classroom issues.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

DoE = Department of Education.

DBE = Department of Basic Education.

FET = Further Education and Training.

HOD = Head of Department

MPDE = Mpumalanga Department of Education.

SMT = School Management Team.

STMA = Sekondi Takoradi Metropolitan

SPIP = Subject Performance Improvement Plans

SPIP = Subject Performance Improvement Plans

LA-1 = Learner number 1 from school A

LA-2 = Learner number 2 from school A

LA-3 = Learner number 3 from school A

LB-1 = Learner number 1 from school B

LB-2 = Learner number 2 from school B

LB-3 = Learner number 3 from school B

TA-1= Grade 12 teacher number 1 from school A

TA-2= Grade 12 teacher number 2 from school A

TA-3= Grade 12 teacher number 3 from school A

TB-1= Grade 12 teacher number 1 from school B

TB-2= Grade 12 teacher number 2 from school B

TB-3= Grade 12 teacher number 3 from school B

PA-1= Parent of a grade 12 learner number 1 from School A

PA-2= Parent of a grade 12 learner number 2 from School A

PA-3= Parent of a grade 12 learner number 3 from School A

PB-1= Parent of a grade 12 learner number 1 from School B

PB-2= Parent of a grade 12 learner number 2 from School B

PB-3= Parent of a grade 12 learner number 3 from School B

SMTA-1= School management team member number 2 from school A

SMTA-2= School management team member number 2 from school A

SMTB-1= School management team member number 1 from school B

SMTB-2= School management team member number 2 from school B

1. TABLE OF CONTENT

TABLE OF CONTENT	PAGE NUMBERS
DECLARATION	i
DEDICATION	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
ABSTRACT	iv
LIST OF ACRONYMNS	v-vi6
CHAPTER 1	
1.1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY	1-11
1.2. Aim	3
1.3. Objectives	3
1.4. Problem statement	3
1.5. Theoretical framework	4
1.6. Ethical consideration	4-5
1.7. Research design and methodology	5
1.8. Qualitative research	6
1.9. Population and sampling	7
1.10. Data collection	7
1.11. Quality assurance	8
1.12. Significance of the study	9
1.13. Limitations of the study	10
1.14. Chapter outline	10-11
1.15. Conclusion	11
CHAPTER 2	
LITERATURE REVIEW	
2.1. Introduction	12
2.2. Learner related factors	12
2.2.1. Attitude towards learning	13
2.2.2. Proficiency in the medium of Instruction	14
2.2.3. Substance abuse	16
2.2.4. Learner absenteeism	17
2.2.5. Shortage of resources	17
2.2.6. Choice of subjects	19
2.3. Parent related factors	19
2.3.1. Low level of parents education	19
2.3.2. Parental involvement	20
2.3.3. Unemployment of parents	21
2.3.4. Parental communication style	22
3.3.5. Parental marital status	23
2.4. Educator related factors	23
2.4.1. Teacher-pupil ratio	23
2.4.2. Teacher unionism	25

2.4.3 Instructional leadership	32
2.4.4. Teacher morale	27
2.4.5. Teacher qualification	27
2.5. Departmental issues	28
2.5.1. Progression policy	28
2.5.2. Curriculum reforms versus teacher training	29
2.5.3. Provision of resources	30
2.5.4. Language policy	31
2.5.5. District and circuit support	33
2.5.6. Corporal punishment	35
2.6. Classroom issues	36
2.6.1. Reading ability	36
2.6.2. Homework	37
3. Conclusion	38
CHAPTER 3	
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY	39
3.1. Introduction	39
3.2. Research design and research methodology	39
3.2.1. Research methodology	39
3.2.2. Research design	41
3.3. Research site	43
3.4. Sampling	45
3.5. Data collection strategies	46
3.5.1. Interviewing	46
3.5.2. Observation	49
3.5.3. Documents	48
3.6. Data generation	48
3.6.1. Teacher and HOD interviews	48
3.6.2. Parents interviews	49
3.6.3. Learner interviews	50
3.6.4. Observations	51
3.6.5. Document analysis	52
3.7. Quality criteria	53
3.7.1. The use of different methods of data collection	53
3.7.2. The use of a tape recorder	54
3.7.3. Transferability	54
3.7.4. Confirmability	54
3.8. Ethical consideration	55
3.8.1. Permission to conduct research	55
3.8.2. Informed consent	55
3.8.3. Anonymity	55
3.8.4. Protection from harm	56
3.9. Conclusion	56
	56
CHAPTER 4	

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS	
4.1. Introduction	57
4.2. School profile	58
4.2.1. School A	58
4.2.2. School B	59
4.3. Research themes	60
4.3.1. Home related factors	61
4.3.1.1. The size of the family	62
4.3.1.2. Unpredictable home environment	63
4.3.1.3. Low financial income	64
4.3.2. School related factors	65
4.3.2.1. Overcrowded classrooms	65
4.3.2.2. Shortage of textbooks	67
4.3.2.3. Planned and unplanned programmes	68
4.3.3. Teacher related factors	69
4.3.3.1. Class attendance	69
4.3.3.2. Teacher qualification	70
4.3.3.3. Teacher preparedness	72
4.3.3.4. Inadequate content coverage	73
4.3.3.5. Inconsistent moderation of tasks	74
4.3.3.6. Non-implementation of improvement strategies	75
4.3.3.7. Lack of capacity building	76
4.3.3.8. Excessive code switching	77
4.3.4. Learner related factors	79
4.3.4.1. Knowledge gap	79
4.3.4.2. Attitude towards learning	80
4.3.4.3. Late coming	81
4.3.5. Parent related factors	82
4.3.5.1. Inadequate parental support	82
4.3.5.2. Inadequate level of education	84
4.4. Conclusion	85
CHAPTER 5	
SUMMARY, FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	
5.1 Introduction	86
5.2. Summary of the study	86
5.2.1. Aim of the study	86
5.2.2. Qualitative procedures highlighted	86
5.2.3. Chapter summary	87
5.3. Summary of major findings	89
5.3.1. Home related factors	89
5.3.2. School related factors	90
5.3.3. Teacher related factors	91
5.3.4. Learner related factors	94
5.3.5. Parent related factors	95
5.4. Recommendations	96
5.4.1. Department of education	96

5.4.2. School management teams	97
5.4.3. Implications for future research	98
5.4.4. Limitations of the study	99
5.6. Conclusion	100
6. References	101-118
7. ANNEXTURE A	119
8. ANNEXTURE B	120
9. ANNEXTURE C	121
10. ANNEXTURE D	122
11. ANNEXTURE E	123
12. ANNEXTURE F	125
13. ANNEXTURE G	129
14. ANNEXTURE H	133
15. ANNEXTURE I	136
16. ANNEXTURE J	137
17. ANNEXTURE K	138
18. ANNEXTURE L	139
19. ANNEXTURE M	140
20. ANNEXTURE N	141

CHAPTER 1

ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

1.1. Introduction and Background to the study

The underperformance of Grade 12 learners has continued to be a cause for concern for different countries including our very own South Africa. This is the reason why Mangcu (2017) attests that in the last couple of years South Africa prioritised the country's academic achievement as one of the important areas that need to be addressed. Mendezebal (2013) amplified this view by mentioning that the academic achievement of learners occupied and continues to occupy a very important place in education as well as in the learning process. It is against this background that the South African public also gave special attention, care and critical observation to the results of grade 12 learners. This is because Grade 12 results are a matter of importance to the South African public because the same results give certainty to the admission of learners in institutions of higher learning such as universities and further education and training (FET) colleges (DoE, 2010).

The underperformance of grade 12 learners has also been experienced in other African countries like Nigeria and Ghana. Bonney and Amoah (2015) confirmed that a public outcry about the academic performance of learners being below expectation have been mentioned in the Western Region of Ghana, Sekondi Takoradi Metropolitan (STMA). Ajayi and Oyeniyi (2017) reported that every year in the Ogun State of Nigeria, student' performance in external examinations has shown a large number of candidates achieving less than five credits for their subjects, including Mathematics and English language. This performance (and outcry) in other African countries is proof that poor academic performance is indeed an international problem.

According to annual national report on school performance, as issued by the Department of Basic Education (2016), the majority of schools in South Africa still report the problem of grade 12 learners performing poorly in their final examinations. This report (DBE, 2016) indicated that the national pass percentage achieved by grade 12 learners was 70.7%. However, out of the nine provinces with learners who wrote matric examinations, four provinces achieved below the national percentage.

These poor performances by the four provinces negatively contributed to the academic performance of grade 12 learners in South Africa. This study will investigate two schools in Mpumalanga under the Gert Sibande district that could not achieve 100% pass between the periods 2013 to 2017, which also contributed to the low academic achievement in grade 12.

Gert Sibande district schools in Mpumalanga province are not immune from the challenge facing the rest of the South African grade 12 learners. According to Mpumalanga Education Department the number of learners passing grade 12 declined for two successive years from 78.6% in 2015 to 77.1 % in 2016 (MPDE,2017). When compared with the national results, Mpumalanga recorded a large drop in admissions to bachelor and diploma studies between 2014 and 2016, which is in line with the national decline (MPDE, 2017). In 2016, only 22.9% of grade 12 learners met the requirements for admission to bachelor studies, and only 34.05% met the requirements for admission to diploma studies (MPDE, 2017). This decline is evidence that the problem of unsatisfactory performance by grade 12 learners also exist in Mpumalanga. This study will therefore look into factors which may possibly give rise to the underperformance of grade 12 learners with specific reference to Ithafa and Cebisa secondary schools under Mpumalanga province in Gert Sibande district.

The persistency of the problem though does not mean that nothing has been attempted to solve it. Some research studies have been conducted on this issue. Rammala (2009) considered factors causing grade 12 learners to perform poorly by paying a particular attention to the factors that are caused by home and school environment. Acquino (2011) considered the following factors as contributing significantly to poor academic performance. He paid particular attention investigating habits and study attitudes of grade 12 learners that could contribute to poor academic performance. Ngcongco (2016) concluded that teachers' qualification could be another possible factor which can cause the underperformance of grade 12 learners. Harsasi and Sutawijaya (2018) linked the underperformance of grade 12 learners to factors like the course assessment quality, self-efficacy and the learners' learning process. Shaffee, Ahmad, Idris, Ismail and Ghani (2019) identified numerous social ills like poverty, socio-economic conditions and political challenges as factors impeding academic performance.

However, it must be mentioned that despite the existence of a number of studies focusing on the factors contributing towards grade 12 poor performance, the problem still persists. It is against this background that the researcher saw a need to focus on possible factors causing the underperformance of grade 12 learners, which is below the expected level of performance as set by the department of education in secondary schools in Ermelo, Gert Sibande District in Mpumalanga Province.

1.2. Aim

The aim of this study is to investigate and identify factors which caused the underperformance of grade 12 learners in Msukaligwa I circuit, between the years 2013 to 2017.

1.3. Objectives

The objectives of the study are:

1. To explore how the home environmental factor can cause the grade 12 learners' underperformance at secondary schools in Gert Sibande District, Mpumalanga Province.
2. To explore how the educational institutional factor can cause the grade 12 learners' underperformance at secondary schools in Gert Sibande District, Mpumalanga Province.
3. To explore how qualifications of teachers can be a possible factor cause to the grade 12 learners' underperformance at secondary schools in Gert Sibande District, Mpumalanga Province.
4. To explore how habits and attitudes of grade 12 learners can cause their underperformance at secondary schools in Gert Sibande District, Mpumalanga Province.
5. To explore how the level of education of parents can cause the grade 12 learners' underperformance at secondary schools in Gert Sibande District, Mpumalanga Province.

1.4. Problem Statement

A problem statement refers to a short description of the researcher's area of concern that needs to be addressed (Miles, 2017). In the context of this study the area of concern that needs to be addressed is the underperformance of Grade 12 learners in

two schools in Msukaligwa 1 circuit between the years 2013 to 2017. Solutions to existing problems can only be obtained by asking relevant and critical questions. Questions should therefore be asked as to what exactly are the possible causes of such a poor performance by grade 12 learners in the identified schools.

This study therefore aimed at investigating factors which possibly caused the underperformance of grade 12 learners, in two secondary schools in Ermelo, Gert Sibande District in Mpumalanga province, focusing in the period 2013- 2017. Hence the pivotal research question of this study was: Which factors are possibly causing the underperformance of grade 12 learners in the two identified secondary schools.

1.5. Theoretical Framework.

Researchers use different theories for different studies. Examples of such theories include the Phenomenological theory, Constructive theory, Interpretivist theory, Critical theory to mention just a few. For the purposes of this study, the Participatory theory was adopted.

Kalliola (2009) defines Participatory theory as a research method which is based upon the involvement of all role players to empower people with knowledge and understanding to create change. Rodriguez and Brown (2009) indicate that the participatory theory is a dynamic research process in which various view-points that revolves around a mutual topic, caused for a more reliable outcome. They further opine that through the participatory theory researchers can reach an outcome that is meaningful, valid, reliable and repeatable when conducted by other researchers and role players.

Strydom (2011) indicates the theory pays particular attention to all the participants that will be sampled to participate in a particular research study. The Participatory theory is about the involvement and participation of individuals who are affected by a certain phenomenon that is under study at a particular time. The involvement and participation of all participants is emphasised by Butson, Cooper, Henderson and McIntyre (2008), who concede that the truth, reality and values about a certain phenomenon can only be found through interactions with relevant and affected individuals. Participatory theory is most relevant for the intended study, because it will create an opportunity for the researcher to find the truth through interaction with

grade 12 teachers as well as SMT members at the under-performing schools. Therefore, the involvement of grade 12 teachers and SMT members from the two schools will be crucial to the study, as it will allow for understanding their views regarding the possible factors which lead to the poor academic performance of grade 12 learners.

Through the active engagement and partnership with the sampled participants, the theory will be used to get and produce the necessary knowledge in order to improve their social, educational and material condition. Therefore, the Participatory theory is the most suitable framework for this study, which intends to target affected individuals to explore what really cause the poor academic performance of grade 12 learners in two schools in Gert Sibande District, Mpumalanga Province.

1.6. Ethical Considerations

Walliman (2005) states that all research studies focusing on people and their relationships with others should be sensitive about all issues of ethics. To ensure sensitivity the following ethical issues related to conducting research were dealt with: informed consent, respect for anonymity and confidentiality, and respect for privacy. To ensure that the intended study subscribes to the dictates of ethical considerations, the following were done:

- **Permission for the study**

Prior to the commencement of the study, the researcher obtained written permission to conduct the study from: Mpumalanga Department of Education, Gert Sibande District, Msukaligwa circuit, principals and grade12 teachers at the two schools that will be selected.

- **Informed consent**

To subscribe to the prescript of the informed consent, the researcher gave a brief explanation to participants why the study is done, and what does it aim to achieve and in the end participants would be given a printed copy of the interview procedure and questions. Further explanation was given to participants that they had the option not to continue or to pull out from the Study in case they feel uncomfortable.

- **Confidentiality and Anonymity**

To ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of participants, the researcher used pseudonyms. However, the names of the two schools used in the study are real. The two schools gave permission for the real names to be used because they were of the opinion that the results of the study would assist them to improve their results. The recordings done during the interviews would be destroyed after analysis of data is completed.

- **Research integrity**

The researcher committed to maintain integrity when carrying out the research project.

- **Feedback**

Feedback would be given to the Education Department of Mpumalanga, Gert Sibande District office, Msukaligwa 1 Circuit and principals and teachers of the two schools and under study.

1.7. Research design and Methodology.

The study adopted the Case study Design as the most appropriate one. This is because as Yin (2003) states that a case study design is more suitable to be used when the researcher tries to find out why a phenomenon is occurring, how a particular case or set of behaviour is happening or when the behaviour of the participants cannot be manipulated by the researcher.

The case study research design was therefore deemed appropriate since the proposed study sought to investigate why learners doing grade 12 in the two schools in the years 2013 to 2017 continue to perform below the expected level of performance in their final examinations.

The following methods of collecting data were employed:

- Observation of the behaviour of participants during teaching periods and break time, and observing discipline at the schools, as well as punctuality. Observation will be done as a systematic data collection strategy to examine participants in their natural setting through prolonged engagement.
- Interviews where grade12 learners, grade12 teachers, SMT members in the two underperforming schools as well as parents of grade 12 learners were conducted.

- Document analysis where the following documents were analysed; time book, class registers, period registers, logbook and learners' books submitted to teachers for control purposes. These documents provided more information about the behaviour of both learners and teachers during tuition time and break time. The logbook provided information about visits by officials from both the circuit and district office.

1.8. Qualitative Research.

This research project adopted a qualitative approach. A qualitative approach was chosen because it provided the researcher with insight into the problem under study. Furthermore, it enabled the researcher to explore the underlying reasons and motivations behind the substandard academic performance of grade 12 learners. Answers were found because the Qualitative Approach to the study provided the researcher with an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon. Through this approach the researcher was able to capture expressed information about the beliefs, values, feelings and motivations of participants, which provided an answers to the question of what are the exact reasons for the poor performance of grade 12 learners is in Ermelo, Gert Sibande District.

1.9. Population and Sampling

Silverman (2000) opines that purposive sampling can be the best choice if the researcher aims at illustrating some feature and process. In the intended study, purposive sampling was chosen to ensure the selection of participants with certain defining characteristics, such as being a grade 12 teacher in an under-performing school or being an SMT member of an under-performing school in Msukaligwa circuit, being a learner or a parent of a learner in an under-performing school. Furthermore, purposive sampling was used to select the two schools due to the close proximity of the researcher's home to the two selected schools.

Five teachers per school (3 grade 12 teachers and 2 HODs), five grade 12 learners per school and 3 parents per school were purposely selected as participants. The number of participants selected was sufficient because it would have allowed the researcher to continue until the last stage of the study in a case where one or two participants withdraw before the study is completed.

1.10. Data Collection

Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) advocate for the use of a variety of data collection methods such as observations, interviews and document analysis. For the purposes of this study, the same data collection strategies were used. This included interviews conducted face-to face with the participants, observations of participants in their natural setting and the critical analysis of documents.

Observations focused on the behaviour of participants during teaching periods and break time, the discipline at the schools, as well as punctuality.

Face -to- face interviews of about 30 minutes were scheduled with the participants during a four to six- weeks period. The interviews were recorded, so as to allow for easy transcription and analysis. A written record of contextual factors (like facial expressions, body language and gestures) was also kept during the planned interviews.

Documents analysed included the time book, class registers, period registers, logbook and learners' books submitted to teachers for control purposes. These documents provided more information about the behaviour of both learners and teachers during tuition time and break time. The logbook provided information about the visits by officials from both the circuit and district office.

Data collected through observation, interviews and documents was analysed and interpreted to provide answers to the research question and to increase the level of understanding of the phenomenon under study.

1.11. Quality Assurance

To ensure quality of the study, the researcher subjected the research study findings to the four (4) criteria of trustworthiness as constructed by Schwandt, Lincoln and Guba, 2007. The four criteria include Credibility, Confirmability, Dependability and Transferability.

- **Credibility:** Credibility in qualitative studies means that, for the researcher to demonstrate how truthful the findings of the study are, the research findings will have to be linked to reality. According to Guba (1981) credibility should be

used to assure participants that the findings of the research study in deed represent their experience.

In this study credibility was established through the use of triangulation techniques used for analyst triangulation and member-checking. Two principals and SMT members from other two local secondary schools were given the opportunity to review the findings. To award participants a chance to make amendments and provide additional information if necessary, the data, interpretations and conclusions of the study was given to participants. This was done as a way to adhere to the demands of the member-checking technique.

- **Dependability:** Lincoln (1995) states that quality can be assured if the same findings can be produced if someone else also undertook the research. In qualitative research, dependability answers the question as to how stable is the collected data over time and conditions. To ensure dependability, the researcher reported in detail about all the processes used in the study. To ensure the dependability of the findings, the study adopted the external (inquiry) audit technique where the researcher employed the services of an independent researcher to assess all the processes followed when collecting and analysing the collected data. The outside researcher was also be used to evaluate the results of the study as well as confirming whether the findings of the study are both accurate and can be supported by the collected data.
- **Confirmability:** Lincoln & Guba (1985) opines that Confirmability ensures that the research study findings are not that of the researcher's perspectives and biases, but a true reflection of the participants' responses. In the context of this study Confirmability implied that after the inquiry was completed, the information discovered could also be confirmed by someone else. Therefore the researcher accurately presented the performance of the two schools over the last five years as well as the findings of the research, so that other schools that also experience poor grade 12 performances could be given the opportunity to test the accuracy of the findings.
- **Transferability:** ensures that the findings of the study can be applied in other contexts. Transferability in a qualitative study seeks to find out at what extent are the findings of the study applicable to other situations and wider

populations. Sufficient contextual information about the research sites was provided. This provided readers in similar situations described in the study with the opportunity to relate the findings of the study to their own position.

1.12. Significance of the study

The significance of the study aims at helping the reader to identify a specific audience targeted by the researcher to benefit from the study as well as explaining how each type of audience will benefit from the study. It is an undeniable fact that a research study which lacks an explanation on its significance is incomplete. On the basis of this, the researcher is of the view that the findings of the study provided light to three groups of people that are critical in the attempts to solve the problem of poor academic performance of grade 12 learners:

For teachers and School Management Teams the study provided thorough guidance which enabled them to explore various possible turn-around strategies that were effective in addressing the problem under study.

For the authorities in Department of Education, including Subject advisors and Circuit managers, the study exposed them to some shortcomings which may exist in some of the directives or policies as propagated by the department of education which may contribute to the poor academic performance of grade 12 learners.

Lastly, through this study, awareness will be created for both parents and learners on which possible factor need to be noted and possibly changed for grade 12 learners to improve their performance and stand a good chance of admission in institutions of higher learning.

1.13. Limitations to the study

Every research study has limitations. According to Price, James H and Judy Murman (2004) all the features of the research design or methodology that negatively affected the interpretation of the findings of the research can be defined as limitations to the study. This can be as a result of many factors which include among

others the researcher's initial choice of design and of course the unexpected challenges that may arise during the study.

The limitations of this study pertain its sample size. The study was conducted on two township schools only; this might affect the Transferability of the study findings in a case of the so-called former model c schools and other township schools which may have different settings. It is therefore the view of the researcher that if the number of schools selected was bigger and inclusive of former model c schools, the results of the findings may differ. This is because as Price, James H and Judy Murman (2004) concede it is not easy to find significant relationships from the data if the size of the sample is small. The researcher opines that for future studies, the sample size should be larger and inclusive of former model c schools so as to make it easy for any researcher to find significant relationships from the data. Such a view is supported by Pearson-Stuttard, J., Kypridemos, C., Collins, B., Mozaffarian, D., Huang, Y., Bandosz, P. and Micha, R. (2018) who confirmed that results can only be more precise if the sample size is larger.

1.14. Chapter Outline

Chapter 1- is the introduction of the study

Chapter 2 –deals with the reviewing of literature by other researchers who conducted studies on the similar topic.

Chapter 3- deals with the methodology that has been used to collect the necessary data.

Chapter 4- deals with the analysis and interpretation of the collected data.

Chapter 5 is the conclusion of the study.

1.15. Conclusion

This study seeks to investigate factors causing the underperformance of grade 12 learners at secondary schools in Gert Sibande District, Mpumalanga Province. This chapter dealt with the introduction and background of the study, problem statement, aims and objectives, theoretical framework, research design, research methodology, population and sampling, data collection, quality assurance, significance of the study, limitations of the study and chapter outline.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Chapter 1 provides an introduction and background to the study. It also outlines the way in which the chapters of the report have been arranged and this chapter focuses on the literature review on possible factors that cause the poor academic performance of grade 12 learners. Literature reviewed is organised under sub-headings as follows: Learner- related issues, Teacher- related issues, Parent-related issues, School and classroom challenges and Departmental issue.

2.2. Learner- related issues.

Noble (2006) states that self-confident learners show in the strategies they implement to cope with their school work, their positive attributions and background characteristics were indirectly related to their academic achievement in high school. Factors outlined by Noble (2006), are just some of the factors that are learner-related which may contribute towards learners' academic achievement. The list cannot be exhausted. Consequently, Ali (2009) adds others by indicating that , study effort from learners and the proper use of the facilities provided by the institution to the learner and the learner's learning style positively affect the learner' performance. Njoroge and Nyabuto (2014) adds other factors like lack of discipline, lack of commitment, attitude towards learning, substance abuse and absenteeism as significant for learners" academic achievement. Huang (2012) mentioned that proficiency in the medium of instruction and choice of subjects are other factors that affect the performance of learners academically. Manizheh (2016) adds that learner related factors have the highest impact on learners' performance more than any other factors. That is why Sunil and Madhuri (2005) concede that there are many more reasons for children to underperform at school. In their findings Sunil and Madhuri (2005) mention factors like medical problems, below average intelligence, specific learning disability, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, emotional problems, poor socio-cultural home environment, psychiatric disorders and even environmental causes. This study therefore is aimed at investigating whether the above-mentioned factors can also be some of the causal factors of the poor academic performance experienced in the two schools under study.

2.2.1 Attitude towards learning

Zan and Martino (2007) state that attitude towards learning plays a crucial role in learning and achievement. This is true because the input always determines the output. Nicolaidou and Philippou (2003) confirm this by indicating that when students have positive attitudes towards mathematics, they would achieve better which reflect a significant relationship between attitudes and performance. The attitude learners have about learning determines how they approach the tasks given to them by teachers in class which then lead them into either productive or non-productive orientations. Tan (2020) concluded that a positive attitude towards learning during Covid-19 can be associated with higher academic performance. This is also supported by Mato and De la Torre (2010) in their study focusing on secondary school learners which showed that students with better academic performance exhibited more positive attitudes towards Maths than those with low performance. Findings by researchers lend credence to the position that indicates that the attitude of learners towards learning has been considered to be a very significant factor underlying the learner's school achievement.

For example, Bayaga and Wadesango (2014) states that learners' performance in Mathematics is more affected by the learners' attitude towards the subject rather than other factors like home background, teaching and school climate. Such is supported by Mata, Monteiro and Peixoto (2012) where he elaborates further that the correlation showed that the more positive the attitude, the higher the level of achievement in the student. Findings by Molina and Bansil (2018) confirm that a strong correlation between learners' positive attitude and their academic performance does exist.

However, some researchers argue that the correlation between the learner's attitude towards learning and his or her academic performance was rather weak and should not be considered to be of practical significance. Talsma, Schuz, Schwarzer and Norris (2018) opine that self-efficacy by learners is just an indication of past performance. Harsasi and Sutawijaya (2018) support this view when stating that the performance of learners can be linked to a variety of factors including self-efficacy, the learners' learning process, learner – teacher interaction and course assessment quality. Such a view is contended by Schenkel (2009) who stresses that what

students believe about their competence and their expectation for success in school, are directly linked to their levels of engagement as well as their emotional state which will then promote or interfere with their ability to be academically successful. Findings by Agustiani, Cahyad and Musa (2016) state that self-efficacy, self-regulation of learning and academic achievements are positively correlated, which implies that if one of the three variables experience change, the other two will also experience a positive or negative change.

A positive attitude towards learning is indeed a significant necessity in the attempt to address the problem of poor grade 12 academic performances. This is supported by Mullins (2005) where he asserts that negative attitude towards learning could result in learners performing poorly which will as a result prevent them from obtaining the required results for university entrance.

From the above discussion, it is clear that researchers are divided on the issue of learner attitude contributing towards the academic performance of learners. Considering the different views held by different researchers pertaining the role and impact of learner attitude towards academic performance, it is therefore imperative for this study to determine whether the learner's attitude does or does not influence the academic performance of learners especially in the two secondary schools under study.

2.2.2 Proficiency in the medium of instruction

Proficiency in the medium of instruction refers to the ability of a person to speak any language used in a particular school as a language of teaching and learning. For the purpose of this study, the medium of instruction refers to English.

During the SOWETO uprising in 1976, learners from different schools in SOWETO protested against the use of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction. After the nationwide protests of 16 June 1976, English became the medium of instruction in many township schools. According to the department of education (2008) learners are required to acquire proficiency levels like abstract cognitive academic language skills which are needed for thinking and learning to enable them to learn effectively across the curriculum. Fleischer (2008) indicates a challenge that less than one in ten grade 12 learners in South Africa speak English as his first language, yet by the end of the year they have to be assessed in English. The use of English as a

medium of instruction also means that most grade 12 subjects should be taught in English, and learners are expected to answer questions in the examination using English. The challenge is that most learners are struggling to communicate in English, which then disadvantages them when answering open response questions in the examination, and this affects their academic performance (Pokrant, 2012). Dekker and Lemmer (1993) supports this by stating that students who have a limited proficiency in the language of instruction are at most risk of failing and dropping out of school because they have not mastered the language required to cope with the learning material. Findings by Addow, Abubakar and Abukar(2013) confirmed that proficiency in a language is a statistically significant determinant of academic performance.

Lacking proficiency in the medium of instruction does affect the academic performance of second language learners. Daud, Daud and Kassim (2016) state that writing for example, as an activity, becomes too demanding for second language learners. This is because language proficiency is a skill which learners have to master before they can cope well in content subjects. Sparks, Ganschow and Javorsky (2000) opine that second language learners fail to perform well because their level of communication is insufficiently developed. Findings by Sparks, Ganschow and Javorsky (2000) further confirm that the writing performance of learners is related to anxiety which in turn affect their performance.

Proficiency in English as a medium of instruction poses a problem to learners whose mother tongue is not English. Findings by Briguglio and Watson (2014) confirm that learners experience difficulties because satisfying the English language entry requirements to start their studies does not guarantee that they have the necessary English academic skills to complete their course without support. Park (2016) found that academic acculturation through second language was the most challenging aspect for learners who are not studying in their home language. Shahzad, Sajjad, Ahmed & Asghar (2013) opine that for learners to achieve academic success, they must be able to actively engage with the academic content through discussion, reading, writing, analysis and evaluation.

For a learner to become a good and effective communicator, the four basic language skills, which include listening, reading, speaking and writing, must be developed.

Proficiency in the medium of instruction allows the learner to organize and refine his or her ideas before transferring them onto paper. Therefore, lacking proficiency in any of the basic language skills in the medium of instruction can also be a contributing factor towards poor performance. This is because lacking proficiency means that the learner has poor vocabulary, weak argumentation and poor grammar and syntax skills which have the potential to cause the learner to fail.

2.2.3 Substance abuse

The report of the American Council on School Health and Committee on Substance Abuse (2007) states that drug use in American teenagers remains disturbingly high. The same report further identifies learner truancy, poor school performance and underachievement as manifestations of substance abuse. Research conducted by Hodgkinson (1990) points that more than a third of African American adolescents use marijuana on a regular basis, compared to only 5% regular users among White Americans. Such findings are confirmed by Cummingham (1994) who indicates that 94% of high school learners at Pine Ridge Reservation have used alcohol before. Such big numbers of learners abusing substances lend credence to the fact that learners can access such substances before the school starts and even during break time without any difficulty. Once these drugs are consumed, the concentration level of learners will be impaired resulting to poor performance academically. Such is supported by Schwartz (2008) who states that getting intoxicated negatively affects cognitive functions such as concentration, memory and attention for 48 hours.

The report of the Department of Basic Education (2013) states that the effects of substance abuse in South African schools include the deterioration of physical and mental health and academic problems and increased involvement in risky behaviour such as unprotected sex, violence and crime. Tshitangano (2016) supports this by asserting that in South African schools, substance abuse is very prevalent and has also been identified as contributing to the high rate of school dropout and poor academic performance. Grade 12 learners who are abusing substances cannot perform well academically because their level of concentration is compromised.

Substance has many negative effects for any adolescent learner who does it. Graeme, Fields, Stutsman, Anderson and Barthwel (2008) states that substance abuse impairs the learning memory, abstract thinking and problem-solving abilities

resulting to poor performance, poor school attendance and behavioural problems. This is supported by Louw (2012) who asserts that drugs affect the brain resulting to a major decline in its functions. According to Mothibi (2014) the abuse of substances likes marijuana, cocaine and alcohol in schools in Eisleben village, Botlokoa Ga-Ramokgopa, has increased and resulted to high failure rate almost every year. In his findings, Mothibi (2014) further highlights that a close link between substance abuse, high level of truancy, poor homework responses and lack of concentration by learners in class , does exists.

Such evidence by various studies confirms in explicit terms that there is a definite correlation between substance abuse and declining academic performance. As explained above, one of the possible negative results of substance abuse is a high level of absenteeism which also has a potential to cause poor academic performance.

2.2.4 Learner absenteeism

Learner absenteeism has far reaching effects on the academic performance of a learner. That is why Rodger (2001) states that academic performance is hypothesized to be a function of learners 'class attendance and other variables, some of which are unobservable, such as learner's motivation and aptitude. A study by Chiwaula (2008) found that the negative impact of absenteeism has been universally acknowledged and has been linked to poor academic performance. Duran (2011) asserts that absence from school drags down learner achievement. In deed attendance has a statistically significant effect on the performance of the learner. Absenteeism implies that some of the topics or concepts will be taught while the learner is absent which disqualifies such a learner from answering questions about topics done while he/she was absent. This is supported by what Wadesango and Machingambi (2011) stated when studying the effects of absenteeism on learner performance. In their study, they reported that absenteeism affects the abilities of learners which can be reason of decreasing grades, and which may result in learners failing the grade.

2.2.5 Shortage of resources

According to the Draft National Policy for Provision and Management of Learning and Teaching support material (2014) textbooks supplied to schools must be

retained in good condition for a period of five years. This means that new textbooks will only be supplied to schools after a period of five years regardless of the continuous increase in learner enrolment. Usually the government delays in supplying textbooks to schools which has a negative impact on the quality of teaching delivered to learners. Such a delay results in a situation where two or three learners have to share textbooks, and as a result, learners will come to school without completing their homework, which results to academic performance.

Rammala (2009) stated that the learner's background in relation to the availability of educational resources at home like books, electronic resources such as TV, computer, study desk and table for their own use and general academic support at home are crucial. Such a possibility is supported by Morgan et.al (2009) by stressing that children from low socio-economic status households and communities develop academic skills more slowly compared to their counterparts from higher socio-economic status families. This is true because a conducive home environment provides for a positive environment for learning. The shortage of resources, at home and school, and the lack of proper exposure to the educational resources such as laboratories, internet and computers and textbooks implies that the learner has inadequate, unreliable and not up to date information which is needed to answer an examination question fully and as expected, and as a result will definitely underperform.

Modisaotsile (2012) in his study claims that in terms of the demand and supply of teachers in South African schools in 2005, an estimated 18000-22000 teachers leave the profession every year and need to be replaced by the same equal number, of which it is not happening. Murtin (2013) confirmed Modisaotsile's claims by stating that a severe shortage of teachers exists in South Africa. In his study, Murtin (2013) further stated that the number of teachers who graduate is in the region of 6000 annually, which is far below the expected replacement of approximately 20000 teachers. Such a shortage of teachers imply that classes will be overcrowded, and teachers will be expected to teach at least 50 -70 learners packed in one class, which is against the teacher-pupil ratio of 1:35 as prescribed by the education department. If teachers teach overcrowded classes, the quality of their teaching as well as their expected interaction with individual learners is compromised, which will then lead to poor academic performance of learners.

According to Van der Westhuizen, Mentz, Mosoge, Nieuwoudt, Steyn, Legotlo, Maaga and Sebego (1999) the shortage of resources in schools is one of the leading causal factors for poor grade 12 results especially in poor and average schools. Zangqa (1999) attests that the shortage of resources in schools leads to a disastrous effect on the achievement of learners because it makes everything much more difficult and thus demoralising. Shortage of resources in poor or average schools, makes it very difficult (if not impossible) for good science teachers to adequately prepare learners for examinations in topics where laboratory equipment is needed.

It is therefore evident that the shortage of resources in schools, in whatever format, does play a contributory role towards the poor academic performance of learners.

2.2.6 Choice of subjects

Subject choice for learners remains of crucial importance because uninformed subject choices may negatively affect their academic performance as well as career planning. This is confirmed by Payne (2017) stating that subject choice requires some serious soul searching and big decisions. In her study, Payne (2017) further emphasised that subjects should be carefully selected, and the decision must not be based on what peers are doing. This is true because some learners choose subjects solely because they do not want to disappoint their family members and friends, even though they lack the ability to learn and master the subject. For example, a learner can choose Mathematics whereas he or she does not have the ability to master it. That is why Raleigh (2016) asserts that learners should be realistic about their ability to cope with advanced work and content of the subject before choosing any subject.

2.3 Parent-related issues

2.3.1 Low level of Parents' education

The South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 promulgate the right and responsibility of parents to be involved in the education of their children. The challenge the parents face when exercising this constitutional mandate is their low level of education. Khan (2015) asserts that the lower level of parents' education has an impact on the assistance parents give to their children which in turn influence their performance at

school. This is further supported by Mji and Makgato (2006) by stating that many parents are seriously handicapped when it comes to supporting their children because of their own limited education or a lack of proficiency in English. It is therefore difficult for illiterate parents to both monitor and assist their children with their school work. For example, a parent who left school in grade 7 cannot assist a grade 12 learner with mathematics. Literature also indicates that students perform better in school if their parents are actively involved in their education (Dahie and Mohamed, 2018). Peters (2014) substantiated the claim by stating that parental involvement enables parents to monitor their children's schoolwork and classroom activities at home, thereby contributing to their children's success. It is possible for the performance of the learner to improve if both assisted and monitored by a literate parent. The poor level of education of parents, which is closely linked to the financial status of the family, has the potential to affect the performance of the learner at school.

2.3.2 Parental involvement

According to Myeko (2000) parental involvement refers to a process through which parents meaningfully participate in the various educational activities of their children. Parental involvement in the education of children has the potential to improve the commitment and performance of their children in educational activities. Booyse, Le Roux and Wolhuter (2012) support this by asserting that when parents show an interest in their children's learning and have high expectations regarding their performance, they promote attitudes that are key to achievement. If parents participate in school activities and encourage education and learning at home, regardless of their education background and level, children are bound to perform better.

According to Gonzales-DeHass and Willems (2005) parent involvement has a sound research base attesting to the many potential benefits it can offer in education. Such benefits include student's motivation, perceived competence, and self-regulation and mastery goal orientation. The researcher in this study agrees with this because when parents have positive attitudes about education that can greatly affect how children perform. Parental involvement also improves discipline in schools because learners know that any time during the day, their parents can be made aware of their

misbehaviour. When the school communities, families and community groups work together to support learning, children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer, and like school more. Such is attested to by Van Deventer and Kruger (2009) who declared that improved school performance, reduced drop-out rates, a decrease in delinquency and a more positive attitude towards school, are just some of the few benefits of parental involvement.

No matter how crucial parental involvement is it is also important to find the right balance of school involvement. Teachers should guard against assigning less substantial and insignificant roles which will leave them feeling frustrated, belittled and left out. Parents on the other hand should guard against doing things outside their jurisdiction as parents. To ensure the correct level of parental involvement Coleman and Routledge (2011) suggest that school must develop a collaborated school-based prevention program which is characterised by partnerships and shared goals, rather than by turf wars and animosity between all stakeholders.

2.3.3 Unemployment of parents

According to Ariel Kalil, the director of the centre for Human Potential and Public Policy at the University of Chicago (2012), researchers have found that unemployment can lead to poor academic performance. This is supported by the findings of an economist Jessamyn Schaller (2009) who stated that children of the unemployed are 15 percent more likely to repeat a grade than their peers whose parents held on to stable jobs. Levine (2011) concurred that unemployment is often negatively related to both social and academic outcomes for children. Shaffee et al (2019) concluded that various social ills like poverty, socio-economic conditions and political challenges do impede academic performance. Such findings lend credence to the inability of unemployed parents to give financial support to their children in time of need. Chances are that the academic performance of children from homes where parents are unemployed will be affected and children will end up performing poorly.

The South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 states that no child should be refused school admission due to the inability of the parent or guardian to pay school fees. The inability of the parent or guardian to pay school fees may be resulting from different reasons including job loss or unemployment. In a case where a child of an

unemployed parent is admitted to a school of choice, possibilities are that the parent will be unable to provide the child with necessary school essentials. Lacking the necessary school essentials may then negatively affect the academic performance of the child. Findings by Oster (2006) and Ruiz-Valenzuela (2015) confirm that having unemployed parents has a negative effect on children's school performance. This lends credence to the fact that the high level of unemployment of parents may contribute to the poor performance of the child.

Bjorklund and Eriksson (1998) suggest that unemployment can be associated with deteriorating mental health. Findings by Gruber (2004) indicate that the educational performance of the learner is impeded by factors like divorce or relocation which is triggered by the unemployment of parents. The learner's mental health (in this case referring to the concentration level of a learner) that is stressed by home circumstances such as the parent's sudden loss of income or job loss is compromised. As a result the concentration level during lessons and during individual study is compromised, and this, increases the possibilities of poor academic performance. It is evident that the ability of parents to provide the necessary school essentials is crucial and can boost the academic performance of the learner. It is therefore highly possible that learners will be stressed and depressed if their parents are unemployed, and they will end up performing poorly at school.

2.3.4 Parents' communication style

According to Spera (2005) the authoritative style of parenting is often associated with higher levels of student performance. The researcher contends with this because the way the parent communicates to the child about school matters can yield unwanted behaviour and attitude on the child. A child can develop a negative attitude towards studying because he or she perceives or interpret the parent's continuous instruction as nagging. Once the child develops a negative attitude towards studying and education related matters, his or her performance at school will be poor.

Marcheli and Martin (2002) assert that there is an indirect relationship with performance from learner's perception of how much time his/her parents assign to the studies at home. The expectations of the parent about his or her child's school work plays an important role in the way in which the learner perceives or interpret the

information for future use. This is because the expectations of parents in as far as education matters are concerned have a noticeable influence on their children's academic results. Such expectations encourage learners to pursue their goals with hard work, determination and have a study orientated mentality. Family has a notable influence on their children's academic results even if the financial backing is not favourable.

2.3.5 Parental marital status.

A study by Turker (2003) reports that children who grow up in fatherless families perform poorly on measures of scholastic achievement, educational attainment and other healthy related issues. This is also supported by McLeod, Kruttschmitt and Donfeld (2004), Volmarr (2006) who state that children from two-parent homes do better at school than children from single parent homes and homes where there are conflicts. In most cases children from single parent homes are forced by financial needs and circumstances to use their study time to do temporal jobs so as to assist financially at home. This leads to a situation where a child will not have enough time to prepare for examinations which will lead to him or her performing poorly.

Rodriguez (1986) stated that positive family environment promotes the development of matured and stable students, whereas unfavourable family climate promotes non-adaptation, immorality, lack of balance and insecurity. Ekanem (2004) asserts that a conflict-free home environment creates emotional stability in the child at home and subsequently throughout his school life. A home environment characterised by quarrelling and fighting does not favour learning which will then result in poor academic performance. This is because such a home environment triggers emotional problems and distress for the learner which will then make the learner to perform poorly at school. Conflict at home also means that there will not be enough opportunity for the child to study. This view is supported by Ogbemudia and Aisa (2013) who maintain that physical and psychological conditions of the home environment affect children academically. A study by Egunsola (2014) confirmed that the marital status of parents has a significant influence on students' performance in Agricultural Sciences at the secondary school. Findings by several researchers indicate that marital status of parents, especially single parent homes do have the potential to cause poor academic performance.

2.4 Educator- related issues

2.4.1 Teacher –pupil ratio.

Lemmer and Van Wyk (2010) state that, the teacher-pupil ratio in South African primary schools is set at 1:40, and in secondary schools is set at 1:35. This is confirmed by Motshega (2012), who assert that resolution 4 of the Collective agreement of 1995 provides a guideline on teacher-pupil ratio for ordinary schools to 1:40 in primary school and secondary school at 1: 35. It is generally accepted that in order for a class to function optimally, there needs to be one teacher for every 25 pupils (Tswana and Hlati, 2017). In reality, the ratio in public schools is higher than the prescribed one, as supported by Tswana and Hlati (2017) who mentioned that in the Western Cape, principals have lamented the teacher-pupil ratio, which at some schools is as high as 1:46.

There are many causes of the high teacher-pupil ratio in schools. Causes may include factors like the failure of the government to build schools, the increase in number of the population surrounding a particular school and is serviced by that one school, and schools registering more learners and end up exceeding the capacity of the school just to secure the same number of teaching posts for the coming years. These factors create an imbalance in terms of demand and supply of teachers which in turn may increase the possibility that the academic performance of learners be negatively affected. This is supported by Murtin (2013) who state that a severe shortage of teachers does exist in South Africa. In his study, Murtin (2013) states that the number of teachers who graduate is around 6000, which is well below the replacement need of approximately 20 000. Considering the challenges posed by the high teacher- pupil ratio in schools, it is evident that the academic performance of learners can be affected negatively.

Barrington (2018), states that in the United States, there has been a push towards decreasing student-teacher ratio in all the grades, with the aim of improving the academic performance of school-age children. Lowering the ratio, is a good strategy to implement because a low student-teacher ratio has advantages which include among others: that the teacher can better manage the class, the smaller things can be quickly picked up and if needed, acted upon. Lowering the ratio is important so that a teacher can be more effective in his or her position. This lends credence to the

possibility that a high teacher-pupil ratio contributes towards the poor performance in grade 12.

According to Baruth (2009) overcrowded classrooms have resulted from the historical background of South Africa. A study by Shah and Innamullah (2012) confirmed that overcrowded classrooms have a direct impact on teaching and learning. This is supported Matshipi, Mulaudzi & Mashau (2017) by highlighting that overcrowded classrooms are one of the challenges hindering the provision of quality education to more than 11 million learners in South African public schools. The researcher in this study agrees because overcrowded classes create an obstacle for teachers to apply progressive activities of the classroom teaching and learning process. The overcrowding of classes also impacts on the behaviour of pupils in class which render the class undisciplined and uncontrollable. It is due to overcrowded classes that it becomes difficult for the teacher to spot learners who do not do their homework. This is because the teaching period lapses before the teacher can reach such learners, and this negatively affects the academic performance of learners.

According to Shah and Innamullah (2012) overcrowded classrooms have not only affected learner performance. The provision of education in overcrowded classrooms has negative impact on the performance of both educators and learners. Overcrowded classes have also put immense stress on teachers. Due to overcrowded classes, teachers are both physically and emotionally drained. The increased workload and inadequate teaching time, causes the teacher to render a compromised service to learner, and this, has the potential to cause poor academic performance on the side of learners.

2.4.2 Teacher Unionism

Eberts (2007) opines that unionism affect every dimension of the workplace and can subsequently influence educational outcome. This is supported by Ringim (2017) who states that labour disputes and the right to trade unionism has been constantly abused, and often results in low productivity. A study by Wills (2019) revealed that in South Africa teaching and learning time is lost as a direct consequence of teacher strike action. In his findings Wills (2019) further mentions that the participation of teachers in strike action negatively affects learning for learners in the poorest three

quarters of schools. Due to unionism, many teachers seem not to care about the quality their students turn out to be, as long as their salaries and allowances are increased. Teachers leave learners unattended and hold meetings during school hours, which have a negative impact on learner performance. Such meetings sometimes lead to strikes, stay-away, go-slows which end up affecting the school programme adversely, and once the school programme is affected, the academic performance of the learners will be affected too.

2.4.3. Instructional leadership.

According Seabi (2013) poor performance is linked to the poor quality of teaching, which in turn can be attributed partly to a lack of instructional leadership at schools. According to Policy guidelines (Department of Education, Republic of South Africa, 2000, 2002) heads of departments are positioned as Instructional leaders in schools. As instructional leaders, Heads of Departments (HODs) assist teachers to set and achieve professional goals related to improvement of general school instruction, and should monitor that these goals are successfully achieved. If HODs fail in their task to capacitate and equip teachers under their supervision with the necessary skills, strategies and information needed so that they can maximise their teaching abilities, such can have a negative impact on academic performance of learners.

According Mangcu (2017) the monitoring of curriculum delivery in schools is not conducted as expected. The researcher in this study agrees with this view because HODs spend most of their time on administrative matters rather than managing and monitoring the quality of teaching and learning. HODs should ensure that teaching is prioritised by all in the school and the environment is conducive for learners to learn maximally. It is further the responsibility of HODs as instructional leaders to monitor if teachers who have been capacitated are implementing the new strategies so as to improve learner performance. But instead, HODs tend to focus their efforts on ensuring that they comply with departmental rules and regulations and the bureaucratic administrative demands of district officials, rather than on addressing the needs of their learners. The focus of HODs on administrative issues compromises the monitoring of quality of both formal and informal assessment tasks, the quality of teaching and learning, which are imperative to the academic performance of learners. The compromised quality of monitoring by HODs means

the support given to educators on challenging subjects will be insufficient. The insufficient support and monitoring of teachers lead to poor quality of teaching and learning, which maximises the chances of poor academic performance.

2.4.4 Teacher morale

Susan (2001) indicates that sinking teacher morale generally accompanies sinking student achievement. According to the OECD findings (2016), students who attend schools where teacher morale is lower, are more likely to perform poorly in mathematics, compared with students who attend school where teacher morale is high. Hindt (2012) states that research suggests that poor teacher morale negatively affects student performance just as much good teacher morale positively affects student performance. The researcher in this study agrees because teachers have the greatest influence on the school climate due to the fact they have the most contact with students. This is supported by MacNeil, Prater and Busch (2009) who suggest that students achieve higher scores on standardised tests in schools with healthy learning environment. This means that the lower the morale of the teacher is, the lower the performance of the learner will be.

Covington (2011) indicates that several factors contribute to low teacher morale. They include federal, state and local demands, low pay, lack of administrative support, and heightened discipline problems. Due to the afore-mentioned factors, teachers end up with insuperable amount of responsibilities and duties. Therefore, if poor academic performance is to be addressed, concerns or factors lowering the morale of teachers must also be resolved.

2.4.5. Teacher qualification.

Kola (2015) states that the subject matter knowledge, pedagogy studies, professional development and years of experience are important and correlated with students' academic achievement. This view is supported by Suleiman and Hammed (2020) who opine that the underperformance of grade 12 learners can be attributed to the deficiency in teaching methods used by mathematics teachers as well as primary school teachers who lacked potential and competence to teach mathematics at primary school levels. This is confirmed by Ewetan (2015) who states that teachers' teaching experience significantly influences students' academic performance in Mathematics and English language as measured by their

performance in the SSC examinations. The researcher in this study agrees because, as Anderson (1991) states, many meaningful improvements in the quality of education that students receive are determined by the quality of teachers.

Murunga (2013) states that teachers should be in-serviced where gaps are identified, to enable them to cope with the requirements of the dynamic school curriculum. This means that it is, therefore necessary for someone to have a special skill or type of experience or knowledge that will make him or her, more suitable to teach. This is confirmed by Darling-Hammond (2000) who indicate that middle and high school students learn better from teachers who hold Bachelor's or Master's degrees in the subjects they teach and from experienced teachers than they do from less experienced ones. Teacher qualification is therefore the most important school-based factor that determines students' academic achievement (Rockoff, Rivkin, Aaronson, Harris and Sass, 2008).

2.5. Departmental issues.

2.5.1 Progression policy.

According to the Department of Basic Education (2012), progression policy refers to the "movement of a learner from one grade to the next, excluding grade R, in spite of the learner not having complied with all the promotion requirements". Munje (2016) asserts that learner progression is a form of 'automatic promotion' or grade promotion for reasons other than academic achievement. Progression policy is used by the Education Department to prevent a learner from being retained in a phase for a period exceeding four years (DBE, 2011).

Jimerson and Renshaw (2012) argue that the automatic promotion of learners does not have the potential to fully assist learners at risk. This is because, as Jimerson and Renshaw (2012) state, the policy raises many practical concerns about the learners' abilities, logistical support needed during the teaching and learning process, as well as the availability of support systems which are needed to facilitate the coping process for learners, and the resultant performance.

Researchers advocating for retention of learners who do not meet a minimum academic performance level concede that repetition has a noble role to play in the

child's development and ability to perform better. Findings by Mariano, Martorell and Berglund(2018) state that learners who repeat a grade, have the opportunity to acquire more knowledge and academic skills necessary for success in later grades.

The policy has some negative effects for teachers which in turn lead to poor performance (DoE, Circular no.1, 1996). Teachers become demotivated due to the attitude exhibited by progressed learners. This is supported by Munje (2016) who states that the leniency afforded by the policy, encourages learners to exhibit a passive and "don't care" attitude. Because of the progression policy, learners know that, irrespective of their status or results, or any other reasons other than satisfactory results, progression is guaranteed (Munje, 2016). It is challenging for teachers to fill the content gap of a learner that has been undeservedly progressing. Teachers end up lowering the standards for all learners in the classroom in an attempt to accommodate the needy learners, which in turn leads to poor performance.

Motshega (2015) concedes that it seems probable that the first cohort of progressed learners which reached grade 12 in 2014 contributed to the decrease of 2.6% in pass rate in 2014 compared to 2013. Findings by Stott ,Dreyer and Venter (2015) states that in the Free State Province only 49% (1934 out of 3919) of the progressed learners passed grade 12 exams of which the overall (n=26439) pass rate was depressed by 5,9 percentage points to only 82,8 %, which is 4,6 percentage points lower than the 87,4% the Free State achieved in 2013. The drop in performance of grade 12 learners in the Free State is evidence that the progression policy does contribute to poor academic performance. As per the findings of Stott, Dreyer and Venter (2015) it is clear that the policy overburdens the already challenged learners by pushing them into new grades where bigger challenges await them. Learners become demotivated because they struggle more with the next grade's work more than they did when they were supposed to fail, which in turn increases the chances of poor academic performance.

2.5.2. Curriculum reforms versus teacher training.

According to Tshiredo (2013), it is important to find out how new changes in curriculum affect the academic performance of learners. Bantwini (2009) states that

the key to successful curriculum change, is the development of teacher's knowledge, skills, attitudes and alignment of teacher training methods. Penuel, Fisherman, Yamaguchi and Gallagher (2007) confirm that, there is a consensus which says teachers are the key to educational change and school improvement. Chisholm (2005) supports this by stating that curriculum change can be implemented with ease in well –resourced contexts possessing well trained teachers. Adequate teacher training on curriculum changes, enable teachers to feel confident and competent which will improve the academic performance of learners.

Priestly and Sime (2005) state that curriculum change is often accompanied by unrealistic demands, lack of time and resources to understand the content of the required change, inadequate teacher training, increased workload and lack of effective management. The changes in curriculum make the teachers to struggle to reach the expected learner performance for some time until they master it, and this has a negative effect on the academic performance of learners. Sufficient time for teacher-training is required to avoid covering an excessive amount of work during a short period of time.

Tshiredo (2013) states that teachers feel it is not necessary for them to change the way they teach, especially those who did not receive training on the new curriculum change during their tertiary education. This is supported by Stears (2009) who asserts that more South African teachers seem to resist change when it comes to teaching science and still use the old approaches. As a result, curriculum change, although intended to increase the effectiveness of teachers, cause teachers to want to avoid the challenge of change (Placer & Richardson, 2002).

2.5.3 Provision of resources, facilities, and funding of schools.

Chapter 4, section 2 of the South African Schools Act no. 84 of 1996, dictates that the State has a responsibility to fund public schools from public revenue on an equitable basis in order to ensure the proper exercise of the rights of learners to education and the redress of past inequalities in education provision. This section of SASA means that the national government should do everything in its power to provide adequate infrastructure, facilities and resources needed for smooth operation of schools. Usually, the government delays to fulfil its obligation of

supplying schools with relevant learner-teacher support material on time, which has a negative impact on the performance of learners.

Greenwald, Hedges and Laine (1994) found that the number of educational resources available is positively linked to the academic accomplishments of learners. In their study, they further state that the most educationally efficient form of increased education expenditure is key to academic improvement. This is supported by (Africa, 2005; Letseka and Maile, 2008; Council of Higher Education, 2010) who assert that the lack of sufficient funding have consistently been cited as key reason for learner academic failure and progression. A learner, who lacks funding, while from a poor economic background, is bound to under-perform due to depression resulting from the lack of funding. This is supported by Sekhukhune (2008) who stated that many poor learners from low-income households do not have enough funds to afford food, and this has a negative impact on their academic performance.

Baker and Friedman-Nimz (2003) found that the emphasis on funding has shifted from the equitable distribution of resources to providing the funding necessary to achieve high standards of achievement outcomes for all learners. The government should prioritise the financing of education programmes in order to improve learner performance. As Baker and Friedman-Nimz (2003) indicate, schools and teachers complain that the funds are insufficient to finance necessary school programs, like computer-based programs which can help learners to learn and improve their performance.

Findings by Van der Westhuizen, Mentz, Mosoge, Nieuwoudt, Steyn, Legotlo, Maaga and Sebege (1999) state that the lack of resources features very strongly as a cause for poor grade 12 results and seems to be the greatest factor in poor and average schools. On the other side private schools and former model C schools seem to perform better because their resources are fees-related, and their fees are high enough to pay good teachers. Zangqa (1999) attests that the lack of adequate funding can have a disastrous effect on achievement of learners because it makes everything much more difficult and thus demoralising. For example a good science teacher without a laboratory has difficulty preparing learners for examinations where laboratory equipment is needed. A school with a good librarian but without a library

cannot encourage independent enquiry among learners who are hardly likely to have a good collection of informative books and magazine in their homes.

2.5.4 Language Policy

The Constitution of South Africa recognises the official and equal status of eleven languages as well as the constitutional right of all South Africans to receive education in the official language of their choice in public schools within reasonable practical limitations (RSA, 1996b). The Pan South African Language Board's policy document (PANSALB) states that their aims include the pursuit of language policy so that learners can grow, establishing multilingualism, and the promotion and development of official languages (Parliamentary Monitoring Group (PMG), 2001). Like in South Africa, as Trudeli (2016) indicates, many countries are promoting mother tongue language policies, though practices in schools frequently diverge from the national language policy and instead use international languages such as English. This is due to the perception parents and educators hold on the value of English in terms of accessing jobs and participating in the globalised economy (UNICEF, 2016). This practice by many countries (including South Africa) results in the relegation of mother tongue to the home. This lack of alignment between national policy and classroom practice in effect nullifies the policy's intended effects (UNICEF, 2016).

In multilingual societies like South Africa, the choice of language instruction and language policy in schools is critical for effective learning (Education for All (EFA), 2005). According to Landsberg (2011), out of the eleven official languages, English is the main language of teaching and learning in many schools followed by Afrikaans. This is supported by Taylor and Coetzee (2013) who state that in South Africa, all learners must write their school-leaving examinations in either English or Afrikaans. In this sense, the language policy may cause poor academic performance because, as Mwamwenda (2004) asserts, most learners find it difficult to follow instruction in a foreign language. This is supported by Makoni (2017) who asserts that language plays a huge part in knowledge generation, acquisition and dissemination.

Cooper (1999) argues that learners experience a pedagogic processing disadvantage because learning new ideas and information is most efficient when what is being taught is located within learner's existing frame of experience. Bender, Dutcher, Klause, Shore and Tesar (2005) confirm that learners learn better when they are taught in their mother-tongue because they can understand their teacher better. Smits, Huisman and Kruijff (2008) assert that a difference between the language that learners speak at home and the Language of Teaching and Learning negatively affects educational outcomes. Smits et al (2008) further emphasise that the Language of Teaching and Learning introduces a language barrier because learners are required to decode a language that they do not understand before making connections between spoken and written language. For learner performance to improve, the learner needs to effectively and independently decode and comprehend the content (PANSALB, 2001).

Fleischer (2008) states that subtractive bilingualism policies and transitional bilingualism are the two primary reasons for the systematic under-achievement in reading, writing and mathematics, and ultimately leads to high grade 12 failure rates. Due to the afore-mentioned language policy, teachers end up code switching in an attempt to ascertain that learners understand. Code switching refers to the practice by teachers to alternate between the learners' home language and English in order to make complex concepts more accessible to learners. This is supported by Uys and Leech (2008) who assert that, besides the fact that code switching adds a burden on the teachers; learners are never equipped with the language knowledge in the language of assessment, which leads to poor academic performance.

2.5.5 District and Circuit support.

The Policy of the Department of Basic Education on the Organisation, Roles, and Responsibilities of Education Districts (DBE, Republic of South Africa, 2013) states that district officials should, "*work collaboratively with principals and educators in schools, with the vital assistance of circuit offices, to give management and professional support, and help schools achieve excellence in learning and teaching.*" Findings by Moorosi and Bantwini (2016) revealed that the nature of support district officials give to school principals and managers is more of authoritarian top-down

leadership styles, which tend to have negative effects on school performance. This then compromises the quality of monitoring done by HODs in schools.

Bantwini (2016) states that district and circuit leadership is an essential component of education system and provides a necessary bridge between schools and government. According to Department of Basic Education (2013) the role of education District and Circuit officers is to provide management and professional support and help schools achieve excellence in teaching and learning. Officials from these offices should provide supervision, coaching, development of staff which is aimed at influencing principals' thinking and practices in their locality. This idea of district support for schools is based on the view that these offices are best placed to play a critical role in the promotion of quality teaching and learning (Motshekga, 2012). This means that if Districts and Circuit offices fail to deliver the necessary support, the academic performance of learners will be negatively affected.

Moorosi and Bantwini (2016) affirm that district leadership is not only significant in improving schools and learners' learning, but is also central to driving educational reforms and achieving greater educational quality. As the Department of Education (2011) state that the core function of District and Circuit offices is to buttress schools in delivering their core function, which is to improve the educational achievement of all learners. This is why Marzano and Waters (2009) affirm that high functioning districts influence what happens in the classrooms, which in turn influences learner performance. Bottoms & Schmidt-Davis (2010) attest that effective and supportive districts raise the principals' level of confidence in their ability to succeed, and in their belief that improved school practices are important to their learners' academic success. This is supported by Ebersohn (2008) who mentions that the District and circuit officials have an oversight and monitoring responsibility regarding the overall functionality of the school, and they have to work as a team to ensure that schools achieve the department standards, goals and objectives of providing quality education to the entire society. District leadership, therefore, has an indirect but important effect on learner achievement (Marzano and Waters, 2009).

According to Motshega (2012) in District and Circuit offices, few staff members have job related training, which compromises service delivery by many district offices to fall far short of what the institutions and the public expect. Findings of a study by

Mthiyane, Bhengu & Bayeni (2014) reveals that subject advisors did not at any time observe actual classroom teaching to see if teachers were implementing what they had learnt at workshops. Their findings further reveal that the visits of district officers to schools are focussing on policy compliance by schools rather than support, and exhibited elements of inspection, supervision and control. A survey conducted by the Public Service Commission in Limpopo, Northern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal provinces, found inter alia that schools were hardly visited by circuit managers (The Public Service Commission, 2006). This poor level of support and development by district and circuit officials impacts negatively on the performance of learners.

Bantwini and Diko (2011) indicate that support to schools, particularly rural and historically disadvantaged schools, is often fragmented and uncoordinated. Dysfunctional schools will remain dysfunctional if they do not receive the required support by district and circuit officials. This supported by Smith (2010) who asserts that the support of the circuit and district officials to schools, is supposed to be an essential link in the development and improvement of schools. Smith (2010) and Ebersohn (2008) agree that if the functions of the officials hold true, schools should be positioned well to improve their academic performance.

2.5.6. Corporal Punishment

Article 19 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC, 1989) laid the foundations for the protection of children from “all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse”. In South Africa, corporal punishment in all schools has been banned as per the prescript of the South African School Act 84 of 1996. As a result of the banning of corporal punishment, the lack of discipline and safety in schools became major challenge (Maphosa and Shumba, 2010).

Ndamane (2008) states that the banning of corporal punishment leads to a lack of discipline which is a serious problem experienced by educators. This challenging behaviour by learners renders educators helpless and disempowered, which may lead to unsuccessful teaching and learning.

Contrary to the effects the banning of corporal punishment has on teachers, students who have been subjected to hitting or other harsh disciplinary practices frequently withdraw from school activities and disengage academically. This is supported by

findings by The Society for Adolescent Medicine (2003) which state that victims of corporal punishment often develop lowered school achievement, a tendency for school avoidance and school dropout. The prevalence use of corporal punishment against students creates an overall threatening school atmosphere that impacts students' ability to perform academically.

According to UNICEF findings (2014), corporal punishment has been associated with a range of negative impacts on learners, which includes poor performance at school, physical injuries, psychological and emotional harm, absence, and dropout. UNICEF findings (2014) further indicate that corporal punishment is negatively associated with low maths scores at age 12 in India, Peru, and Vietnam. A study by Hickman (2008) found that in the countries where corporal punishment is frequently used, schools have performed worse academically. It is therefore evident that harsh physical punishment aimed at improving learners' behaviour does not improve their academic performance, but instead performance is enhanced through motivation and counselling, Awan (2011). It is therefore very important for this study to interrogate both the extent and impact corporal punishment might have on the academic performance of learners in the two identified research sites.

2.6 Classroom issues

2.6.1 Reading Ability

Nyarko, Kugbey and Kofi (2018) state that the reading ability of a learner is significantly and positively related with the learner's performance. Reading provides background knowledge and comprehension skills necessary for student achievement. Guthrie, Benneth & McGough (2007) state that reading involves getting meaning from printed or written words, which is the basis for learning and one of the most important skills in everyday life.

Learners with poor reading ability get terrible scores in their examinations, and effortlessly get distracted and eventually drop out from school. This is supported Fosudo (2010) who states that a learner who has a poor reading ability does not do well in class activities and this deficiency is extended throughout his or her academic lifetime. That is why Yusuf (2015) concluded that reading is critical for learners' success in and outside school. This is further supported by Deavers (2000) who

states that reading is a major component of learning. Reading is a complex cognitive process of decoding symbols in order to construct or derive meaning. This means a learner, whose reading ability is challenged, will have difficulty to answer examination questions, and this may lead to poor academic performance. Issa, Aliyu, Akangbe & Adedeji (2012) concede that the reading ability provides learners with the key for all form of information necessary for our day-to-day survival and growth. It is therefore, easy for a learner whose reading ability is poor to perform poorly at school. This is also supported by Chege (1999) and Njoroge(2000), in their studies where they indicate that learners with problems in reading English have problems in school performance.

Reading difficulties are the main causes of failure in school (Carmine, Silbet & Kameenui, 1997). Anyaegbu (2017) confirms that poor reading ability is believed to be one of the causes of poor performance in secondary schools in Nigeria, as (Feagan, 1983, Hallahan, Kauffman & Lloyd, 1985 agree that reading appears to affect performance in all other academic subjects. Issa, Aliyu, Akangbe & Adedeji (2012) state that everyday reading activities in which learners engage, may considerably influence their studying skills and subsequent academic performance. Issa, et.al (2012) further state that poor reading ability could partly be held responsible for general poor performance that schools usually record in both internal and external examinations. It is evident that poor academic performance in grade 12 is a result of poor reading ability of learners.

2.6.2. Homework

According to Cooper and Valentine (2001) there has been a great debate over the value of homework for over a century now. Proponents of homework believe homework increases learner understanding of the work done in class, retention of these material, as well as teaching skills like good study habits and time management (Cooper and Valentine, 2001). In their study they further state that Critics of homework state that homework has not been shown to improve performance, and further cite drawbacks which include among other things; boredom and burnout, less time for family, lack of sleep and increased stress. A study by the American Educational Research Association (1998) found that homework can either

positively or negatively impact learners depending upon their individual or family circumstances

Even though homework is viewed by some as a vital key to learner achievement in today's society, a strong "anti- homework" movement still exist (Crosnoe, 2002). For example Vatterott (2007),states that true responsibility cannot be coerced, therefore learners must be allowed the time to develop and take ownership of their tasks in order to get true learning from homework. Smith (2016) indicates that learners often require help which encourages some to cheat by getting someone else to do it. Cooper, Robinson and Patall (2006) state that the negative impacts of homework are loss of interest in academic material, and physical and emotional fatigue. These negative impacts of homework have a potential to cause poor academic performance because too much homework cause emotional fatigue which leads to a loss of interest in academic material.

According to Druker (2017) homework can be counterproductive. In his findings Druker (2017) concede that rather than improving educational achievement, heavy homework load can negatively affect the performance of learners. Falche and Marte (2012) add that even though other studies conclude that homework is an important part of being successful, but too much of it can have the opposite effect on learners' academic performance. This lends credence to the fact that the amount of homework a learner has, can ultimately impact his or her achievement, as Kohn (2006) states that high amounts of homework do not guarantee high performance.

3. Conclusion

In this chapter, I highlighted a number of factors that contribute towards grade 12 poor academic performance as researched by different researchers, both nationally and internationally. Factors identified include learner-related issues, educator-related issues, parental issues, Departmental issues, and classroom issues. The next chapter deals with the research design and methodology of this study in an attempt to address the statement of the problem, which is, "Possible factors that cause grade 12 poor academic performance in two secondary schools in Ermelo". The next chapter focuses on research methodology adopted for use in the study.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

This chapter outlines the research design and methodology used in the study. The study in question investigated possible factors that cause poor academic performance of grade 12 learners in two schools in Gert Sibande district, Mpumalanga Province. This research project adopted a qualitative approach. The approach was found to be most suitable for the study because it provided the participants with the opportunity to articulate their perceptions, understandings, experiences, and insights about the problem under study. Furthermore, the approach enabled the researcher to explore the underlying reasons and motivations for the poor academic performance of grade 12 learners. This chapter dealt with the research methodology, research design, research site, sampling, data collection techniques, data generation, quality criteria and ethical consideration.

3.2. Research Design and Research Methodology

In order to deal with the confusion related to the use of the two terms, (research design and research methodology), it is necessary to first start by clarifying them because they are usually confused by many emerging researchers. Research design simply refers to a plan the researcher uses to answer a research question. A research method on the other side is a tool or techniques used to generate data (Newman, 2018). He further indicates that research design and research method are closely related but different. According to him, a good research design ensures that the obtained data always helps to answer the research question more effectively. The difference in meaning between the two terms is detailed in the following paragraphs.

3.2.1 Research Methodology

According to Lowhorn (2007), emerging researchers often find it very challenging to make a decision whether to adopt a qualitative or quantitative approach in their studies. As Lowhorn (2007) indicates sometimes a researcher may select an approach because he or she is more familiar with particular approach. In his findings, Lowhorn (2007) further recommends that for a research to be more helpful the choice of an approach should be based on a well-considered and suitable design

rather than simply choosing an approach that is more familiar or comfortable to the researcher. In addition, Campbell, and Stanley (1963) state that a qualitative approach to the study not only answers the question “why”, but it also determines if the independent variable (in the case of this study, the participants’ behaviour) does cause an effect on the dependent variable (which is the performance of grade 12 learners). After thoroughly considering the purpose of the study, the researcher in this study decided that a qualitative approach to the study would be the best one to help address the question at hand, that is, “which factors are causing the underperformance of grade 12 learners in the two schools selected as research sites?”

The purpose of this study is to investigate the underlying causes of the poor academic performance of grade 12 learners in the two schools selected as research sites. For this to be possible, Gephart (1999) suggest that a qualitative research needs to be located within the three major philosophical categories: constructivism, interpretivism and critical postmodernism. This study is located within the interpretivism paradigm. As Bryman (2004) indicates, interpretivism enables the researcher to understand and interpret data in a way that facilitate an in-depth engagement with the phenomenon. Furthermore, Cohen, Browne, and Leung (2007) state that in an interpretivism paradigm, the experience of participants and their cultural ideologies co-create each other. In addition Cresswell (2008) attest that a qualitative research seeks to gather an in-depth understanding of human behavior and the reasons behind such behavior as dictated by the context they are in. It was therefore through the experiences of teachers and HODs that the researcher was able to get an in-depth understanding of factors that are likely to contribute towards the poor academic performance of grade 12 learners in Msukaligwa 1 circuit.

Denzig and Lincoln (2011) state that a qualitative approach to a study investigates things in their natural settings while trying to interpret a phenomenon in terms of meanings people bring to setting. The qualitative approach seemed relevant to the study because as Cresswell (2008) concede, it is most suitable when the researcher aims at gathering an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon in its natural context. This is supported by Henning, Van Rensburg and Smit (2004) who opine that a qualitative approach to a study helps to get a clear and detailed account of a phenomenon under study. Through the use of the chosen approach, the researcher

was able to use interviews in order to gather in-depth information on which factors are contributing to the poor academic performance of grade 12 learners in the two selected research sites.

Creswell (2003) opines that a qualitative approach uses anthropological and ethnographic methods to study the participants. It is against this background that he recommends as little intrusion as possible should occur when using qualitative research and a researcher should frequently observe the participants unnoticed. He further states that qualitative research seeks to arrive at a theory that explains the behavior observed. Kobus (2007) adds that a qualitative approach to the study helps the researcher to collect descriptive data with an aim of developing an understanding of what has been observed or studied. Observation of participants was therefore done following ethnographic principles as recommended by Creswell (2003). This enabled the researcher to determine the participants' version of reality, rather than accepting one generic version of reality like the quantitative researcher would do.

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), a researcher using a qualitative approach gathers data by using less specific questions which probe for a deeper understanding of a certain phenomenon. This required the researcher to develop effective qualitative questions which could give shape and direction to the study. Kross and Giust (2019) add that research questions, lying at the basis of methodology, play a key role in quality inquiry. It is against this background that the researcher carefully developed open-ended questions to be used during interviews with all participants.

A qualitative approach to the study was more suitable because it enabled the researcher to get peoples' views or their understanding of the possible factors that contribute towards poor academic performance of grade12 learners in the two schools under study. The qualitative approach further enabled the researcher to interview grade 12 teachers, Head of Departments, and parents of learners in the two schools in order to get the reasons behind the poor academic performance of grade12 learners.

3.2.2 Research design

According to Trochim (2006), a research design is the overall strategy used by researchers to coherently and logically commingle different components of the study

in order to effectively address the research problem. In addition, Yin (2003) defines a research design as an action plan for getting from point A to point B, point A being the initial set of questions to be answered and point B referring to some set of conclusion or answers given to those questions. The function of a research design therefore is to explain how the whole process of the research will be carried out. It specifies the different procedures to be followed by the researcher in trying to answer the question.

According to Bryman (2004) a research design can take a number of different forms. Ibrahim (2016) identified these designs as Grounded theory, Ethnography, Phenomenology, Narrative or Historical and Case study. In his explanation Ibrahim (2016) stated that Grounded theory expects that the researcher collects rich data on a topic of interest and develop theories inductively. He further stated that the purpose of Ethnography on the other hand expects the researcher to immerse himself in groups or organizations to understand their culture. A Phenomenological research the researcher investigates a phenomenon or event by describing and interpreting participants' lived experiences. Narrative research on the other hand expects the researchers to examine how stories are told to understand how participants perceive and make sense of their experiences. Lani (2013) advocates that a Case study design should be used when the researcher intends to do one or any of the following:

- i) When his or her focus is to answer "how" and "why" questions.
- ii) When the behaviour that needs to be observed is not manipulated.
- iii) When the researcher wants to further understand a given phenomenon.
- iv) When the boundaries between the context and phenomenon are not clear.

For the purposes of this study, the case study design was adopted. This is because as Omari (2010) indicates, it helped me to conduct and work with more descriptive data which seeks deep and vivid descriptions of the context and events. Furthermore, McMillan and Schumacher (2001) added that a case study helps the researcher to gain a sharpened understanding of why the instance happened as it did. The design used in the study enabled the researcher to describe the phenomenon under study and gather information in a detailed manner. Considering

the purpose of the study, the case study design seemed relevant because as MacMillan and Schumacher (2001) concede that a case study design can help to ensure that findings of the study are judged to be credible. The researcher managed to get the views, experiences and responses of the participants based on the objectives of the study.

According to Robert (2013), a case study is a research design that involves an up-close, in-depth, and detailed examination of a phenomenon (the case), as well as its related contextual conditions. Robert (2013) further states that a case study research allows the researcher to conduct an empirical inquiry that investigates a phenomenon within its real-life context. In addition, Stake (2005) states that a case study should focus on a bounded system, usually under natural conditions, so that the system can be understood in its own environment. Furthermore Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) emphasises that when using a case study design the researcher should investigate and report on the complex dynamic and unfolding interactions of events, human relationships, and other factors in a unique instance. Bryman (2004) added that a case should be chosen on the grounds that it will allow a better understanding of the circumstances in which the question will be answered. The chosen research design enabled the researcher to gain a more detailed understanding of the phenomenon through the use of a range of research tools.

Given the interpretive position adopted in this research and the nature of the research question, the case study design was considered the most appropriate approach to employ because it provided the researcher with a systematic way to collect data, analyze information and report the results. Through the design, the researcher got detailed information on the unique perceptions and concerns of individual participants in a real-world situation which would have been lost if a quantitative research was used. Using multiple methods of data collection such as interviews, document analysis and observation assisted in shedding more light about the problem under study.

3.3 Research site

The study was conducted at two secondary schools in Ermelo, Gert Sibande district in Mpumalanga province, South Africa.

Mpumalanga is a province of South Africa. The name means “East”, or literally “the place where the sun rises”. Being one of the nine (9) South African provinces, Mpumalanga province is located in the eastern part of South Africa, bordering Eswatini and Mozambique. It shares borders with four other provinces: Limpopo province on the north, Gauteng province on the west, Free State on the southwest and KwaZulu-Natal on the south. It is divided into four districts, namely Botshabelo, Ehlanzeni, Gert Sibande and Nkangala. It was established in April 1994 after the first democratic elections of South Africa. The Capital city of Mpumalanga province is Mbombela formerly known as Nelspruit.

There is considerable variation in home languages in the province. The area is made up of four population groups (Blacks, White, Coloured and Indian) with blacks being the majority. African languages spoken in the province are IsiSwati, IsiZulu, Tsonga, Southern Ndebele, and Northern Sotho. European languages spoken are Afrikaans and English.

Measured by its total income, Mpumalanga can be classified as one of the poor provinces of South Africa. According to the report by Statistics South Africa (2011), Mpumalanga province has the third lowest total income of the provinces in South Africa. However, in *per capita* income terms the province ranks fourth lowest. SSA (2011) report indicates that Mpumalanga province is marred by high poverty rates, inequalities in the distribution of income between various population subgroups, and unemployment. These factors, as identified in the SSA (2011) report, may have an impact on the environment of the two schools selected as research sites.

The means of production is agriculture and mining. According to the Global Africa Network report (2016), 68% of the land in Mpumalanga is used for agricultural purposes. Crops planted include maize, wheat, sorghum, barley, sunflower seed, soybeans, macadamia’s, groundnuts, sugar cane, vegetables, coffee, tea, cotton, tobacco, citrus, subtropical and deciduous fruit. Natural grazing covers approximately 14 % of Mpumalanga. The main products are beef, mutton, wool, poultry and dairy.

Extensive mining of gold, platinum and coal is the second means of production. The Global Africa Network report (2018) indicates that Mpumalanga province accounts for 83% of South Africa’s coal production. Mpumalanga province is home to the three

major power stations in South Africa. Moreover, the new Kusile power station, which is one of the biggest infrastructure projects in the history of South Africa, is also situated in Mpumalanga province.

Recently, Mpumalanga province has become one of South Africa's biggest tourist attractions. The province encompasses the southern half of the well-known Kruger National Park. According to Mpumalanga Economic Growth Agency (MEGA), Mpumalanga province is already a leader in nature reserves and parks.

3.4 Sampling

Sampling refers to the use of a subset of the population to represent the whole population. In qualitative research the selection of participants can be done by following strategies like purposive sampling, quota sampling or stratified sampling. Purposive sampling is when participants are selected based on certain characteristics they possess. In quota sampling, participants are chosen with respect to sizes and proportions of subsamples, with subgroups chosen to reflect corresponding proportions in the population (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). In stratified sampling, sampling is done by dividing the total population into small groups.

This study adopted Purposive sampling. This is because according to McMillan and Schumacher (2010) purposive sampling involves identifying and choosing individuals who are rich in information needed for the intended study. This is supported by Maree (2007) who stated that in purposive sampling the selection of the sample is largely dependent on the judgement or discretion of the researcher who decides as to who is most likely to achieve the purposes of the study.

For the purposes of this study, purposive sampling was chosen to ensure the selection of knowledgeable participants who possess certain defining characteristics, such as being a grade 12 teacher in an under-performing school or being an SMT member of an under-performing school in Msukaligwa circuit, being a parent of a learner in an under-performing school. All the participants in the study were successfully selected because they met all the defining characteristics used to identify them. Furthermore, purposive sampling was used to select the two schools due to the close proximity of the researcher's home to the two selected schools.

The sample size is composed of 22 participants. This total number of participants consists of 3 grade 12 teachers from each school, 2 Head of Departments from each school, 3 grade 12 learners from each school and 3 parents from each school. The number of participants was enough because as Patton (2002) states, in qualitative research even a fewer number of respondents, are enough for a researcher to generate findings. Furthermore, the number of participants selected was sufficient because it would have allowed the researcher to continue until the last stage of the study in a case where one or two participants withdraw before the study is completed.

Robinson (2002) states that in qualitative study participants should be selected because they possess the kind of data needed for the study. Three parents selected as participants were females who are single parents and the other three (males) are married. All the parents were aged between 45 and 52 years old. All the parents who participated in the study had learners in the respective schools and were governing body members. Such parents were able to give information about their own home environment as well as information regarding the behaviour of other parents in the school in relation to academic matters of their children. Teachers and head of department selected as participants were aged between 37 and 55 years. Four were females and six were males. Teachers and head of departments from the two schools have been teaching in the schools for many years, which enabled them to provide the data that was needed for the study. Learners selected as participants were aged between 17 and 20 years. Learners were selected because they could easily communicate using the language of teaching and learning. The 22 respondents were purposely selected on the basis that they would provide experience on the factors that may possibly contribute to the poor academic performance in the two schools in Ermelo.

3.5. Data collection techniques

According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) a qualitative study can employ a number of data collection methods such as observations, interviews and document analysis. For the purposes of this study, the researcher opted to use open-ended face to face interviews, participant observation and document analysis as data collection strategies. An interview is generally a qualitative research technique which

involves asking open-ended questions to converse with respondents and collect elicited data about a subject (Gubrium and Holstein, 2001). Observation is a qualitative research technique where researchers observe participants' on-going behaviour in a natural situation (Creswell, 2007). Bowen (2009) defines document analysis as a form of qualitative research in which documents are interpreted by the researcher to give voice and meaning around an assessment topic. The researcher opted to use the three methods so as to enhance the chances that the data collected could be as close to the truth as possible.

3.5.1 *Interviewing*

Despite the prevalence of the COVID-19 pandemic, the researcher opted for face-face interviews as one of the tools of collecting data. This is because as Carol (2017) opines that interviews are most effective for qualitative research because they enable the researcher to explain, better understand and explore the opinions of participants. The interviews conducted during the study were with teachers, heads of department in the two schools as well parents of learners in the two schools.

Maree (2008) defines interviews as a face-face conversation between the interviewee and the interviewer where the latter asks a set of questions with an aim of finding the truth and more information about a certain phenomenon under study. This is supported by McMillan and Schumacher (2010) who assert that interviews provides the interviewee an opportunity to give details, further explanations and clarify responses. Interviews are data collection instruments used by the researcher to obtain data about the perspectives, beliefs and behaviour of the participants which pertains the phenomenon under study. The researcher opted for face-face interviews because as Lavrakas (2008) states they enable the researcher to gather detailed information about the factors which may possibly cause the poor academic performance of matric learners in two schools in Msukaligwa 1, Gert Sibande district. Using open-ended questions during interviews allowed participants to express themselves freely on the given subject. Furthermore, by using open-ended questions (as advocated by qualitative researchers) the researcher was able to collect the descriptive data needed to develop an understanding of what possible factors are causing academic underperformance of grade 12 learners in Msukaligwa 1 circuit.

Open-ended face -to- face interviews were planned for all participants, that is, grade 12 teachers in the two schools, head of departments as well as parents. All the scheduled interviews took place during the time of COVID-19 when only grade 12 learners were continuing with their studies. The interviews were recorded, so as to allow for easy transcription and analysis. A written record of contextual factors (like facial expressions, body language and gestures) was also kept during the planned interviews. The interviews enabled the researcher to gather more information about factors which may possibly cause the academic performance of matric learners in Gert Sibande to be poor. For further details on the focus of the interviews with teachers, heads of departments and parents are attached as appendixes, with appendix A being interviews with grade 12 teachers, Appendix B for interviews with heads of department and appendix C for interviews with parents.

3.5.2 Observation

Furthermore Newbold (2018) state that observation is an important research method for researchers because researchers use it to determine how participants behave in different environment. COVID-19 presented the two research sites with a “new normal” environment where learners are expected to be screened every morning before they start with their school day. As Denzin and Lincoln (2011) advocate that a qualitative research should involve studying and observing things in their natural setting, the behavior of participants in their new natural setting (as provided by COVID-19) was therefore carefully observed. During observations the researcher systematically noted and recorded events of interests so as to get answers to the question under study. This was done with an intention to look for behavioural trends which had the potential to cause poor academic performance in the two schools. A further detail on what the observation focused on is attached as appendix D.

3.5.3 Documents

Bowen (2009) on the other hand states that document analysis is also a useful and beneficial method for most researchers because they provide supplementary research data. Bowen (2009) further opines that documents are helpful in contextualizing the study within its field. It is against this background that for the purposes of this study the researcher adopted document analysis as another tool to collect data. Documents analysed during the study include the logbook and class

registers. Documents analysed provided the researcher with supplementary data on factors that may contribute towards the poor academic performance of grade 12 learners in the two research sites.

3.6 Data Generation

The generation of data occurred during the prevalence of the novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) which resulted in the national lockdown of the entire country. COVID-19 and the national lockdown posed challenges and further delayed the process of data generation. During the national lockdown, all schools were closed, and it was impossible for the researcher to start with the generation of data. This is because all participants selected for the study, which include grade 12 teachers and Heads of departments, were not available to be interviewed.

3.6.1. Teacher and HOD interviews.

Due to their busy schedule, teachers initially opted to be given the interview schedules to complete at the comfort of their homes. This could not be done because the researcher, as per the research proposal, opted for face-to face interviews as a data generation strategy. Teachers then opted to schedule their interviews after hours at the comfort of their homes. Due to the dangers and fears of transmission posed by COVID-19, all the interviews which were scheduled to take place after-hours at the comfort of their homes did not materialise. Appointments were then scheduled to take place during school hours at school. Despite having scheduled appointments with participants, the researcher on some other days had to go back home without interviewing participants due to unplanned emergencies and unforeseen situations. Teacher interviews were then rescheduled to take place at schools during the teachers' free periods. This was done to avoid disturbing participants during teaching time as well as creating any disturbances to the daily school program. Finally, interviews scheduled during the teachers' free periods became successful.

On entering the school premises, the researcher's body temperature was taken daily at the main gate, his hands washed with an alcohol enhanced hand washing sanitizer. This was done as a strategy to control access and reducing chances of transmitting the virus to the communities of the two schools selected as research sites. To adhere to the COVID-19 regulation of social distancing, both the interviewer

and the interviewee sat on the separate ends of the ordinary teachers' table and a little bit away from the table. For better sound quality, the voice recorder was put in the middle top of the table so that participants' voices could be clearly recorded. To avoid any possible transmission of the virus, the researcher always wore a face shield. The use of the face shield enabled the researcher to breath properly during the duration of the interview. The use of the face shield instead of the face mask further assisted in ensuring that the researcher is clearly audible when asking questions. The interviews lasted for 20-30 minutes and were completed in a space of six days (four days for teachers and two days for HODs). Details on the focus of the interviews with teachers and HODs are provided in the interview schedule attached as appendixes, with appendix A being the interview schedule with grade 12 teachers and appendix B being interview schedules with heads of departments..

3.6.2. *Parents interviews.*

All parents selected as participants in the study were governing body members of the two selected research sites. The researcher consulted with principals of schools in order to get contact details of the parents selected to be participants in the study. After getting contact details, the researcher then phoned participants and scheduled interview times. Interviews were then scheduled for different days during the week. Interviews that were initially scheduled for midweek did not materialise due to work related commitments. These interviews were then rescheduled for Saturdays and Sundays when parents were not working. This was possible because parents were not attending any church services because of the national lock down as a result of COVID-19. Interviews with parents of learners in the two schools were done in the comfort of their homes.

During the visits to different homes, the researcher always carried with him an alcohol-based hand rub to wash his hands before entering and leaving the different homes. Some of the participants' homes also had their own sanitizers which were given to the researcher on his arrival. Furthermore, to protect himself against any possible infection or transmission of the virus, the researcher wore his face shield for the entire duration of the interview. To ensure social distancing, the researcher and the participants sat on opposite sides of coffee tables. Some of the parents preferred to be interviewed in their home language, that is, IsiZulu. So, interview questions

were translated during the interview for better communication and during the time when they were transcribed. The interviews took 15 -20 minutes before completion. Through these interviews, the researcher was able to get some valuable information on whether the level of parental involvement in the two schools does or does not contribute to the academic performance of their children. Further details on the content of the interviews with parents are included as interview schedule with parents in the attached appendix C.

3.6.3. *Learner interviews*

All learners selected for the study were doing grade 12 in the two research sites. The researcher sought the opinions of two grade 12 teachers teaching English in each of the two research sites. Teachers selected learners who they thought would be able to provide the researcher with the necessary information. After the identification of learners, the researcher contacted individual learners to seek their consent to be part of the study. After agreeing to be part of the study, the researcher then set appointments with individual learners. Interview sessions with learners were then scheduled for after school and during break time.

The interviews took place in one of the offices provided by teachers. To comply with the safety regulations as suggested by the health professionals, the researcher ensured that learners wore their masks. Both learners and the researcher sanitised their hands before continuing with the interviews. To ensure social distancing, the researcher and the participants sat on opposite sides of tables. The interviews took 15 -20 minutes before completion. Through these interviews, the researcher was able to get some valuable information on which factors learners believe contribute towards their poor academic performance. Further details on the content of the interviews with learners are included as interview schedule with learners in the attached appendix D.

3.6.4. *Observations*

The observations at the two research sites continued for four weeks, two weeks for each research site. In all the days on which observations were conducted, the researcher always wore his face shield to protect himself against any possible transmission of the virus COVID-19. The first focus area for observing teachers and learners was on their punctuality in terms of their arrival at school as well as how

quickly do they return to class after break time. This was done with the purpose of finding out how does the factor of lateness by both teachers and learners in the two schools affect teaching periods. Due to the big number of learners who are supposed to be screened at the main gate and the limited number of screeners (only two for each school), a delay in the start of class periods was initially experienced almost every day. After the addition of one extra screener, delays were minimized, and few learners became late. In both schools, periods after break time were affected almost every day. Even though learners received their lunch in their respective classrooms, delays were experienced almost every day because teachers had to start first by sanitizing all learners before beginning with tuition. Learners in both schools delay going back to class especially after break time. This is because instead of going to the bathrooms while there is time, learners decide to go there immediately when the bell indicating that it is time for them to go back to class ring.

Observation also considered class organization during the era of COVID-19. This was done with an aim of finding out whether overcrowding in classes as another possible factor causing poor academic performance still to exist or not. As a way of complying with social distancing classroom enrolment in the two schools was halved by almost 50%. Classes consisted of 20-25 learners with no learner sharing a table. Even though such class organization in the two schools ruled out overcrowding in classes but it doubled the number of classes initially assigned to be taught by one teacher. This meant that a teacher who used to teach four classes was now teaching eight classes, which may compromise the quality of teaching which is given later during the day because of fatigue.

3.6.5. *Document Analysis*

Documents that were analysed included the time book, class registers, logbook and learners' books submitted to teachers for control purposes. The analysis of these documents was completed in two weeks, one week for each school and they shared more light on the research question. The focus area for analysing documents was on the level of absenteeism as a possible cause to poor performance.

Since data was generated during the era of COVID-19 the usual class registers were no longer being used in the two schools. This was due to the fact that learners who were initially in one class were now divided into two separate classes to comply with

social distancing. Both schools relied on the COVID-19 compliant registers since they are expected to submit daily statistics to the circuit office. The COVID-19 compliant registers also shed some light on the attendance of learners at school. In most days attendance by learners was not at 100%, that is, in each day in each class, few learners were absent.

The second document analysed was the logbook. The logbook provided the researcher with details of visits done by the departmental officials to the school. The circuit manager for Msukaligwa 1 visited the schools several times to support and monitor the school's compliance to COVID-19 safety regulations. Career Guidance official also visited the school to motivate grade 12 learners. Some officials from the provincial office as well as officials from the Department of Basic Education visited the school to monitor school readiness and compliance to COVID -19 safety regulations.

Due to COVID-19, in addition to the time book, teachers now sign COVID-19 registers as a safety measure to track their temperatures. The time book gave details on the punctuality of teachers at school. Some of the teachers signed it during the course of the day, not immediately when they arrive at school. This is because such teachers are rushing to class so as to honour their first teaching period. Teachers who came late on a particular day also signed in the correct time as if they arrived on time.

As a matter of policy in the two schools, HODs have to monitor learners' books weekly to check for content coverage. Teachers on the other hand are expected to have to controlled learners' books before submitting them to HODs. Due to the fear of transmission of COVID 19 both teachers and HODs in the two schools have ceased to control learners' books. Learners now mark their work, on their own, during class time while following the guidance of teachers. Such a practice also put a strain on the time allocated to teach new content which then made teachers to be behind schedule with content coverage.

To safeguard against getting and spreading the virus from the documents that were analysed, the researcher sanitized hands before and after handling any document. All documents used shed some light on whether teaching periods allocated for content coverage are utilized maximally and appropriately by teachers, heads of

departments and learners. The documents further provided more information necessary to answer the question at hand, that is; what exactly are some of the possible factors that cause poor academic performance in the two schools under study.

3.7. Quality Criteria

3.7.1 The use of different methods of data collection

In qualitative research, trustworthiness can be ensured by using the four criteria constructed by Schwandt, Lincoln and Guba (2007), i.e: credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability. According to Maree (2012) using various data collection methods lead to the trustworthiness of the study. Firstly, trustworthiness was ensured by using three different methods of data collection. These methods were face to face interviews with all participants, observation of participants in their natural setting and the analysis of different documents used in schools. Observations and document analysis were used to confirm whether the responses given by the various participants during interviews are indeed a true reflection of reality in the two research sites. The researcher adopted these three data collection methods so as to enhance the chances that the data collected was as close as possible to the truth.

3.7.2 The use of a tape recorder

Secondly to ensure that the data collected and presented was not bias, the researcher used a voice recorder. According to Al-Yateem (2012), recording usually achieved through audio techniques further helped qualitative researchers to keep accurate, numerous records of their entire data collection process in order to ensure credibility and integrity. The voice recorder enabled the researcher to present the responses of the participants verbatim. After the interviews were done the recordings were played in full so that participants could get a chance to make amendments and provide additional information if necessary. Participants were then given a chance to verify if the collected data were indeed their exact responses as per their interviews.

3.7.3 Transferability

Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that the researcher can establish transferability of the research study's findings by providing readers with evidence that the research study's findings could be applicable to other contexts, situations, times and

populations. Seale (1999) adds that providing a detailed, rich description of the settings studied enables the reader to judge the applicability of the research findings to other settings that they know. To ensure the transferability of the study to other similar settings, the researcher gave detailed information about the two research sites.

3.7.4 Confirmability

Lastly, to bring about trustworthiness to the study, the researcher used more than one research site. This was done to ensure the confirmability of the research findings. Creswell (1998) defines confirmability as the extent to which the research findings can be confirmed by others. Participants (teachers, HODs and parents) from the two research sites were therefore asked the same interview questions which also lent credence to the responses of the various participants.

3.8. Ethical Consideration

3.8.1 Permission to conduct research

Gray (2009) puts an emphasis on the importance of the researcher to observe the principles of ethics when conducting a research. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) adds that a research study done with permission of all relevant participants protects the participants, adheres to the privacy and confidentiality of the participants, and also takes care of the well-being of participants. To ensure that this principle of ethical consideration is adhered to, after getting the clearance certificate from the University of Limpopo, the researcher requested and obtained permission from the Mpumalanga Department of Education (attached as Appendix E), Msukaligwa 1 circuit (attached as Appendix F). The researcher further received permission letters from the two schools (attached as Appendix G and H). The schools were ensured that the intended research study was not going to disturb their normal teaching and learning proceedings.

3.8.2 Informed consent

Walliman (2005) states that all research studies focusing on people and their relationships with others should be sensitive about all issues of ethics. Creswell (2003) adds that the researcher is always obligated to respect the rights, needs, values and desires of participants. The researcher further talked individually with all

participants and asked for their informed consent to be part of the study. The researcher did this by informing each participant about the purpose, nature, data collection methods and the extent of the research project prior to commencement. Because data was generated during the era of COVID-19 each participant was asked before the start of the interview whether he or she is still free or prepared to be interviewed or not. This was done solely to ensure that no single participant was forced to proceed with the interviews. All the chosen participants gave verbal consent to continue with the study.

3.8.3 Anonymity

Crow, Wiles, Heath and Charles (2006) state that the primary method researchers use to preserve anonymity is the use of pseudonyms for participants and also for the location of the study. Crow, Wiles, Heath and Charles (2006) opine that ensuring anonymity in the study protects the participants from illegitimate retaliation, harassment and undesirable consequences for providing the information. It is against this background that the researcher provided codes for all the participants. During the interviews, the researcher assured participants of privacy, confidentiality and anonymity by assigning each participant a code instead of using their real names and surnames. However, the names of the two research sites are real. This is because the two schools gave permission for their real names to be used. Both the schools were of the opinion that the results of the study will assist them to improve their grade 12 results.

3.8.4 Protection from harm

According to Trochim (2000), participants of a research study should not be exposed to any physical or psychological harm. In his study, Trochim (2006) explains that harm during the study can take different forms like stress, pain, anxiety, diminishing self-esteem or an invasion of privacy. The researcher explained and guaranteed all participants that participation in the study will not cause them any physical or psychological harm. The researcher further explained to participants that they are free to withdraw from the study anytime they feel uncomfortable.

Further explanation was given to participants that a voice recorder will be used to record the interviews. This was done because it would be impossible for the researcher grasp everything said in one instance. Lastly, it was explained to

participants that they had the right to stop the interview or withdraw from the study at any stage if they feel uncomfortable.

3.9. Conclusion.

This chapter contained a detailed outline of the research methodology used in the study. It provided a discussion of the relevant qualitative approach processes and strategies used while conducting the study. Through the use of different data collection instruments that are suitable for a qualitative research study, the researcher was able to get relevant information about factors which had the potential to cause the poor performance of grade 12 learners in the two schools under study. Even though some participants mentioned information irrelevant to the study, but the majority of participants highlighted relevant and critical factors which had the potential to affect the performance of grade 12 learners in the two selected schools.

CHAPTER 4

Data Analysis and Results

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter outlined the research design and methodological processes adopted for the study. This chapter presents the profiles of the two schools. It also presents an in-depth analysis of the qualitative data collected from six grade 12 teachers, four members of the school management teams, six grade 12 learners and six parents of grade 12 learners from the two research sites, which are two secondary schools in Ermelo, Gert Sibande District. The data used is based on the information collected using interviews with grade 12 teachers, members of the school management teams, grade 12 learners and parents, observations of teachers and learners as well as a number of documents that are used in school. The data that was generated reflects on a number of possible factors by the teachers, learners and parents as well as the home and school environment which may contribute towards the poor academic performance of the grade 12 learners. All the responses from teachers, members of the school management teams, learners and parents are grouped according to similarity and difference, irrespective of the school they come from. The chapter provides a comprehensive discussion, analysis and interpretation of participants' responses based on the qualitative technique on which the research was carried out.

For the duration of the entire study, the researcher aimed at investigating factors that are contributing towards the poor academic performance of the grade 12 learners in the two schools selected as research sites. To ensure that data constructed is analysed properly and correctly, the recommended strategy to code, store and retrieve data as advocated by Miles and Huberman (2013) was used in the study. Miles and Huberman (2013) recommend that raw data which can be in a form of recorded or scribbled field notes should be processed before they are available for analysis. They further suggest that raw data must be converted into expanded write-ups which can be read, edited for accuracy, commented on, coded and analysed using several methods.

4.2. School Profile

4.2.1 School A

This research site is a quintile 2 public secondary school located at 2847 Mandela Drive in Wesselton Township in Ermelo, adjacent N11 national road. It was established in 1990 to accommodate the increasing number of learners from a number of primary schools which could not be accommodated in one secondary school. The school is built next to a shopping complex and a police station. The school serves learners from two types of communities: an average community (middle class) from Everest Park Township and a poor community of Thusi village. Grades accommodated at this site include grade 8 to 12. From grade 10 to grade 12 only learners doing commercial subjects, technical subjects and science subjects can be accommodated in the Further Education and Training band. The mother tongue for the majority of learners is IsiZulu whereas the medium of instruction used in the school is English, and this poses a challenge because learners have difficulty when it comes to communicating using the medium of instruction.

The school is a very big school with thirty-two (32) classrooms. It is a well-built school. There is one laboratory for the learners doing science subjects. The school has one computer laboratory for learners who are doing Computer Application Technology, one library and one big kitchen which is used for preparing food for learners.

The learner enrolment is two thousand and thirty (2030); 524 learners in grade 8, 417 in grade 9, 506 in grade 10, 377 in grade 11 and 206 learners in grade 12. Both the teacher population and learner population is 100 per cent black. A total number of 63 educators, 2 administration clerks, 2 administration clerk assistants who are volunteers and 3 general assistants are employed at the school. The minimum educational qualification for the majority of educators is the Bachelor of Education degree. There is a high level of overcrowding in classes with classes averaging between 65-70 learners per class. In grade 12 classes learners are 52 per class. Despite such overcrowded classes the school has successfully continued to get a 100 % pass percentage in the technical subjects like Engineering Graphic Design (EGD), Mechanical engineering, Civil engineering and Electrical engineering. In the Further Education and Training band, learners have the option to choose from three

streams of subject combinations: the commercial stream, Science stream, or the technical stream.

The school admits learners from three surrounding primary schools which are close by. Despite the fact that music is not offered as a subject in the school, the school excels more on choral music competitions. Moreover, this is the only secondary school in Ermelo that has drum majorettes. Both the drum majorettes and the school choir attract quite a noticeable number of learners to the school. This may lead to a situation where some of the learners admitted in the school, due to the love they have for music or the drum majorettes, might be forced to choose subjects they are unable to master, which may affect their academic performance.

4.2.2 School B

The second research site is a quintile 4 public secondary school located at 2467 Mandela Drive in Wesselton township of Ermelo. It was established in 1995 after the closing down of Ermelo Mine, and the building was handed over to a Trust which converted the hostel building to a school. It was established as a strategy to deal with overcrowding in one of the neighbouring schools in the area at the time. The school is surrounded by informal settlements, with a number of shops in front including a liquor outlet. The school serves learners from the poor communities of the surrounding informal settlements and some from the formal housing. The school accommodates grade 8 to 12 learners, with grade 10-12 specialising in the general stream, commercial stream and science stream. The majority of learners are Zulu-speaking whereas the language of teaching and learning in the school is English, and this poses a challenge because learners have difficulty when it comes to communicating using the medium of instruction.

The school is relatively small because it has only seventeen (17) classes with a learner enrolment of 960. Both the teacher population and learner population is 100 per cent black. The majority of learners are found in the lower grades (grade 8-11) with only 79 grade 12 learners. Grade 8 learners are 213; Grade 9- 241, Grade 10- 198 and Grade 11-229. The school employs twenty-four teachers, one administrative clerk, two administration clerk assistants who are volunteers and three general assistants. The minimum teaching qualification for all the teachers is the Secondary Teachers Diploma, with a few having a Higher Diploma in Education (HDE) and a

few with an honours degree. The average class size is 56 learners. The majority of learners in the Further Education and Training band are found in the general stream and commercial stream. This is because the two streams of subject combination are regarded as relatively easy when compared with the science stream.

The school admit learners from a close by inclusive primary school. This means that the majority of learners in the school may have different learning difficulties. Quite a sizeable number of learners in the school excel in extra mural activities like music and netball. In addition to the challenge posed by the type of learners admitted in the school, there is recognizable level of teacher absenteeism at school and non-attendance of classes. The different challenges experienced by the school may contribute towards the poor academic performance of grade 12 learners in the school.

School buildings are not well cared for, the roof is rusty, and gutters are worn out. Only the administrative block, teacher offices and only eight classrooms have electricity. The school has a very small makeshift library which is also used as a storeroom for textbooks and stationery. There are no playgrounds for learners to use for extra mural activities. It does not have laboratory for learners who are doing subjects like life sciences and physical sciences.

4.3. Research themes

Data generated through observation, interviews and documents was analysed and interpreted to provide answers to the research question. Thematic content data analysis was used to analyse data received from participants and documents during the process of data collection. The researcher used the same data to increase his level of understanding of the phenomenon under study.

Strauss and Corbin (1990) define data analysis as a process of analysing and organising available data with an aim of identifying relationships, similarities and differences. The data that was collected through recorded interviews was transcribed first before it could be analysed. Data resulting from the interviews with parents who preferred to be interviewed in their mother tongue was firstly translated to English and transcribed later. This is the same with the data that was generated from the interviews the researcher conducted with learners. It was firstly translated to English before it was transcribed. Responses of participants were then compared with the

aim of identifying similarities and differences. The identification of similarities and differences in the responses of participants allowed for the classification of the data into themes and sub-themes. Data generated through observations and document analysis was also compared to the responses of participants. The comparison of responses gave the researcher some light on which factors may possibly contribute towards the poor academic performance of grade 12 learners in the two schools selected as research sites. The generated data was processed following Miles and Huberman's (2013) recommended strategy to code, store and retrieve data. Themes and sub-themes exhibited were classified as indicated in the following table:

THEME	SUB-THEME
Home Related Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The size of the family. • Unpredictable home environment • Low financial income
School Related Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overcrowding • Shortage of textbooks • Planned and Unplanned Programs
Teacher Related Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class attendance • Teacher Qualification • Teacher preparedness • Inadequate Content Coverage • Inconsistent Moderation of Tasks. • Non-implementation of strategies • Lack of capacity building • Excessive Code switching
Learner Related Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge Gap • Attitude towards learning • Late coming
Parent Related Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate Parental support • Inadequate level of education

4.3.1. Home related factors

Home related factors were found to have a noticeable contribution to the poor academic performance of the grade 12 learners by parents and educators. They regard them as the major contributor because of the types of home the majority of learners come from. The majority of learners in the two research sites come from families who live in one-roomed or two-roomed houses formally known as Reconstruction and Development Program houses (RDP houses). Some of these learners live with grandparents, uncles and other extended family members in that one-roomed or two-roomed house. Such conditions have the potential to rob the child of an opportunity to study whilst at home. For example, one parent from school B (PB-2) stated that *“the higher the number of people occupying the house, the more competition for space there will be.”*

Surprisingly learners supported the view by both teachers and parents. One learner from school A (LA-3) even said, *“I have no space I can use to study when I am home”*. Not having time and space to study while at home may contribute towards the poor academic performance of learners. This is because allowing learners time and space to study at home provides the learner with an opportunity to revise and master the work done at school. Even though there may be a number of home related factors that may affect the academic performance of learners, parents, teachers and learners in the study identified the size of the family, the unpredictable home environment and low financial income as factors contributing towards the poor academic performance of grade 12 learners in the two schools selected as research sites. This is in line with what Christie (2009) highlights when she indicates that home related factors may be physical, social circumstances or wider cultural patterns of life related to the location. She further indicates that home related factors are all the aspects of people’s domestic lives that contribute to their living conditions. A brief description of each of the possible home-related factors is presented here-under:

4.3.1.1. The Size of the family

Participants were expected to explain whether they believe that the home environment of learners (especially the size of the family) does contribute towards the academic performance of grade 12 learners. Four parents out of the six indicated that family size is a problem that contributes towards the poor academic performance of learners. One parent from school A (PA-3) said, *“The bigger the*

family size, the more negative the impact is on academic performance of learners because a learner will just not have a quiet time he or she can use to study”.

Learners were divided on whether the size of their families does or does not affect their academic performance. Two out of the six learners interviewed opined that the size of the family does not affect their academic performance. One learner from school B (LB-3) even stated that *“it depends on how you organise your time as a learner”*. The two learners believed that instead of complaining about the number of people at home, learners can go and study at the library after they are done with their home chores. The four other learners were of an opinion that the size of the family does affect the academic performance of learners. Learner number 1 from school A (LA-1) even said *“if you live far from libraries and are surrounded by noisy neighbours, you will not have time to study and it will affect your performance at school.”*

The size of the learner’s family was raised as a concern because bigger families are characterised by rowdiness, and this does not create convenience for learning. Learner number 1 from school B (LB-1) supported by stating *that “the best way for me is to wait for everyone to sleep before I can think about studying”*. Odok (2013) lends credence to this point as he indicates that small family sizes are linked to higher educational attainment. Kunz and Peterson (2010), also attest that with an increase in family size comes a diminution of the adult-child relationship, hence poorer academic achievement.

4.3.1.2. Unpredictable Home Environment

The research study also intended to establish how the unpredictable home environment (as experienced daily by learners) in their different homes affect their academic performance. This is because learners come from different family backgrounds which present different challenges for learners. The challenges that learners experience at home, which are sometimes unpredictable, have the potential to affect learners’ academic performance either positively or negatively. The unpredictable situations learners experience daily may include gender-based violence, high level of noise, quarrelling between members of the same family and substance abuse.

One participant who is an educator from school B (EB-1) stated that “*Some of our learners come from homes where parents are abusing alcohol, and in a case where a learner has to study, they are not given chance to study at home due to social challenges like domestic abuse.*” Evans (2006) attests that children, who do better at school tend to come from homes that are quieter, more organized and have a predictable routine, regardless of their socioeconomic status.

It is not surprising though that even learners supported the view that the challenges presented by their unpredictable home environment does affect their academic performance. One learner from school B (LB-3) even complained that “*the unhealthy relationship between my parents stresses me a lot and it affects my performance at school.*” Findings by Threlfall, Seay and Kohl (2013) confirm that the unpredictable home environment has a lot of influence on academic performance of learners. This is because according to them, the family is the first and major agency of socialisation and has a great influence on the bearing on the development of the child.

4.3.1.3. Low financial income

This was another area of concern for the researcher. The researcher wanted to find out if the low financial income in the learners’ homes does contribute towards their academic performance or not. This concern emanated from the fact that numerous research studies have documented that a correlation between poor academic achievement and a low socioeconomic status does exist. One parent from school A (PA-3) stated that his low financial income renders him unable to provide critical school essentials for his child which may cause his child to fail. Blair, Granger, Willoughby, Mills-Koonce, Cox, Greenberg and Fortunato (2011) attest that children living in poverty are at risk for high stress levels, impacting their executive functioning, working memory and Intelligence quotient. An educator from school A (EA-2) stated that “*famine can cause learners not to perform well at school.*” This may be true considering that a learner suffering from high stress level as a result of poverty cannot concentrate in class, and that can compromise his or her academic performance.

Surprisingly learners disagree that the low financial income of their parents does affect their academic performance. Learners believe the low financial income of their parents should be their motivating factor to do well at school so that they improve

their home situation. Learner number 3 from school A (LA-3) even said, “*I get everything here at school for free, the only thing I need from home can be clothes to wear so that I can come to school*”. The perception of learner number 3 from school A was supported by learner number 2 from school B (LB-2) who stated that “*the low financial income at home will make me to study and learn more*”.

Parents who have low financial income are less likely to have the necessary financial muscles to provide their children with the necessary school essentials. Ella, Odok and Ella (2015) state that children of female-headed families (single mothers) are at a greater risk of poor academic achievement. This is because the income of the single mother may not be enough for her to be able to provide for the basic needs of the children. Children from such families may suffer from malnutrition. A nutritionally inadequate diet may have an impact on the child’s development and learning capacity, which can lead to poor school performance.

4.3.2. School related factors

Learners spend most of their time at school where most of their character is moulded. The researcher opines that the school environment plays a very significant role in the academic performance of learners. He further believes that a positive school environment is more conducive to learning and academic performance. It is against this background that the researcher decided to investigate the influence the school environment has on the academic performance of grade 12 learners in the two schools selected as research sites. In this study, the researcher investigated whether or not factors like overcrowded classrooms, planned and unplanned programs and shortage of textbooks do contribute towards the poor academic performance of grade 12 learners in the two schools selected as research sites.

4.3.2.1 Overcrowded Classrooms.

Participants were asked whether overcrowding in the classrooms does contribute towards the poor academic performance of grade 12 learners or not. This is because many research studies showed that an overcrowded classroom significantly affects effective teaching and learning. All participants who are teachers suggested that overcrowding in the classroom has an effect on the academic performance of grade 12 learners. Teachers raised the issue of overcrowding because in overcrowded classes their focus is forced to shift from teaching to trying to manage classrooms

and controlling learners. One teacher from school A (EA-2) stated that *“the high number of learners in classrooms makes it very difficult for educators to give learners individual attention especially those who have a huge content gap which was created as a result of these learners being progressed from the lower grade.”*

Four out of the six parents participating in the study were also of the view that overcrowded classrooms pose many challenges for teachers. One parent from school B (PB-2) even stated that, *“With overcrowding in classes, a teacher can finish the whole year without knowing all the learners in his class.”* The concern of parents on overcrowded classes was due to their belief that lower numbers in class size would enable teachers to deliver quality education for their children. Moreover, parents are of an opinion that nothing has a higher priority more than their children’s education.

Regardless of what the other parents said, the other two parents believe overcrowded classes are beneficial to learners. These parents believe learners should gain much more from education than the arbitrary outcome of examination results. They believe learners can benefit a lot from a much less isolated learning experience and larger pool of peers to collaborate with. One parent (PA-3) even said, *“Learners can enrich their critical thinking skills and develop their awareness about life issues”*. Grazier (2017) attests that overcrowded classrooms present learners with an opportunity to acquire knowledge and learning which is beyond ‘the norm’ which is found within the walls of the classroom. Ultimately, through overcrowded classes, learners are empowered to own their future and be ready for university.

The opinion of teachers and parents was echoed by all the six learners participating in the study. Learners supported the view of parents and teachers because each classroom in the two research sites consists of more than 50 learners. This number is more than what the Norms and Standards of the teacher-pupil ratio allows. In South African secondary schools, the teacher- pupil ratio should be 1:35, that is, one teacher responsible for 35 learners. School B had two grade 12 classes consisting of 50 learners each, whereas school A had 4 classes of 55 each. One learner from school A (LA-1) said, *“The huge number in our classes makes it difficult for teachers to teach us properly.”* Learner 2 from school B (LB-2) supported and said, *“The*

classroom environment is not conducive due to limited physical space.” Khan and Iqbal (2012) validates this view by stating that effective teaching is not possible in overcrowded classes and majority of the teachers in such classes face instructional, discipline, physical and evaluation problems.

4.3.2.2 Shortage of textbooks

Teachers and learners were expected to indicate whether or not the shortage of textbooks affects teaching and learning. All the six learners firstly indicated that textbooks are not enough for all of them because they share them. One learner who takes History as a subject indicated that in school B learners taking History as a subject do not have textbooks at all, and they rely on the notes compiled by the teacher. Four learners out of the six who participated in the study believed the shortage of textbooks does affect their academic performance. Learners raised the issue because they believe textbooks are the only source of information they have which they can use to supplement on the notes they got from their teachers. One learner from school B (LB-2) said *“the shortage of textbooks is a big problem; the long distance between our homes makes it difficult for one party to get the textbook from the other party.”* The four learners indicated that the problem of the shortage of textbooks is more noticeable and critical when there is a task that they must do.

Surprisingly the other two learners disagreed with the view that the shortage of textbooks affects their academic performance. One learner (LA-2) even said, *“You can always download information from internet”*. The two learners argued that there are many ways of getting more information besides textbooks and relying on the notes given to them by teachers.

Teachers supported the view that the shortage of textbooks does affect learners’ academic performance. One teacher (EA-2) indicated that *“the shortage of textbooks negatively affected the quality of education”*. Teachers are of the opinion that the shortage of textbooks place grade 12 learners at a high risk of performing poorly. Furthermore, they believe that the shortage of textbooks weakens their impact on the teaching and learning process. Owoeye and Yara (2011) attest that the unavailability or shortage of resources in schools ultimately leads to poor learning. They further opine that textbooks are of critical importance to learning and academic performance of learners.

However, other researchers opine that the shortage of textbooks does not make any difference. Proponents of this view believe textbooks can be effectively used with the assistance of other learning materials. Mudulia (2012) argues that the academic performance of learners is improved by using textbooks with other learning materials. This view is supported by Triyoga (2010) when indicating that there is no single textbook which can be regarded as ideal for every teacher, for every group of learners and for every teaching situation. Glennerster, Kremmer, Mbiti and Takavarasha (2011) stated that an average child does not benefit from textbooks. It is therefore advisable that (though limited in number) textbooks should be used carefully and alongside other aids or other materials.

4.3.2.3 Planned and Unplanned programmes

Participants were asked to explain how other programmes (planned and unplanned) affect the academic performance of grade 12 learners. Programmes referred to include visits by outside people, representatives of companies and other departments who are allowed to talk to learners during tuition time. Learners indicated that the other programmes happening during tuition time have the potential to negatively affect their academic performance. Learners are of the opinion that such programmes lead to a situation where teachers are unable to complete the prescribed content. One learner (LA-2) complained and said, "*Sometimes teaching periods are shortened just to accommodate certain activities at school*". Reducing the normal duration of the teaching period may negatively affect the performance of grade 12 learners. This is because as Cattaneo, Oggenfuss and Wolter (2016) indicate, in education instruction time is an important and costly resource. Learners felt tuition time should never be misused. LB-2-said "*these programmes must be limited to avoid utilising too much of our tuition time because we may end up being behind with the syllabus*".

Teachers argued that such programmes may affect the academic performance of learners. SMTB- 2 indicated that "*the content of these programmes is scrutinised before whether it will uplift learners or not*". EA-2 indicated that "*as teachers, we cannot deprive learners of programmes like career guidance education*". Teachers believe programmes that are meant to assist learners should be awarded the necessary time.

It is true that all other school programmes (planned and unplanned) are meant to assist learners with life issues. But if these programmes are done very often in school, they may compromise tuition time which may also contribute towards the poor academic performance of learners.

4.3.3 Teacher Related Factors

Teacher related factors include anything done by teachers which has the potential to cause grade 12 learners to underperform academically. The researcher investigated how the following factors influence the academic performance of grade 12 learners: class attendance, teacher qualification, teacher preparedness, and inadequate content coverage.

4.3.3.1 Class attendance

Participants were expected to indicate whether class attendance by both teachers and learners has any contributory role towards learners' underperformance. It is surprising that teachers themselves raise concerns about the high level of non-class attendance by teachers in school B. One teacher (EB-3) said, "*Some of the teachers do not attend classes for the entire school working hours. Such teachers usually hide behind family responsibility of which sometimes is not the case.*" Participant EB-2 added by saying "*Some of the teachers do not teach for the entire period. Some are sometimes called to attend School management meetings during teaching times*". Teachers believe the high level of non-attendance of classes rob learners of tuition time and makes them ill prepared for examinations.

Parents also supported the view of teachers regarding the non-attendance of classes by teachers. One parent from school A said, "*Sometimes we meet teachers in shops during school hours*". The concern of parents emanates from their belief that during working hours every person must be at his or her working station performing the duties that he or she is paid for.

Learners also complained about teachers who do not attend classes. LB-1 said, "*When it is cold teachers stay in their offices and warm themselves with heaters while we stay cold in our classes*". The non-attendance of classes by the teachers worries learners because they will not finish the syllabus and that will put them at a disadvantage during their final examination. Finlayson (2009) confirms that when a

teacher is repeatedly absent in class, the performance of learners is significantly impacted in a negative way.

Porres (2016) indicates that the discussion on teacher absenteeism and its impact on academic performance continue to be an area of much concern to both educationalists and researchers because it relates to teachers and teaching. Findings by Lewis (2020) suggest that if teachers are not attending classes, the averages of learners in core subjects like Science and Mathematics is negatively impacted. Waymack (2014) adds that if teachers do not attend classes, it is impossible for them to have the necessary positive impact that they should. This is supported by findings of the 2012 report of the National Bureau of Economic Research which indicate that when teachers are absent in class there is a significant decrease in learners' outcome.

However, other studies raise questions regarding the generalizability of prior research on teachers' absenteeism and academic performance of learners. Findings by Lewis (2020) indicate that teacher absenteeism had a significant positive effect on the averages of learners in English. Transky (2020) adds that no significant correlation exists between teacher absenteeism and learners' achievement in mathematics. Schmulian and Coetzee (2011) attest that the correlation between teachers' class attendance and academic performance of learners is very low and not very meaningful. Such viewpoint indicates that other factors besides class attendance are likely to affect academic performance.

4.3.3.2 Teacher qualification

Participants were asked whether the qualifications of teachers contribute to the poor academic performance of grade 12 learners. The interviews with grade 12 teachers and heads of departments revealed two dimensions. The first dimension is with regard to the qualification of teachers in terms of the subject specialisation. The second dimension is with regard to the heads of departments managing subjects they are not qualified to manage. The researcher interrogated the issue of teacher qualification because he opines that the proper qualification of teachers is critical to the academic performance of learners.

Grade 12 teachers were divided on the issue of the qualification of teachers. Four out of six Grade 12 teachers opined that the qualification of teachers does contribute

towards the underperformance of grade 12 learners. TA-2 said, *“Some of the teachers are given different subjects to teach of which those subjects are not their specialisations”*. TB-1 mentioned that *“due to the shortage of human resource, a teacher qualified to teach languages is requested to teach a content subject he or she has no tertiary qualification.”*

It is surprising that two out of the four heads of department had a different view regarding teacher qualification as a possible factor. One head of department (SMTB-1) argued that *“a teacher may be qualified to teach a specific subject but learners still fail.”* SMTA-3 stated, *“all teachers in grade 12 are highly qualified; it is a question of a teacher giving himself enough time with his learners.”*

The issue of head of departments managing subjects they are not qualified to manage was raised by heads of departments themselves. SMT members from both schools were requested to indicate whether they think that their monitoring of teachers' work may in some way contribute towards the poor academic performance of grade 12 learners. The researcher was of an opinion that the monitoring of teachers' work is critical to learner academic achievement. Moreover, heads of departments in the two schools are responsible for the management of a cluster of subjects from grade 8-12 even though they do not have any tertiary qualification to manage some of those clustered subjects. One head of department from school B (SMTB-2) said *“I am responsible for Economic Management Sciences grade 8 and 9, Business Studies grade 10-12, Economics grade 10-12 and Accounting grade 10-12, and my qualification is Economics and Business Studies. Therefore, I can say in subjects like accounting the way I control learners' work is a bit compromised.”*

The above responses indicate that the qualification of teachers may be one of the contributing factors towards the poor academic performance of grade 12 learners. Due to the shortage of human resources, heads of departments in the two research sites are responsible for a number of subjects from grade 8-12. This strategy compromises the quality of monitoring they do which can lead to the poor academic performance of the learners. According to Chapter A of the Personnel Administrative Measures (2016), heads of department should *“be in charge of a subject, learning area or phase”*. This is in direct opposition to the practice in schools where heads of department are in charge of more than one subject in two phases. In the context of

South African secondary schools, a phase consists of three grades (10-12) with a number of subjects included.

4.3.3.3. Teacher preparedness

The focus of the researcher in this research theme was to find out whether the preparedness of teachers has an impact on the academic performance of grade 12 learners. In both schools, members of the school management teams, or heads of departments raised some concerns about the preparedness of teachers for their classes. Heads of department believe a well-prepared teacher will have a clear lesson plan detailing what will be done and when will it be done during the class period. Furthermore, they are of the opinion that without lesson plans teachers will always be behind schedule and the quantity and quality of the work given to learners may not match the required standard, as a result learners' performance will be negatively affected. One of the heads of department from school A (SMTA-1) highlighted that *"some teachers are doing lesson plans for compliance and never use those lesson plans. Sometimes those lesson plans do not meet the expected standards as per CAPS document."* SMTA-2 lent credence to the opinion of SMTA-1 when she said, *"there is poor adherence to submission dates which might be a result of the lack of planning, and the lack of planning by educators leads to poor utilisation of teaching time"*.

Teachers on the other hand disagreed with the opinion that teacher preparedness may contribute towards the poor academic performance of learners. Teachers believe the performance of learners depends more on learners' own motivation to do well and the commitment they have towards their studies. One teacher from school B (TB-3) even said *"my lesson plan cannot make or force learners to study."* TA-2 said, *"I have been teaching the same subject in grade 12 for more than five years, I just need to check what content should be treated on a particular day, I do not need a detailed lesson plan for that."* TB-1 said, *"You can have a lesson plan but sometimes the situation in the class or the immediate needs of learners dictates what needs to be done at that particular moment."*

Findings by Kariuki, Njoka and Mbugua (2019) identified teacher preparedness as a major contributing factor to poor teaching methods which fundamentally translates to learners' poor performance. Teacher preparedness and lesson planning are

essential part of good teaching. Without teacher preparedness and lesson plans, teaching wanders aimlessly. Learners may not relate to what is taught on a particular day with what was taught previously and what will be taught later. Poor planning may lead to reduced learning which will in turn lead to the poor academic performance of learners.

Surprisingly, other researchers that opine teacher preparedness and lesson plans are overrated and may not necessarily affect the academic performance of learners. According to Marvi (2016), experienced teachers can show up unprepared and still deliver an acceptable lesson. He further opines that planning exactly what teachers are going to teach each class each day and trying to stick to it just does not work. This is because lesson planning is based on the prior experience of teachers (what they anticipate will happen) instead of the current needs of learners. He further adds that lesson planning causes stress for teachers especially when things just do not go according to plan; for example, when an introduction planned to last for ten minutes takes more or less of the planned duration. Furthermore, lesson planning may also add stress for learners who need to ask more (or fewer) questions.

4.3.3.4. Inadequate content coverage.

Participants were asked whether the inadequate coverage of the prescribed content does contribute towards the poor academic performance of grade 12 learners or not. Heads of departments indicated that in most cases teachers are far behind with the pace setter. They identified the content gap that the progressed learners have as the reason for the inadequate coverage of the prescribed content. One head of department from school A (SMTA-2) said *“The challenge with content coverage is that the time allocated for the coverage of the prescribed content is compromised due to different disturbances. In most cases teachers use the time allocated to teach new content to try to close knowledge gaps from the previous grades.”*

Teachers supported the view by heads of department. Teachers feel the way the annual teaching plans are structured; they leave no room for teachers to revise or re-teach a topic learner have struggled to master. One teacher from school B (TB-3) even said, *“the Annual teaching plans prescribe topics for each day without regarding factors like the pace of the learners and the disturbances experienced during school*

days. Once you miss one day of teaching due to unforeseen disturbances or circumstances, you are already behind schedule”.

It is not surprising that even learners were of the opinion that inadequate content coverage may contribute towards underperformance. Learners believe that not completing the prescribed content puts them on the disadvantage during their final examinations. One learner from school B (LB-3) said, *“During the examination you can come across a chapter you have not treated in class, only to find that it has more marks.”*

Learners further explained how the issue of not finishing the syllabus affects them. They indicated that sometimes teachers conduct extra classes in trying to finish the syllabus without considering the fact that learners need time to revise and master what they have already learnt. LA-2 said, *“The issue of grade 12 learners writing examinations on one day whilst continuing with normal teaching and learning as a way of trying to finish the syllabus is a disadvantage for us because we end up not having time to study and prepare for the next examination paper”.*

Examination papers are set with the notion that all the prescribed content would have been covered. However, due to challenges and different disturbances experienced in schools, as identified by participants, this may not be the case. Abamba (2012) states that a decrease in learners’ achievement is the result of a corresponding decrease in teachers’ coverage of the content. Oluka and Okurot (2008) attest that poor academic performance is affected by the lack of completion of the prescribed content.

4.3.3.5. Inconsistent moderation of tasks

Participants were asked to explain whether all tasks given to learners include all the cognitive levels. Heads of department from the two schools indicated there are challenges regarding the moderation of tasks given to learners. SMTA-1 highlighted that *“a challenge regarding informal and formal tasks given to learners is that such tasks do not cover all cognitive levels. Only lower order questions and average questions are included. Higher order questions are not included in the set tasks”.* SMTB-2 stated that *“sometimes teachers submit a task very late, which does not give the HOD much time for moderation”.*

Teachers agreed that the inadequate moderation of tasks in the two research sites does exist. They opine the inadequate moderation of tasks is a result of a lack of planning on the side of the heads of department. Teachers opine that heads of department should develop quarterly program of assessment stipulating when certain tasks should be submitted for moderation. One of the teachers (EB-2) said, *“There is an inconsistent moderation of informal and formal tasks by heads of departments. Some of the formal tasks that are set in the schools are not pre-moderated”*.

The moderation of tasks is critical in ensuring that tasks given to learners include all cognitive levels. If learners are not used to answering high order questions, it will be difficult for them to answer higher order questions during examinations. Learners that are not prepared during the year to answer all levels of cognitive questions are bound to perform poorly during examinations. The Ontario Ministry of Education Report (2017) indicates the moderation of tasks supports the development and use of consistent assessment practices in schools.

4.3.3.6. Non- implementation of improvement strategies.

The researcher wanted to check whether teachers develop and implement subject performance improvement plans (SPIP) for the purposes of improving the academic performance of learners. After every formal task given to learners, the Department of Education expects teachers to analyse results, develop and implement strategies to improve learner performance. Heads of department indicated that there is a challenge of non-implementation of subject performance improvement plans in the two schools selected as research sites. SMTA-1 said, *“there is no mechanism in place to ensure that teachers implement the subject performance improvement plans they have developed”*. SMTA 2- conceded that *“this is one area where the majority of HODs experience challenges because it is difficult to monitor the implementation of subject improvement plans*.

Teachers confirmed the opinion of the heads of department. TB-2 highlighted that *“there is no time to implement the subject performance improvement plans because such an activity is not accommodated in the Annual teaching plan.”* TA-2 stated that *“In most of the time teachers develop the subject performance improvement plans*

for compliance purposes; there is no evidence that most of the teachers are implementing what is written in their subject performance improvement plans.”

The non-implementation of the subject performance improvement plans gives false impressions about the situation in the two research sites. It paints a picture that everything is properly done to improve learner performance, whereas implementation is lacking. Findings by Li, Guohui and Eppler (2008) confirm that strategies frequently fail not because of inadequate strategy formulation, but because of insufficient implementation. Non implementation means learners who could not master a particular subject matter will seat for examinations without mastering that particular content, and that will lead to poor academic performance.

On the contrary, instances exist where teachers implemented subject performance improvement plans to the letter, but academic performance did not improve. Gbollie and Keamu (2017) indicate there is no proven, tested model that guarantees that the implementation of the subject performance improvement plans would fully yield the much-anticipated improved learning outcomes. They further opine that strategies aiming at improving learner performance should be a result of a collaborative practice or effort of all stakeholders involved. Since learners are at the core of the learning process, they themselves should make positive efforts to ensure their own learning and acquire enhanced academic achievement. This is because subject performance improvement strategies also include steps which should be taken by learners to enhance their own learning competencies. Pintrich (2003) attests that learners who monitor and control their own cognition are likely to exhibit higher academic achievement.

4.3.3.7 Lack of Capacity Building.

Participants were requested to explain whether there is any form of support or assistance given to new and inexperienced teachers who are teaching grade 12 for the first time. Teachers indicated that newly appointed teachers and those who are teaching grade 12 for the first time in their teaching profession are assigned to teach grade 12 classes without any capacity building from relevant heads of department. One teacher from school A (EA-1) stated that *“some teachers are given different learning areas to teach even though those learning areas are not their*

specialisations.” Another teacher (EB-1) added, *“For capacity building we mostly rely on subject advisors.”*

Heads of department agreed that there is a lack of capacity building given to new and inexperienced teachers who are teaching grade 12 for the first time. One head of department (SMTA-1) conceded and said, *“Such is not done by the school, unless the educator attends content workshops organised by curriculum implementers or subject advisors from the district office.”* SMTB-2 put it categorically and said, *“We do not conduct capacity building workshops for our teachers.”*

Capacity building in schools is aimed at strengthening the knowledge and skills of teachers for the purpose of making them to be more confident, efficient and effective. Through capacity building teachers develop and update their knowledge with a view to translate such knowledge to the classroom activities which will have a positive impact on the performance of learners. Capacity building therefore should be something which should be done continuously in schools so as to improve the academic performance of grade 12 learners. This is because the academic achievement of learners depends on the learning experiences derived from teachers via teaching and learning in the classroom. Jepketer, Kombo and Kyalo (2015) attest to this when they indicate that teachers are critical in influencing teaching and learning processes in schools.

4.3.3.8. Excessive Code Switching

Participants were asked whether they think the language of learning and teaching (LOLT) does contribute towards the poor academic performance of grade 12 learners. Teachers indicated that due to the fair level of language proficiency of learners teachers are compelled to code switch during tuition. With code switching teachers intend to make sure that learners understand. Masitsa (2004) lends credence to this opinion when he concedes that language forms the basis of all learning because everything a learner learns is dependent on his or her command and control of language. One participant conceded that teachers have a small contribution towards the poor academic performance of learners. EA-1 stated that *“As teachers we code switch excessively. Activities given to learners are issued in the teacher’s native language, which makes it difficult for learners to answer questions during the external examination.”*

Surprisingly learners are of an opinion that code switching does not affect their academic performance but instead it improves it. Learners believe code switching between two languages is a beneficial communicative strategy for them because it makes them to understand better. One learner from school B (LB-3) asked, *“How am I expected to pass my examination if I did not understand a certain topic and the teacher did not make any attempt to make me understand?”*

Masitsa (2004) indicates that academic performance is impossible without communication between the teacher and the learner. Once learning is inhibited, good academic performance is not achievable. A learner without the relevant vocabulary and language skill will perform poorly during examinations because of difficulty to understanding the language used in the question paper.

Code switching as a teaching strategy deprives learners of an opportunity to communicate in the language of teaching and learning. This is because learners also in return respond to questions using their native language. Through code switching learners end up having difficulty to tackle examination questions successfully. Language proficiency is undoubtedly a prerequisite for successful learning. It can thus be expected that learners with a lack of language ability will in all probability also be underachievers, Masitsa (2004).

However other researchers opine that code switching enhances the academic performance of learners. Findings by Aichum (2003) indicates that Code switching has demonstrated to be an effective teaching and learning technique in schools that use a second language as medium of instruction. Simasiku, Kasanda and Smit (2015) indicate that learners are frustrated by knowing the answer but not having the adequate vocabulary to express it. Through code switching learners' learning of the English language is enhanced which then improves the way learners answer questions. Moreover, through code switching, the difficult English concepts are better interpreted by learners in the language that they fully understand. Mishra and Yadav (2013) assert that code switching is considered to be an extremely important aspect in both cognitive development and social communication. Fantini (1985), Genishi (1981) and Huerta (1980) lends credence to this view when emphasizing that code switching should not be seen as a handicap, but rather as an opportunity for children's language development. Code switching makes learners to be actively

involved in their learning and to better understand the subject matter. Lee (2012) confirms that code switching brings better learning outcomes than English –only instruction among English Second language learners.

4.3.4 Learner Related Factors

Manizheh (2016) opines that learner related factors have the highest impact on learners' performance more than any other factors. Learner related factors include all the activities done by learners which have the potential to cause them to underperform at school. A number of learner related issues were investigated with an intention to find out whether or not they contribute towards the poor academic performance of grade 12 learners in the two schools selected as research site. These issues included amongst others the knowledge gap of learners, their attitude towards learning and their school work as well as late coming.

4.3.4.1. Knowledge Gap.

Knowledge gaps exist because of the failure of learners to fully learn, and grasp concepts taught at a lower level of education. Participants were therefore asked whether the knowledge gap that the progressed learners have does affect the academic performance of grade 12 learners not. The researcher's interest was aroused by the fact that in the two research sites the progression of learners in the lower grades (8-11) is very high. Teachers believe the progression of learners from lower grades does affect their academic performance in grade 12. This is because they opine that progressed learners have some content they have not mastered in the lower grades which might be critical in grade 12. One teacher from school A (EA-2) said *"as grade 12 teachers we are faced with a huge volume of learners who are being progressed from lower grades to grade 12. This creates a huge content gap which is not easy to cover simultaneously with the new content."*

Surprisingly learners supported the view that the gap in knowledge does affect their academic performance. Learners believe progressing learners deludes them into thinking they have mastered the skills to be successful or even worse they get the message that achievement does not count. One learner (LA-3) even said, "Progressed learners do not see the importance of studying and learning so that they

pass.” LB-2 said, *“You cannot fail to master the work of a lower grade and be able to master the work of the higher grade”*.

Grade 12 teachers are more likely to teach some learners for the first time in grade 12 and they do not know where these learners are lacking in terms of academic content. Teachers assume that learners at their disposal at a particular time have understood and mastered certain basic content in the syllabus. But by the time teachers identify the knowledge gap these learners have; it will be too late for them to do anything which in turn causes academic performance of learners to be poor. SMTA-2 supported this fact when she highlighted that *“when teachers try to close the knowledge gaps from previous grades that lead to delay in delivering the new content”*. Harley (2006), even though he argued for the progression of learners, acknowledges that progressed learners are actually promoted without acquiring the necessary content knowledge required for the new grades.

4.3.4.2 Attitude towards learning

Participants were expected to indicate whether the learners’ attitude towards learning does affect their academic performance or not. This is because the researcher is of an opinion that the attitude of learners towards learning determines their ability and willingness to learn. Teachers complained that the majority of learners in the two research sites have a negative attitude towards learning and studying. They believe the poor academic performance of grade 12 is a direct result of learners’ negative attitude. One teacher (EA-2) said, *“Most of the grade 12 learners have a relaxed attitude when it comes to doing school work and that affect their academic performance.”* EB-2 said, *“most learners’ attitude has developed to be negative due to the fact that they are progressed without any effort, so they don’t know what it takes to pass a grade.”* EA-1 stated that *“when teachers call learners for extra classes or winter or summer classes, learners complain and end up not attending those arranged classes.”*

Surprisingly learners confirmed that their negative attitude towards their studies, their teachers and learning may affect their academic performance. Learners are of the opinion that their attitude towards learning, studying and their teachers determines how they approach the tasks given to them by teachers. One learner from school B (LB-1) even conceded that *“being a successful learner starts with a positive attitude”*.

The learners' attitude towards learning is significant for the learners' academic achievement. Findings by Noble (2006) indicates that the learners' positive attitude towards learning is directly related to their academic achievement in high school. A negative attitude in learners can limit performance, gradually weakens motivation and inhibits learning.

Other researchers opine academic performance is not completely the result of learners' attitude, work and motivation. They believe academic performance of learners is also affected by the attitude of the teacher. This is because the teachers' attitude affects learners in many ways and can shape their learning experience. Ulug, Ozden and Eryilmaz (2011) opine that a positive attitude from the teacher affects learners' motivation, attitude towards school and school work. Yavuzer (2000) adds that the positive attitude of teachers allows the teacher to delve on the positive behaviour of learners which in turn improve learners' academic success. The negative attitude towards of teachers can have a negative effect on both the performance levels and personality development of learners.

4.3.4.3 Late coming

Participants were expected to explain whether late coming makes learners to perform poorly at school. Parents were worried about the high number of learners who come late at school. One of the parents (PA-2) even said, "*My child arrives late at school almost every day because he sleeps very late.*" Parents are worried about late coming because they believe learners who arrive late at school miss out on key learning opportunities.

Teachers shared the perspective of parents about the negative impact late coming can have on learners. Teachers indicated that they do not have the luxury or time to wait for all learners to arrive before they can start with their teaching. EA-1 even stated "*late coming negatively affects content coverage because as teachers we will not be able to finish the prescribed content within the stipulated time*". SMTB-2 added that "*instead of coming straight to school, learners wait for companions or friends so that they can come to school together*".

Surprisingly learners also support parents and teachers about late coming. Learners agreed that they come late at school but did not want to take responsibility. One learner stated that "*I must start by taking my younger siblings to crèche before*

coming to school.” Despite refusing to take responsibility for their late coming, learners supported teachers and parents that late coming negatively affects their academic performance. This is because when late, learners spend minutes standing outside the classroom due to the fear of disturbing the teacher. LA-3 conceded *“it is always difficult to catch up on something you have missed.”* Jumare, Maina and Ankoma-Sey (2015) attest that learners that are punctual to school are better placed to get full benefits of morning hour lessons.

The researcher also observed how punctual learners are when coming to school. Sometimes latecomers are given other punishment (such as picking up papers around the school yard) which further delays them and end up making them unable to attend the first period. In school B the school gates remains locked until break time (10:00), which means latecomers lose the first two or three periods. Findings by Van Breda (2006) indicate that recurrent lateness to school does affect the academic performance of learners. This is because recurrent lateness means the teaching and learning time is inefficiently used. Moreover, the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) prescribes tight learning schedules and assessment targets which require efficient use of time by learners and teachers. Recurrent lateness is antithetical to the achievement of the goals of the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement.

4.3.5 Parent Related Factors

Coleman and Routledge (2011) suggest that schools should develop a collaborated school-based programme which is characterised by partnerships and shared goals, rather than by turf wars and animosity between all stakeholders. Parents are one of the critically significant stakeholders in the education of their children. It is therefore of critical importance that parents should do everything in their power to support their children in their academic journey. It is against this background that the researcher investigated whether parental support and the parents’ level of education contribute towards poor academic performance or not.

4.3.5.1 Inadequate Parental support

Participants were expected to explain whether parents support their children in their academic journey. Teachers identified two areas where they experience the inadequate support from parents. Firstly, teachers complained that parents are not

turning up to parents' meetings which are planned to discuss the progress and challenges of learners. Teachers opine that since parents are critical stakeholders in education of their children, they should fully support their children. One teacher (EA-1) stated that *"few parents support their learners with their academic work and parents are not coming to meetings when invited for updates about their learners' performance as well as updates on what is expected of the learner to do at school."* EB-1 stated that *"learners are not given enough support by the parents and this result from work commitments parents have which enable them to support their families."*

Both teachers and parents indicated that parents never willingly come to school to check on the progress of their children unless the child has challenges and has been suspended from attending. EA-2 highlighted that *"in some parents meetings only 50 or less than 50 parents do attend the meeting."* PA-2 further highlighted that *"the only time parents come to school is when their children have failed, and they come both arrogantly and aggressively to enquire why his or her child has failed."*

Parents confirmed that the majority of parents do not fully support their children. Parents believe that parental support is of critical importance because it is a sign of the parent's interest and commitment to the education of their children. One parent (PB-1) even said, *"Education is like the three- legged African pot which cannot stand if one leg is missing"*. He further stated that, *"for learner performance to improve, it is critical that all role players (teachers, parents and learners) must be involved"*.

Learners also supported the view of parents and teachers that the support of parents is needed for them to succeed academically. Learners opine that parental support is needed to encourage learners and guide them when they digress from the path. One learner (LB-2) said *"Parents bring discipline to us and that keep us on track towards improved academic achievement"*.

Secondly, teachers raised a concern about parents who do not sign learners' books (classwork and tests). Teachers believe the signing of learners' books is evidence that parents check and track the academic progress of their children. One parent conceded that parents have challenges when it comes to monitoring their children's academic progress. PA-3 said, *"I am a domestic worker, I always come home late and tired, so I cannot clean and cook for children, the child must do all the cooking"*

and cleaning at home before studying.” PB-2 indicated that *“parents do not assist learners because they lack the knowledge of how to assist their children.”* Regardless of challenges by parents, the Department of Basic Education (2013) emphasised that parents should regularly check learners’ homework, tasks, projects and tests given to learners.

The support of parents in the education of their children is very important because learners become motivated to keep pushing in their attempts to achieve good results in the academic endeavours. Topor, Keane and Calkins (2010) attest that parental support in the education of the child is consistently associated with a child’s academic performance. This is because parents who support the academic journey of their children usually create a home environment that promotes learning and reinforce what is being taught at school. Through parental support learners attend school regularly, do their homework and are motivated to do well at school.

On the contrary, although parental support helps learners and improves academic performance, it can also have negative results. Tabaeian (2016) argue that parents that are overly supportive may negatively affect the academic performance of learners. A simple reason is that too much of a beneficial or useful thing or activity can be harmful. Overly involved parents can be tempted to step in too frequently to deal with issues the child can handle. Taylor (2016) adds that overly involved parents end up academically “spoon feeding” their children. This academic “spoon feeding” may result to poor academic performance because the learner is used to be dependent on someone else to solve academic problems.

4.3.5.2 Inadequate level of Education

Participants were asked whether or not the inadequate level of education of parents does affect the academic performance of learners. Parents indicated that their level of education may contribute towards the poor academic performance of learners. They believe their level of education makes them to be unable to assist learners especially after school hours. One of them (PA-3) even said *“the last standard I attended at school is standard 8(grade 10), so I am not in a good position to give assistance to my grade 12 child, and besides the syllabus they do now is totally different from what I did at school.”* PB-3 indicated that, *“I depend on the availability of a neighbour who is an English teacher to assist my child after hours. If my*

neighbour is not available or is committed, it is hard luck for my child because that means she would go to school without getting the assistance she needs.”

Teachers supported the view by parents that their level of education may negatively affect the academic performance of learners. One of the teachers (EA-1) even said *“some of the parents that we expect to assist these learners are former learners we taught in this school and who happened to drop out in lower grades, so we cannot expect them to give credible assistance to their children; in short, there is lack of education from parents.”*

Learners on the other hand believe the poor level of education of their parents does not affect the academic performance of learners. They opine that the inadequate level of education of their parents should be motivation for them to do better. One of them stated that *“the failure of my parents should push me to do well at school”*.

Most of the parents from the two schools are not well educated and that poses challenges when learners need assistance with their school work. Mji and Makgato (2006) concede that parents are seriously handicapped when it comes to supporting their children because of their own limited education. This is because, as Gooding (2001) indicates, parents who have at least a bachelor's degree become private teachers to their children. It is therefore very difficult if not impossible for an uneducated parent to assist a learner with grade 12 academic work.

4.4. Conclusion

In this chapter the researcher presented the data that was gathered from interviews with participants. Moreover, the gathered data was analysed and interpreted. The strategies that the researcher used for the analysis and interpretation were discussed in chapter 3. The following chapter will focus on the findings, the recommendations and the conclusion of the study.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

Chapter four focused on the presentation, discussion and interpretation of the qualitative data that was generated. Findings emanating from data analysis revealed the experiences and views of parents, teachers and grade 12 learners regarding factors that may possibly contribute towards poor academic performance of grade 12 learners in Ermelo. In this chapter, I start by giving the summary of the study. That is followed by a brief outline of the findings of the research study conducted. It further provides recommendations for the policy developers, the department of basic education and school management teams.

5.2 Summary of the study

5.2.1 Aim of the study

This study aimed at investigating possible factors which contribute towards the poor academic performance of grade 12 learners in two Gert Sibande District schools, in Mpumalanga province. The basic research question was formulated as follows: What are the possible factors that cause poor academic performance of grade 12 learners in two secondary schools in Ermelo, Gert Sibande District, Mpumalanga Province?

5.2.2 Qualitative Procedures Highlighted

In order to conduct the investigation, the qualitative approach to the study was used. Qualitative data generation strategies were used to solicit the understanding of parents, grade 12 learners, grade 12 teachers and heads of department with regard to the phenomenon being studied. The researcher used semi structured face to face interviews, observation of participants and document analysis to generate data. All the interviews were recorded and transcribed.

Six parents (three per school) of grade 12 learners from the two schools were selected for semi structured face to face interviews. These parents were purposefully selected because they fit the two criteria set by the researcher: being a parent of a grade 12 learner in one of the two research sites, and being a member of the school governing body. All the parents were selected because the researcher felt they were in a position to provide data that was rich, accurate and relevant. For the purposes of

effective communication, interviews with parents were conducted using their mother tongue (IsiZulu). Interviews lasted for about ten to twenty minutes.

Ten teachers (five from each school) were selected for semi structured face to face interviews. Out of the five teachers selected for interviews, three were grade 12 teachers and two were heads of department. Criteria used for their selection was for them to be teachers and heads of department in an underperforming secondary school. All interviews with teachers and heads of departments were conducted using English. Interviews lasted for a duration between fifteen and twenty- five minutes.

Six grade 12 learners (three per school) were also selected for the purposes of open-ended face to face interviews. Selected learners were identified through the assistance of grade 12 teachers in the two schools selected as research sites. Both the researcher and the teachers who assisted with the selection of the learners believed the chosen learners would be in a position to represent the learners' voice in the study. Learners' interviews were conducted using both English and IsiZulu. Interviews lasted for duration of ten to fifteen minutes.

Maree (2012) recommends that the same set of questions should be used for all participants. This is because using the same set of questions helps the interviewer to easily compare and analyze the responses of participants. It is against this background that four sets of interview questions were used for each category of participants (See Appendix A for teachers, Appendix B for heads of departments and Appendix C for parents and Appendix D for grade 12 learners). The researcher applied thematic data analysis to reduce the data into themes and sub-themes in order to accomplish the objective of the study.

5.2.3 Chapter summary

Chapter one dealt with the background to the research problem. This was done by stating the problem, the aim and objective of the study. The researcher further laid out the research approach which would be followed to accomplish the aim and objectives of the study. The proposed methods and structure of the research were also described in this chapter. It is in the same chapter where the key research questions were outlined, the significance of the study explained and the definitions of terms which are key to the study were also presented. Aspects such as the research design and methodology, population and sampling are also explained. Furthermore,

data collection strategies, ethical consideration as well quality assurance were discussed in this chapter.

In chapter two, the researcher focused on reviewing national and international literature which deals with factors that contribute towards the low academic performance of grade 12 learners. The review of different literature was undertaken in order to establish an understanding of the factors that might contribute towards the poor academic performance of grade 12 learners in the two research sites. The reviewed literature focused on home related factors, school related factors, learner related factors, parent related factors and teacher related factors.

Chapter three gives a detailed discussion of the research methodology, research design, and data generation strategies. The strategies that were used to generate data consisted of semi-structured face-face interviews, observations, and document analysis. The researcher further gave a detailed description of the challenges he had to overcome in order to generate the data that was needed to answer the research question. Issues relating to trustworthiness and ethical consideration were also discussed in this chapter.

To generate data, the study used twenty-two participants which consisted of six parents, six grade 12 learners, six grade 12 teachers and four heads of departments. The researcher relied on the participants' experiences and responses to get the required data.

In chapter four, the researcher presented the generated data, discussed it, and interpreted the results. Data presented was generated from interviews with parents of grade 12 learners, grade 12 learners, grade 12 teachers and heads of departments in the two schools under study. Lastly, the responses of participants were grouped into similar sub themes irrespective of their school.

In chapter five, the researcher provided the summary of the research. Furthermore, the researcher made some conclusions and recommendations for further research, and where applicable for future policy. Some of the recommendations are for the department of education to consider while some are for the schools to consider.

5.3 Major findings

The analysis and interpretation of the interviews with parents, teachers and learners provided the basis for the major findings of the study. It became clear that their experiences in terms of the possible factors that contribute towards the poor performance of grade 12 learners in the two schools selected as research sites are the same.

5.3.1 Home related factors

Parents, learners and teachers indicated that a few of the home related factors do contribute towards the performance of learners. Identified home related factors were the size of the family, unpredictable environment at home as well as low financial income. From observation I found that the three identified home related factors do contribute towards the performance of learners. This is in line with what Bennett (2018) found when he indicates that several family factors can affect the child's ability to perform in the classroom.

Parents, teachers and learners indicated that the size of the family where learners live also affect academic performance. Through observation I found that the size of the family is one of the factors that contribute towards learners' performance. Through the interviews that were held at different learners' homes, i noted that majority of learners live in overcrowded families. The majority learners in the two schools live in one roomed or two roomed houses known as Reconstruction and Development Programme houses with their siblings, uncles and grandmothers. The overcrowding in learners' homes does not create a conducive environment for learners to study. This finding is in line with the finding by Odok (2013) who found that small family sizes are linked to higher educational attainment. The bigger the size of the family the more chances of poor performance. Bigger families are characterized by rowdiness, and this does not create convenience for learning.

Teachers further indicated that the unpredictable environment of the homes where learners come from affect learners' academic performance. Through observation, i found that the unpredictable environment in learners' homes does contribute towards poor performance. This finding is in line with the finding by Threlfall, Seay and Kohl (2013) who found that the unpredictable home environment has a lot of influence on academic performance of learners. Furthermore, this finding resonates with what Evans (2006) found who indicates that children who do better at school tend to come

from homes that are quieter, more organised and have a predictable routine. Unpredictable situations like domestic violence do not create a convenient environment for learners to study.

Lastly, parents and teachers indicated that the low financial income of parents does contribute towards poor academic performance. Through observation, I also found that the low financial income in the family also does contribute towards poor performance. During interviews with parents, I noted that the majority of parents are working longer hours in an attempt to make their financial income better. Moreover, some learners do part time jobs in the afternoons so as to supplement their family's low income. By doing these part time job learners are deprived of both time and opportunity to study. This finding is consistent with what Blair, Granger, Willoughby, Mills-Koonce, Cox, Greenberg and Fortunato (2011) found when they indicate that children living in poverty are at risk of high stress levels, impacting their executive functioning, working memory and Intelligence quotient. The low financial income makes parents to be unable to provide school essentials which are critical for the academic performance of their children.

5.3.2 School related factors

Parents, teachers and learners indicated that school related issues like overcrowded classrooms do contribute towards academic performance. Through observation, I found that classrooms in the two schools are overcrowded which contribute towards poor performance. This finding is in line with the findings by Khan and Iqbal (2012) who found that effective teaching is not possible in overcrowded classes .This is contrary to the finding by Grazier (2017) who found that overcrowded classrooms present learners with an opportunity to acquire knowledge and learning which is beyond 'the norm' which is found within the walls of the classroom. Overcrowded classrooms make it difficult for teachers to teach learners properly due to limited physical space.

Furthermore, teachers and learners indicated that the shortage of textbooks contributes towards poor performance. Through the analysis of stock books that are used to record textbooks given to learners, I found that there is a shortage of textbooks in the two schools, which also contributes towards poor academic performance. This finding is in line with the finding by Owoeye and Yara (2011) who

found that the unavailability or shortage of resources in schools ultimately leads to poor learning. This finding is contrary to the finding of Glennerster, Kremmer, Mbiti and Takavarasha (2011) who found that an average child does not benefit from textbooks. Findings by Glennerster et.al (2011) are supported by Mudulia (2012) who also found that the academic performance of learners is improved when textbooks are used with other learning materials.

Even though teachers indicated that the planned and unplanned programmes do not contribute towards poor performance, I found that planned and unplanned programmes do affect performance. Through observation, I noted that these programmes happen during tuition time, thus reducing the normal duration of the teaching period. This finding is in line with what Cattaneo, Oggenfuss and Wolter (2016)'s observation when they indicate that, in education, instruction time is an important and costly resource.

5.3.3. Teacher related factors

Parents, teachers and learners indicated that the non- attendance of classes by teachers affect the academic performance of learners. Through observation, I found that the non- attendance of classes by teachers does contribute towards poor academic performance. The schools use period registers to monitor the attendance of classes by teachers as well as their punctuality when attending classes. When analysing the period registers the schools use, I noted that teachers, if not late for class, are not honoring their periods. If teachers are not in class, on time and teaching, learning is compromised because topics in the annual teaching plan are not covered as expected. If topics in the annual teaching plan are not fully covered, the academic performance of learners is also compromised. This finding is in line with the finding by Finlayson (2009) who found that when a teacher is repeatedly absent in class, the performance of learners is significantly impacted in a negative way. Lewis (2020) also found that if teachers are not attending classes, the averages of learners in core subjects like Science and Mathematics is negatively impacted. This is contrary to the findings by Schmulian and Coetzee (2011) who found that the correlation between teachers' class attendance and academic performance of learners is very low and not very meaningful. The non-attendance of classes by the teachers implies that the syllabus will not be fully covered.

Furthermore, teachers and learners indicated that the inadequate coverage of the prescribed content does contribute towards academic performance. From learners' books, I found that the inadequate coverage of the content does affect academic performance. When comparing topics to be covered as indicated in the pace setters for teachers and topics that are supposed to have been covered already, I noted that some topics that were supposed to have been taught already have not yet been taught. The pace setters require teachers to cover a number of topics within the allocated time (which is one hour per lesson) which results to a situation where some of the topics end up not being taught. During examinations, learners become disadvantaged because they are unable to answer the questions that are based on the content that was not covered during the year. This finding resonates with the observation by Oluka and Okurot (2008) who found that poor academic performance is affected by the lack of completion of the prescribed content. The inadequate coverage of the prescribed content puts learners at a disadvantage because they are expected to write question papers which include all prescribed topics regardless of whether they covered all topics or not.

Heads of department and teachers identified the non- implementation of strategies developed to improve performance as one of the factors contributing to the poor academic performance. Through the analysis of the subject performance improvement plans and learners' books, I found that the strategies meant to improve learners' performance are not implemented which affects the performance. Teachers proposed strategies like 're-teaching the content learners failed' which needed more time. When comparing these strategies as proposed by teachers and the time frame they indicated for implementation, I noted that teachers needed more time in addition to the one hour allocated for teaching. I further noted that instead of re-teaching the content learners failed, teachers focused on teaching new topics as indicated in their pace setter without going back to re-teach as per their plan. In addition, I also found that heads of departments do not have any mechanism they use to ensure that subject improvement plans are implemented as indicated by teachers. This finding is in line with the finding by Li, Guohui and Eppler (2008) who found that different organisations fail not because of inadequate strategy formulation, but because of insufficient implementation of strategies that are aimed at improving performance. This is in contrary to the finding by Gbollie and Keamu (2017) who

found that there is no proven, tested model that guarantees that the implementation of the subject performance improvement plans would fully yield the much-anticipated improved learning outcomes. Considering that the teachers do make subject improvement plans but not implementing them paints a picture that teachers in the two schools do everything in their power to assist learners to pass, only to find that practically that is not the case. When it comes to implementing the strategies of improvement, teachers have challenges like time constraints, which then leave learners having not mastered the content that they initially failed.

Teachers indicated that excessive code switching by teachers affects the performance of learners. Through observation and the interviews, I had with learners, I found that code switching does not negatively affect the performance of learners. While observing teachers in class teaching, I noted that in cases where teachers feel learners do not understand instructions presented to them in English, they use the mother tongue to better clarify their instructions to learners. Furthermore, during my interviews with learners, I noted that learners use both their mother tongue and English when they want to express themselves better or to put their point across. This finding is in line with the finding by Lee (2012) who found that using code switching when teaching English Second language speakers brings better learning outcomes than using English only to give instructions to English Second language learners. This finding is further supported by Aichum (2003) who found that code switching has become an effective teaching and learning technique in schools that use a second language as medium of instruction. Academic performance is impossible without communication between the teacher and the learner. Code switching does not affect their academic performance but instead it improves it. In fact, code switching between two languages is a beneficial communicative strategy for learners because it makes them to understand better. This is because through code switching learners are able to understand difficult aspects of the lesson taught and can follow instructions given by the teacher.

5.3.4 Learner related factors

Teachers indicated that the majority of grade 12 learners have a noticeable knowledge gap as a result of them being progressed from lower grades which in turn affect their academic performance. By knowledge gap I refer to the difference that

exists between what learners are expected to have learned from lower grades versus what they have actually learned up to a particular point. From the observation and analysis of promotion schedules, I found that knowledge gap does affect performance. During my visit to classes, I noted that when teachers try to link the content done in lower grades, learners struggle or are unable to answer questions based on the content they did in the lower grades. Furthermore, after analysing grade 8 -11 promotional schedules, I noted that more than half of learners (in each grade, 8-11) have been progressed. These high numbers of progressed indicate that a big number of learners did not master certain academic content in the lower grades which might be critical in grade 12. This finding is in line with the finding by Harley (2006) who found that progressed learners are actually promoted without acquiring the necessary content knowledge required for the new grades. The knowledge gap that progressed learners have, negatively affected their academic performance. This is because the academic content in the lower grades is linked to the content of the next grade.

Teachers further indicated that the majority of learners in the two research sites have a negative attitude towards learning and studying. During my visit to classes, I noted that the negative attitude that learners show towards attending extra classes (which are intended to assist to improve their test scores in mathematics) does affect their performance. When teachers informed learners about attending the planned extra classes for mathematics, learners complained and questioned why they should attend extra classes knowing very well that they cannot get better results than what they have already achieved. Learners' responses indicated that they are demotivated and believe that they are incapable of achieving better results. This finding is in line with the finding by Congos (1997) who found that a negative attitude limits performance. In support to the finding by Congos (1997), Senay Sen (2013) found that attitude towards learning is one of the most important factors for all the academic performances learners perform.

Lastly, parents, teachers and learners indicated that there is a high rate of late coming in the two research sites. From observation, late coming was found to affect the academic performance of learners. I observed that learners who came late are made to pick up papers inside the school yard. In some other days late learners are locked outside the school gate until break time. This form of discipline deprives

learners who are already late the opportunity to join the class as soon as possible. This finding is in line with the finding by Van Breda (2006) who found that recurrent lateness to school does affect the academic performance of learners because the teaching and learning time is inefficiently used. Van Breda (2006) is supported by the finding of Jumare, Maina and Ankoma-Sey (2015) who found that learners that are punctual to school are better placed to get full benefits of morning hour lessons. Recurrent lateness is antithetical to the achievement of the goals of the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement.

5.3.5 Parent related factors

Parents, teachers and learners indicated that parent related factors do affect academic performance of learners. There is a general outcry regarding the poor parental support in the two research sites. Through observation of learners' exercise books and learners' portfolios, it became clear to me that parents do not support the academic journey of their children, which definitely affects learners' academic performance. The schools encourage parents to attach their signatures on learners' exercise books as evidence of them checking their children's books. When analysing the learners' exercise books, I noted that the majority of books are not signed by parents. This finding is consistent with the finding by Gentry (2011) who found that disengaged parents who are not interested in the academic life of their children often promote school failures. This is contrary to the finding by Tabaeian (2016) who observed that parents that are overly supportive may negatively affect the academic performance of learners. Commensurate to the finding by Tabaeian (2016) is the finding by Taylor (2016) who found that overly involved parents end up academically "spoon feeding" their children.

Lastly, learners indicated that the inadequate level of education of parents does not affect their academic performance. From observation, I found that the inadequate level of education of parents does affect learners' academic performance. From the interviews conducted with teachers and learners, I noted that the majority of parents are former learners who dropped out of school before completing their grade 12. This finding resonates with the finding by Mji and Makgato (2006) who found that inadequately educated parents are seriously handicapped when it comes to supporting their children academically. Furthermore, this finding is in line with the

finding by Gooding (2001) who found that parents who have at least a bachelor's degree become private teachers to their children.

5.4 Recommendations

Poor academic performance of grade 12 learners does not only affect schools in Gert Sibande district, but it is a national problem too. The underperformance of grade 12 learners is influenced by a myriad of factors. The study identified factors from the school environment, management issues and issues from the home environment. It is therefore necessary to conclude this study by providing guidelines on how the problem can be rectified. Recommendations are therefore grouped into two categories, namely for the department of education and school management teams.

5.4.1 Department of Basic Education

- Appoint heads of departments who will be responsible for each subject instead of one head of department becoming responsible for a certain group of clustered subjects. The appointed head of department should have tertiary qualification in the subject that he or she is heading plus a qualification in school management. This will enable heads of departments to exercise quality control of teachers' works which will in turn ensure that learners receive quality teaching.
- Revise or disband the progression policy and allow only deserving learners to be passed to the next grade. This will assist in three ways:
 - i) Learners' attitude towards their school work and learning will change for the better. Learners will realise that if they do not take their studies serious they will not be passed to the next grade. Their commitment towards their studies will be improved.
 - ii) The issue of the content gap created by the progression of undeserving learners will be also addressed. During the interviews grade 12 teachers highlighted the fact that they spend more time trying to close the identified content gaps instead of focusing on the work that is supposed to be taught. This makes them to be behind schedule with content coverage.

iii) Teachers will have enough time to focus only on topics that are supposed to be taught in grade 12 instead of having to spend time trying to close the content gap that exist in learners due to the fact that learners were progressed to the next grade.

- The department of education should put funds aside to build more special schools and skills centers to accommodate learners who are not gifted academically. This will assist South Africa to address the issue of skill shortages.
- Reduce the number of topics to be covered in one academic year. The annual teaching plan is designed in such a way that it does not accommodate any unforeseen disturbances to the schools program. This makes teachers to be behind with content coverage which has a negative impact on the performance of learners. Annual teaching plans are too congested and do not allow any space or time for teachers to address individual needs of learners. The congestion of the annual teaching plans further deprives teachers of time and opportunity to implement subject performance improvement plans that will assist in turning around the performance of the struggling learners. Due to the congestion of the annual teaching plans, teachers rush to finish the syllabus which leaves many learners without understanding the content taught on a particular day. The relaxation of the annual teaching plans will give teachers time to deal with the content gaps learners have and thus improve the academic performance of learners.

5.4.2 School Management Teams

- School management teams should assign the management of each subject to a head of department who has the relevant qualification. Such a person will be able to check the quality of tasks (informal and formal) whether they address all cognitive levels as specified in the CAPS policy document. The study found that one head of department is responsible for the management of three to four subjects which are related to each other. For example, the head of department for social sciences is responsible for History (grade 10-12), Geography (grade 10-12) and social sciences grade 8-9. It is therefore a

challenge for such an individual to be well versed in all the requirements for each subject under his responsibility.

- They should develop a mechanism to ensure that the strategies for the improvement of subject performance are implemented by teachers. This will assist in ensuring that teachers suggest implementable strategies of improvement instead of doing it for the sake of compliance. Heads of departments should set aside special dates for checking and monitoring the evidence of the strategies teachers promised to implement in order to turn around learner performance.
- Improve the level of communication between the school and the parents as a way of ensuring the involvement of parents in the educational journey of their children. Invitations to parents' meetings should be delegated to class teachers. Each class teacher should open a "what Sapp group chat" for all the parents of learners in his or her class. Instead of using letters to invite parents to meetings schools should also try to target a particular grade instead of inviting the entire school. Follow-up invitations to parents who were absent during meetings should be done directly to those parents telephonically. In all meetings with parents, school management teams should continuously emphasize to parents the importance of their involvement in the academic journey of their children.

5.4.3 Implications for future research

This study has achieved its aim of investigating which factors contribute towards the poor academic performance of grade 12 learners in the two research sites. However, a number of related aspects necessitate that additional research be done on the subject. These may include among other issues the following:

- In the context of this study, further research on strategies of ensuring effective parental support for learners especially in the schools regarded as previously disadvantaged should be done.
- An investigation should be conducted to investigate the qualifications of heads of department and their relevance to the subjects they are teaching and managing.

- Future research should investigate whether or not the way the annual teaching plan is structured affects the academic performance of grade 12 learners.

5.4.4 Limitations of the study

Every research study has limitations. According to Price, James H and Judy Murman (2004) all the features of the research design or methodology that negatively affected the interpretation of the findings of the research can be defined as limitations to the study. This can be as a result of many factors which include among others the researcher's initial choice of design and of course the unexpected challenges that may arise during the study.

The limitation of this study pertains to its sample size. The study only examined the views and experiences of 6 grade 12 learners, 6 parents of grade 12 learners and 10 grade 12 teachers from two township schools with a huge number of learners. While this number of the participants provides a generous data source, it does affect the Transferability of the study findings. The participants do not represent the diversity that is found in former model c schools and other township schools which may have different settings. It is therefore the view of the researcher that if the number of selected participants were inclusive of former model c schools, the results of the findings may differ. This is because as Price, James and Murman (2004) concede that it is not easy to find significant relationships from the data if the size of the sample is small. The researcher opines that for future studies, the sample size should be inclusive of former model c schools so as to make it easy for any researcher to find significant relationships from the data. Despite these limitations, responses provided by the other participants shed light on factors that contributed to the poor academic performance of grade 12 learners in the two research sites.

5.6 Conclusion

The study presented the factors that contributed towards the poor academic performance of grade 12 learners at Cebisa and Ithafa secondary schools. Factors relating to the influence of the home environment, the school environment, teacher related, parent related, and learner related were identified to be contributing towards the poor academic performance of grade 12 learners. The study further made

recommendations which the department of education and school management teams can implement in an attempt to address the issue poor academic performance. It is hoped that this study, its findings and recommendations will shed more light on the factors contributing towards the underperformance of grade 12 learners not only in Msukaligwa 1 circuit but across Mpumalanga Province in general, and Gert Sibande district in particular. Lessons learnt from this study might be applicable to all secondary schools that are known as previously disadvantaged.

REFERENCES

- Abamba, E.I. (2012). *Content coverage and students' achievements in Secondary school physics: The Delta state example of Nigeria*. vol.13, issue 1, Article 12.
- Aaronson, D., Barrow, L., & Sander, W. (2007). *Teachers and Student Achievement in the Chicago Public High Schools*. *Journal of Labor Economics* 25:95-135.
- Acquino, L.B. (2011). *Study habits and attitudes of freshman students: Implications for academic intervention programs*. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 2, 1116-1121.
- Adell, M.A. (2002). *Strategies for Improving Performance in Adolescents*. Madrid: Piramide.
- Addow, A.M., Abubakar. A.H., & Abukar, M.S. (2013). *English Language Proficiency and Academic Achievement for Undergraduate Students In Somalia*. Faculty of Business and Accountancy, SIMAD University, Mogadishu, SOMALIA. *Educational Research International*, 2(2), ISSN: 2307-3713.
- Africa, H.P. (2005). *Audit: Student Failure*. Durban, South Africa: University of KwaZulu-Natal.
- Agustiani, H., Cahyad, S. & Musa, M. (2016). *Self-efficacy and Self-Regulated Learning as Predictors of Students Academic Performance*. *The Open Psychology Journal*, volume 13, 2020.
- Aichum, L. (2003). *Teacher Code Switching in EFL classroom*. Retrieved May 5, 2006, from <http://www.beionline.com/tutor/2003collection/liuachum.htm>.
- Ajagbe, O. (2003). *63 Effects of Teachers' Qualification on the Pupils Performance in Primary school Social Studies: Implication on Teacher Quality in Uganda*. *International Journal of Innovative Education Research* 1(3): 69-75.
- Ajayi, K.O., & Oyeniya, O.L. (2017). *Impact of total quality management on students' academic in public secondary schools in Ogun State*. *IFE Psychologia: An international journal*, journals.co.za.
- Ali, N. (2009). *The Factors Influencing Students' Performance at Universiti Teknologi MARA Kedah, Malaysia*. Canadian Research & Development Center of Sciences and Cultures. vol.3 No. 4 2009. <http://www.cscanada.org>.

- Al-Yateem, N. (2012). *The effect of interview recording on quality of data obtained: a methodological reflection*. PubMed. Nurse Researcher 19(4):31-5. doi:10.7748/nr2012.07.19.4.31.c9222.
- Anderson, L. (1991). *Increasing Teacher Effectiveness*. Psychology.66. www.semanticscholar.org>paper.
- Anyaegbu, M.I. (2017). *Poor reading habit and the academic performance of Junior Secondary Schools*. Nnandi Azikiwe University. Awka, Nigeria.
- Awan, A.G. (2011). "Changing world Economic and Financial Scenario": Asian Accounting and Auditing Advancement, vol., no.1pp148-173.
- Baker, B.D., & Friedman-Nimz, R. (2003). *Gifted children, vertical equity, and state school finance policies and practices*. Journal of Education Finance, 28(4), 523-555.
- Bantwini, B.D. & Diko, N. (2011). *Factors affecting South African district officials' capacity to provide effective teacher support*. Creative Education, 2 (3): 226-235.
- Bantwini, D.B. (2009). *District Professional development models as a way to introduce primary school teachers to Natural Science curriculum reforms in one district in South Africa*. Journal of Education for Teaching, 35(2):169-182.
- Baruth, G.G. (2009). *Grappling with large classes: Experiences of teachers, head of departments and principals in three rural schools in KwaZulu-Natal*. (Master of Education, Unpublished thesis). The University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.
- Bashir, I., & Mattoo, N. (2010). *A Study-on-study habits and academic performance among adolescents (14-19) years*. International journal of Social Science tomorrow. vol.1(5),1-5.
- Bayaga, A & Wadesango, N. (2014). *Analysis of Students' Attitudes on Mathematics Achievement- Factor Structure Approach*, International Journal of Educational Sciences, 6:1,45-50,DOI:10.1080/09751122.2014.11890116.
- Bayat, A., Louw, W. & Rena, R. (2014). *The impact of Socio-economic factors on the performance of selected high school learners in the Western Cape Province, South Africa*. Journal of Human Ecology, 45 (3), 183-196.

- Benbow, J., Mizrach, A., Oliver, D., & Moshiro, L.S. (2007). *Large classes in a developing world: What do we know and what can we do?* US Agency for International Development. UNSAID.
- Bender, P., Dutcher, N., Klaus, D., Shore, J. & Tersa, C. (2005). *In their own language: Education for all. Education notes.* Washington DC (US): World Bank.
- Bennett, L. (2018). *Family Factors That Influence Students' Behaviour in School.* Southeast. Louisiana.
- Berne, R., & Stiefel, L. (1999). *Concepts of School Finance equity: 1970 to the present.* In H.F. Ladd, R. Chalk and J.S. Hansen (Eds.), *Equity and adequacy in education finance issues and perspectives* (pp.7-33). National Academy Press. Washington, DC: N.A.P.
- Betts, J.R., Reuben, K.S. & Damenberg, A. (2000). *Equal resources, equal incomes? the distribution of school resources and student achievement in California.*
- Bjorklund, A. & Erikson, T. (1998). *Unemployment and mental health: evidence from research in the Nordic countries.* Scandinavian Journal of Social Welfare .7 (3), 219-235. Wiley Online Library.
- Blair, C., Granger, D.A., Willoughby, M., Mills-Koonce, R., Cox, M., Greenberg, M.T., & Fortunato, C.K. (2011). *Salivary cortisol mediates effects of poverty and parenting on executive functions in early childhood.* Child Development, 82(6), 1970-1984.
- Booyse, J.J., Le Roux, C.S. & Wolhuter, C.C. (2012). *A history of schooling in South Africa,* Pretoria: Van Schaik.
- Bottoms, G. & Schmidt-Davis, J. (2010). *The three essentials: Improving schools require district vision, district and state support, and principal leadership.* Retrieved from www.sreb.org.
- Branson, N., Hofmeyn, C. & Lam, D. (2013). *Progress through school and the determinants of school dropout in South Africa.* Southern Africa Labour and Development Research Unit, UCT. Working Paper Series.
- Braun, V., & Clark, V. (2006). *Using thematic analysis in psychology: Qualitative research in psychology,* 3, 77-101.

- Briguglio, C. & Watson, S. (2014). *Embedding English language across the curriculum in higher education: A continuum of development support*. Australian Journal of Language and Literacy, The, 37(1),67.
- Bryde, J.S. (1969). *A Study of Scholastic Failure and Personality Conflict*. Vermillion, SD. (ER1 document Reproduction Service no. ED 018289).
- Bryman, A. (2004). *Social Research Methods*. (2nd Ed.) Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bonney, E.A. & Amoah, D.F. (2015). *The Relationship between the quality of teachers and pupils academic performance*. Journal of education and practice, v 6 n 24.
- Bowen, G.A. (2009). *Document analysis as a qualitative research method*. Qualitative Research Journal, 9(2), 27-40.
- Butson, C.R., Copper, S.E. & McIntyre, C.C. (2008). *Probabilistic Analysis of Activation Volumes Generated During Deep Brain Stimulation*. Neuroimage. Academic Press. Volume 34, issue 2 (661-670).
- Bustson, M.B. (2008). *Impact of a condensed protocol for disclosing APOE Genotype to first-degree relatives of people with Alzheimer's and Dementia: The journal of the Alzheimer's Association* 4(4), T454-T455
- Butson, C.R., Cooper, S.E., Henderson, J, M. & McIntyre, C.C. (2008). Neuroimage 34. US Patent 7, 346,382.
- Campbell, D.T., & Stanley, J.C. (1963). *Experimental and quasi-experimental designs for research*. Chicago: Rand McNally & Company.
- Campbell, D.T. Stanley, J.C & Gage, N.L. (2016). *Ethical considerations in engineering student design*. USA.
- Carmine, B.; Silbert, J & Kameenui, E.J. (1997). *Direct instruction reading*. 3rd Ed. New Jersey: Merrill/ Prentice Hall.
- Carol, M. (2017). *Research Methods Guide: Interview Research*. Newman Library, Virginia Tech. People Directory.

- Cattano, M.A., Oggenfuss, C. & Wolter, S.C. (2016). *The More, the Better? The Impact of Instructional Time on Student Performance*, Discussion Paper No.9797.
- Chisholm, L. (2005). *The politics of curriculum review and revision in South Africa in regional context*. Human Science Research Council of South Africa, 35 (1): 79-100.
- Chiwaula, L.S. & Kaluwa, B.M. (2008). *Household consumption of infant foods in two low-income districts in Malawi*. Journal of International Development, John Wiley and Sons, Ltd., vol.20(5), pages 686-697.
- Christie, D.B. (2009). *Place-Making as Contemplative Practice*. Anglican Theological Reviews 91.3:347-371.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L & Morrison, K. (2011). *Research Methods in Education*. (7th ed). New York: Routledge.
- Cohen, D., Browne, E.H., & Leung, K.Y. (2007). *Culture and the Structure of Personal Experience: Insider and Outsider Phenomenologies of the Self and Social World*. Advances in Experimental Social Psychology. vol.39.
- Coleman, H.L.K. & Routledge, C.Y. (2011). *Handbook of School Counselling*. Google Books. Routledge. ISBN:1135283583.
- Congos, D.H. (1997). *How Attitudes Affect Grades*. Learning skills Lab, Academic Learning Centre, Central Piedmont Community College.
- Cooper, H. & Valentine, J.C. (2001). *Using research to answer practical questions about homework*. Educational Psychologist, 73,143-153.
- Cooper, H., Robinson, J.C & Patall, E. (2006). *Does homework improve academic performance? A synthesis of research, 1987-2003*. Review of Educational Research, 76, 1-62.
- Cooper, T. (1999). *Processing of idioms by L2 learners of English*. TESOL Quarterly, 33(2), 233-262.
- Council of Higher Education (CHE). (2016). Kagiso Number 10: *Student funding*. Pretoria: Council of Higher Education.
- Council on School Health and Committee on Substance Abuse. Paediatrics. December 2007, 120(6) 1379-1384; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2007-2905>.

- Covington, C.D. (2011). *Lagging in the race: The Impact of teacher morale on student achievement* (Published doctoral dissertation) Capella University.
- Creswell, J.W. (2001). *Qualitative enquiries and research design. Choosing among five approaches*. 2nd edition. London: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Creswell, J. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Creswell, J.W. (2008). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating qualitative and quantitative research* (3rd ed.) Upper Saddle River, N.J: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Creswell, J.W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications.
- Creswell, J.W. (2012). *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research*. New Jersey: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Creswell, J.W. (2003). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. (2nd ed.) Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Creswell, J.W., & Plano Clark, V.L. (2011). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* (2nd ed.). Los Angeles: SAGE Publications.
- Crosnoe, R. (2002). *Academic and Health –Related Trajectories in Adolescence: The Intersection of Gender and Athletics*. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*. 2002a; 43:317-335. (PubMed).
- Crow, G., Wiles, R., Heath, S. & Charles, V. (2006). *Research ethics and data quality: The implications of informed consent'*, *International Journal of Social Research Methodology: Theory and Practice*, vol.9, no.2, pp.83-95.
- Cummins, J. (1994). *The Empowerment of Indian Students*. In Reyhner, J. Norman. University of Oklahoma Press.
- Dadzi, P.S. (2008). *Reading for Education: the role of libraries*. *Ghana Library Journal*, vol.20 (1) pp. 1-14.
- Dahie, A.M., Mohamed, A.A. & Mohamed, R.A. (2018). *The Role of Parental Involvement in Student Academic Achievement: Empirical Study from Secondary*

Schools in Mogadishu- Somalia. International Research Journal of Human Resources and Social Sciences. Vol. 5, issue 07, July. Dahlan University.

Darling-Hammond, L., Berry, B. & Thorenson, A. (2001). *Does teacher certification matter? Evaluating the Evidence*. Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 23 (1) 57-77.

Daud, N.S.M., Duad, N. M. & Kassim, N.L.A.(2016). *Second Language Writing Anxiety: Cause or Effect*. Malaysian Journal of ELT Research.

DBE: *basic education on policy on progression and on policy on promotion*. (2017, October 31). Retrieved from <http://.polity.org.za>.

Deavers, L. (2000). *The Effect of Instruction on Early Non-Word Reading strategies*. Journal of Research in Reading, no. 23, pp 267-286.

Dekker, E. & Lemmer, E.M. (1993). *Critical issues in modern education*. Durban: Butterworths.

Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, Y.S. (2005). *The Discipline and Practice of Qualitative Research*. SAGE Publications.

Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, Y.S. (2000). *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. London: Sage Publication.

Department of Basic Education. (2010). *Report on the Annual school survey*. Pretoria: Government Printer.

Department of Basic Education (2012). *The South African Schools Act, 1996 (Act no.84 of 1996): Approval of the Regulations pertaining to the National Curriculum Statement Grades R-12*. Vol.570, No. 9886, Pretoria.

Department of Basic Education (DBE), Republic of South Africa 2013. *Policy on the organisation, roles and responsibilities of education districts*. Government Gazette, No.36324. 3 April. Pretoria: Government Printing Works.

Department of Education. (2008). *Ministerial Committee on learner retention in the South African Schooling System*.

Druker, P. (2017). *5 Reasons Why Homework Is Bad for Your Child*. Huff Post Contributor platform.

Durrheim, K. (2004). *Research design*. In M. Terre Blance, & K.Durrheim (Eds.), *Research in practice: Applied methods for the social sciences*. (pp. 29-53). Cape Town: University of Cape Town.

Earp, J.C. (2016). *Teacher Expectations and Morale- the impact on student achievement*.

Ebersohn, L. (2008). *School principals' perceptions of team management: A multiple case-study of secondary schools*. *South African Journal of Education*. 28(2), On-line version ISSN 2076-3433.

Eberts, R.W. (2007). *Teachers Union and Student Performance: Help or Hindrance?* US Department of Education. vol.17.no1.

Egunsola, A.O.E. (2014). *Influence of Home Environment on Academic Performance of Secondary School Students in Agricultural Science in Adamawa State Nigeria*. *IQSR Journal of Research and Method in Education*.

Ekanem, T.F. (2004). *The School as a Substitute Home* in Q.I. Obinaju (Ed), *Theory and Practice in Early Childhood Education*. Calabar: Bon Ltd.

Enca news, Article of 10 April 2018: *Improvement in the quality of basic education*.

Engelbrecht, P., Kruger, S.M & Booysen, M.T. (1996). *Perspective on learning difficulties*. *International concerns and South African Realities*. Pretoria: Van Schaik publishers.

Ella, R.E., Odok, A.O. & Ella, G.E. (2015). *Influence of Family Size and Family Type on Academic Performance of Students in Government in Calabar Municipality, Cross River State, Nigeria*. *International Journal of Humanities Social Sciences and Education (IJHSSE)*. Volume 2, Issue 11, pp 108-114.

Eren, O. & Henderson, D.J. (2011). *Are we wasting our children's' time by giving them more homework?* *Economics of Education Review*, 30(5), 950-961. doi:10.1016/j.econedurev.2011.03.011.

Evans, L.J. (2017). *Increasing parent involvement: The effectiveness of a parent education program in one urban charter school*. Master's Thesis. University of Dayton. <https://etd.ohiolink.edu/!etd.send-file?accession=dayton1499260468600285&disposition=inline>.

Evans, G. (2006). *Educational failure and working-class white children in Britain*. Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan. ISBN 1403992169.

Ewetan, T.O. & Ewetan, O.O. (2015). *Teachers' Teaching Experience and Academic Performance in Mathematics and English Language in Public Secondary Schools in Ogun State, Nigeria*. International Journal of Humanities Social Sciences and Education (IJHSSE) volume 2, issue 2, pp.123-134.

Falch, T. and Marte, R. (2012). *Homework assignment and student achievement in OECD countries, Discussion Papers, no.711*, Statistics Norway, Research Department, Oslo.

Fantini, A.E. (1985). *Language acquisition of a bilingual child: A sociolinguistic perspective (to age ten)*. Clevedon, U.K.: Multilingual Matters.

Finlayson, M. (2009). *The Impact of Teacher Absenteeism on Student Performance: The Case of the Cobb County School District*.

Fosudo, S. (2010). *Reading as part of success: A Lecture delivered at the College Library Day, Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education, Otto/Ijanikin, Lagos*.

Fouka, G. (2018). *Health Science Journal, May 28*.

Fullan, M. (2006). *Change Theory: A Force for school Improvement*. Centre for Strategic Education. Victoria. www.michaelfullan.ca/articles.

Ganschow, L., Sparks, R. & Javorsky, J. (2000). *Foreign Language Learning Difficulties*. Journal of Learning Disabilities. DOI:10.1177/002221949803100304. Corpus ID:15788574.

Gbollie, C., & Keamu, H.P. (2017). *Student Academic Performance: The Role of Motivation, Strategies, and Perceived Factors Hindering Liberian Junior and Senior High School Students Learning*. Education Research International. vol.2017, Article ID 1789084. <https://doi.org/10.1155/2017/1789084>.

Georgiou, S. (2002). *Teachers' attributions of student failure and teacher behavior towards the failing student*. Psychology in the schools, 39 (5).

- Genishi, C. (1981). *Code –switching in Chicano six-year-olds*. In R. Duran (Ed.), *Latino language and communicative behaviour* (pp.133-152). Norwood, New Jersey: Ablex.
- Gentry, J.R. (2011). *A Lack of Parent Engagement Helps Create Failing Schools*. Psychology Today.
- Gephart, R. (1999). *Paradigms and Research Methods*. *Academy of Management Research Methods Division*. Research Methods Forum, vol.4.
- Glennerster, R., Kremmer, M., Mbiti, J. & Takavarasha, L. (2011). *Access and quality in the Kenyan education system: A review of the progress, challenges and potential solutions*. Prepared for the office of the prime minister of Kenya. <http://www.povertyactionlab.org/publication/access-and-quality-kenyan-education-system>.
- Goldhaber, D. D. & Brewer, D.J. (2002). *Does Teacher Certification Matter? High School Teacher Certification Status and Student Achievement*. *Educ. Eval. Policy Anal.* 22: pp. 129-145.
- Gonzalez-DeHass, A.R. & Willems, P. (2005). *Examining the Relationship between Parental Involvement and Student Motivation*. *Educational Psychology Review*, vol.17, no.2. pp. 99-123. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/23363897.
- Gooding, Y. (2001). *The relationship between parental educational level and academic success of college freshmen*. Retrospective Theses and Dissertations. 429. Iowa State University.
- Government Gazette No. 39684. (12 February 2016). *Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM)*.
- Gray, S. (2009). *Doing Research in a real world*. Sege Publications.
- Grazier, R. (2017). *Larger class sizes increase opportunities*. VP Growth & Customer Operations, Pamoja.
- Greenwald, R., Hedges, L.V., & Laine, R.D. (1994). *When reinventing the wheel is not necessary: A case study in the use of meta-analysis in education finance*. *Journal of Educational Finance*, 20(1), 1-21.

Gruber, J. (2004). *Making Divorce Easier Bad for Children? The Long-Run Implications of Unilateral Divorce*. *Journal of Labour Economics*, 22(4), 799-833.

Guba, E.G. (1981). *Criteria for assessing the trustworthiness of naturalistic enquiries*. *Educational Technology Research and Development*. 29,75-91.

Gubrium, J.F. & Holstein, J.A. (2001). *Handbook of Interview research: context and method*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.

Guthrie, J.J., Benneth, L. & McGough, K. (2007). *Concept-oriented Reading Instruction: An Intergrated Curriculum to Develop Motivations and Strategies for Reading*. http://curry.virginia.edu/go/clic/nrrc/corri_rlo.html. Retrieved on November 28, 2013.

Hallahan, D.E., Kauffman, J.M. & Lloyd J.W. (1999). *Introduction to Learning Disabilities*, 2nd Edition. Pearson.

Hakielimu. (2011). *Are our Teachers Qualified and Motivated to Teach? A Research report on teachers' qualifications, motivation and commitment to teach and their implications on quality education*.

Harries, D.N. and Sass, T.R. (2008). *Teacher training, Teacher Quality and Students Achievement*. National Centre for Analysis of Longitudinal data in Education Research.

Harsasi, M.J., & Sutawijaya, A. (2018). *Determinants of students' satisfaction in the online tutorial: A study of a distance education institution*. *Turkish online Journal of Distance Education*, 19(1), 89-99.

Hartley, Z. (2006). *Setting a strong foundation in literacy and numeracy up to Grade 6 through a comprehensive GET strategy*. Education Planning: Western Cape Education Department, pp.95-104.

Heugh, K. (2006). *Theory and Practice- language education models in Africa: research design, decision-making, and outcomes*. In H. Alidou, A. Boly, B. Brock-Ute, Y.S., Diallo, K., Heugh & H. Wolff. (2006). *Optimizing learning and education in Africa- the language factor. A stock-taking research on mother-tongue and bilingual education in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Association for the development of Education in Africa. Paris (FR): ADEA.

Hickman, M. (2008). *Paddling vs. ACT Scores and Civil Immunity Legislation*. <http://www.stophitting.com/index.php?page=paddlingvsact>.

How to Help Them Succeed, PISA, OECD publishing, Paris. <http://www.unesco-uganda.ug/index.php?option=com-docman>.

Hindt, L.A. (2012). *The effects of principal leadership on Teacher Morale and Student achievement*. University of Houston. Libraries.

Hodgekinson, H.L. (1990). *The demographics of American Indians*. Washington DC: Institute for Educational Leadership.

Huang, Y.P. (2012). *Design and implementation of English-medium courses in higher education in Taiwan: A qualitative case study*. 36(1), 1-51.

Huerta, A.G. (1980). *The acquisition of bilingualism: A code switching approach*. In R. Bauman, & J. Sherzer (Ed.), *Language and speech in American society: A compilation of research papers in sociolinguistics* (pp.1-28). Austin, Texas: Southwest Educational Development Lab.

Ibrahim, M. (2016). *Types of Qualitative Research*. DOI:10.13140/RG.2.1.2563.4962
IFE Centre for Psychological Studies/ Service, ILE-IFE, Nigeria.

Issa, A.O., Aliyu, M.B., Akangbe, R.B. & Adedeji, A.F. (2012). *Reading Interest and Habits of the Federal Polytechnic Students*. *International Journal of Learning & Development*. Vol.2, no.1, pp 470-486.

Jacquelynn, M., Eccless, N. & Daviskean, T. (2005). *Relationship between parents' education and their children's academic performance in Nigeria; Case study of Kano State*; *Academic Journal on Educational Research*; 8 (6) 58-70.

Jensen, J.L. & Rodgers, R. (2001). *Cumulating the intellectual gold of case study research*. *Public Administration Review* 61(2). 236-246. *Journal of Education and Practice*. ISSN 2222-1735. Vol 6, no.24, 2015.

Jepketer, A., Kombo, K. & Kyalo, D.N. (2015). *Relationship between Teacher Capacity Building Strategy and Students' Performance in Public Secondary Schools in Nandi County, Kenya*. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention*. Volume 4 Issue 10:37-50.

- Jimerson, S.R. & Renshaw, T.L. (2012). *Retention and Social promotion*. Principal Leadership, Citeseer.
- Jumare, A.M., Maina, B.A. & Ankoma-Sey, V.R. (2015). *Analysis of Students' Late-Coming Factors in Selected Secondary Schools in Zaira: Implications for Educational Managers*. Journal of Education and Practice, v6 n32 p56-61.
- Kalliola, S. (2009). *Learning along with Participatory Action Research- A Finnish Perspective*. International Journal of Action Research, 5 (3).
- Kaplinsky, S. (1992). *Preparing for a quality metric*. 1st Edition. Cape Town: Don Nelson Publishers.
- Karande, S. & Kulkarni, M. (2005). *Poor school Performance*. The Indian Journal of Paediatrics. vol.75:961-967.
- Kariuki, L.W., Njoka, J.N., & Mbugua, Z.K. (2019). *Influence of Teachers Preparedness on Performance of Pupils in Mathematics in Lower Primary Schools in Aberdares Region of Kenya*. European Journal of STEM Education, 4(1), 01.
- Kean, E. (2005). *The influence of parent education and family income on child achievement: the indirect role of parental expectations and the home environment*. Journal of family Psychology, 19, 2.
- Khan, R.M.A. (2015). *The influence of Parents Educational level on Secondary School Students Academic achievements in District Rajanpur*. Journal of Education and Practice, vol.6, No. 16
- Khan, P. & Iqbal, M. (2012) *Overcrowded classroom: A serious problem for teachers*. University of Science and Information Technology, academia.edu.
- Kogce, D., Yildiz, C., Aydin, M. & Altindag, R. (2009). *Examining elementary school students' attitudes towards mathematics in terms of some variables*. World Conference on educational sciences-new trends and issues in educational sciences. Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences Amsterdam: Elsevier Science BV.
- Kohn, A. (2006). *The homework myth: Why our kids get too much of a bad thing?* (1st Da Capo Press Ed). Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Life Long.

- Kola, A.J., & Sunday, O.S. (2015). *A Review of Teachers' Qualification and Its Implication on Students' Academic Achievement in Nigerian Schools*. International Journal of Educational Research and Information Science. Vol.2, no. 2, pp.10-15.
- Kross, J., & Giust, A. (2019). *Elements of Research Questions in Relation to Qualitative Inquiry*. The Qualitative Report, 24(1), 24-30. Retrieved from <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol24/iss1/2>.
- Kunz, P.R., & Peterson, E.T. (1973). *Family size and academic achievement of persons enrolled in high school and the university*. Social Biology. 20:4, 454-459, DOI:10.1080/19485565.1973.9988076.
- Landsberg, E., Kruger, D. & Swart, E. (2011). *Addressing barriers to learning: a South African perspective*. Van Schaik, Pretoria.
- Lavrakas, P.J. (2008). *Encyclopedia of survey research methods*. Thousand Oaks, Calif: SAGE Publications.
- Lee, J.H. (2012). *Implications for language diversity in instruction in the context of target language classrooms: Development of a preliminary model of the effectiveness of teacher code-switching*. English Technique: Practice and Critique, volume 11, number 4. pp. 137-160.
- Leedy, P. (1997). *Practical Research: Planning and Design*. (6th Ed.) Upper Saddle River, N.J. Prentice Hall.
- Leepo, S.R. (2015) *Strategies to deal with Academic under-performance in grade 12 in the Free State*. Central university of Technology. Free State.
- Lemmer, E. & Van Wyk, N. (2010). *Themes in South African Education*. Cape Town: Pearson.
- Letseka, M. & Maile, S. (2008). *High University drop-out rates: A threat to South Africa's future*. Pretoria: HSRC.
- Levine, P. (2011). *How Does Parental Unemployment Affect Children's Educational Performance? Whither Opportunity? : Rising Inequality, Schools, and Children's Life Chances*. (1), 87-104.

Lewis, W. S. (2020). *Teacher Absenteeism and the Perceived Reasons for its Effect on Student Achievement in Three Barbadian Secondary School*. Durham theses, Durham University.

Li, Y., Guohui, S., & Eppler, M.J. (2008). *Making Strategy Work: A Literature Review on the Factors influencing Strategy Implementation*. ICA Working Paper 2/2008.

Lincoln, Y.S. (1995). *Emerging Criteria for Quality in Qualitative and Interpretive Research*. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 1, 275-289.

Lincoln, Y.S. & Guba, E.G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills, Calif: Sage Publications.

Louw, D.A. (1993). *Human Development*. *South African Medical Journal*, vol. 101, No. 12. 57-84.

Lowhorn, G.L. (2007). *Qualitative and Quantitative Research: How to Choose the Best Design*. Regent University.

Maarman, R.F. (2009). *Manifestations of 'capability poverty' with learners attending informal settlement schools*. *South African Journal of Education*, 29(3), 317-331.

MacMillan, J.H & Schumacher, S. (2001). *Research in Education: A Conceptual introduction (5th edition)*. Addison Pearson, Longman.

MacNeil, A.J., Prater, D.L. & Busch, S. (2009). *The Effects of School Culture and Climate on student achievements*. *International Journal of Leadership in Education> Theory and Practice*. Volume 12, issue 1, p 73-84.

Mafuwane, B.M. (2011). *Contribution of instructional leadership to learner performance*. Unpublished Doctoral Thesis. University of Pretoria.

Mainasara, L.K.U. (2009). *An appraisal of trade unions and employment Regulations under the Law; A case study of Nigerian Labour Congress*. Unpublished, LLM Thesis, Faculty of Law, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

Makoni, M. (2017). *Addressing language barriers is key to student success*. University World News.

- Mangcu, X. (2017). *Prioritise education and grow the country*. (Retrieved from City Press, 23/12/2017).
- Manizheh, A. (2016). *Causes of Poor Academic Performance among Omani Students*. International Journal of Social Science Research. 4.126.
- Maphosa, C & Shumba, A. (2010). *Educators' disciplinary capabilities after banning of corporal punishment in South African Schools*. South African Journal of Education, vol.30 (3), 387-399.
- Marais, P., (2016). "We can't believe what we see": *Overcrowded classrooms through the eyes of student teachers*. South African Journal of Education. Vol 36, no.2.
- Maree, K. (2007). *First Steps in Research*. Pretoria. Van Schaik Publishers.
- Maree, K. (2012). *First steps in Research*. (11th Ed.) Pretoria: Van Schaik.
- Mariano, L.T., Martorell, P. & Berglund, T.(2018). *How Does Repeating a Grade Impact Students High School Persistence and Behaviour? The Case of New York City*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation.
- Marzano, R.J. & Waters, T. (2009). *District leadership that works: Striking the right balance*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.
- Mata, M.L., Monteiro, V. & Peixoto, F.(2012). *Attitudes towards mathematics: Effects of individual, motivational, and social support factors*. ISPA, Instituto Universitario, UIPCDE, Rua Jardim do Tabaco 34, 1149-041. Lisboa, Portugal.
- Maree, J.G. (2010). *First Steps in Research*. Sixth Impression. Van Schaik Publishers.
- Maree, J.G. (2007). *First Steps in Research*. Van Schaik Publishers, Pretoria.
- Maree, J.G. (2008). *First Steps in Research*. Van Schaik Publishers, Pretoria.
- Marvi, Y. (2016). *Why Experienced Teachers Hate Lesson Plans*. LinkedIn.com.
- Masitsa, G. (2004). *Four critical causes of under-achievement in township secondary schools*. Acta Academia, 36(1):213-245, Apr.
- Mato, M., & De la Torre, E. (2010). "Evaluacion de las actitudes hacia las matematicas y el rendimiento academic." PNA, VOL. 5, NO.1 pp. 197-208.

- Mji, A. & Makgato, M. (2006). *Factors associated with high school learners' poor performance: A spotlight on mathematics and physical sciences*. South African Journal of Education, 26-(2), 253-266.
- Matshipi, M.G., Mulaudzi, N.O. & Mashau, T.S. (2017). *Causes of Overcrowded Classes in Rural Primary Schools*. Journal of Social Sciences. Volume 51, issue 1-3, pp. 109-114.
- Marcheli, A. & Martin, E. (2002). *Evaluation in secondary education.-Snapshot from a controversial era*. Institution IDEA, Madrid: SM.
- McMillan, J.H. & Schumacher, S. (2011). *Research in education, evidence-based inquiry (7th edition)*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Mendezebal, M.J.N. (2013). *Study habits and attitudes: the road to academic success*. International Journal of Applied Research and Studies, 2, 1-14.
- Mercer, C.D. & Mercer, A.R. (2001). *Teaching Students with learning problems, (6th Ed)*. Columbus Ohio:Charles E. Merrill.
- Miles, D.A. (2017). *The One-Page Dissertation Proposal Matrix: A Guide for Developing the Dissertation Proposal*. Research Gate
- Miles, M.B., Huberman, A.M, & Saldana, J. (2013). *Qualitative data analysis. A Methods Sourcebook*. 3rd Edition, Sage publications: Los Angeles.
- Mirjana, M. (2012). *Individuality as an interactive Style*. July 20.
- Mishra, S.K., & Yadav, B. (2013). *Analogous study of English Linguistic knowledge between monolingual and bilingual sixth grade students*. International Journal of English Literature and Culture, 1(2), 41-55.
- Molina, M.G. & Bansil, A.G. (2018). *Correlation between Confidence and Performance of Engineering Students in Solid Mensuration, People*. International Journal of Social Sciences, 4(1), pp. 87-104.doi:10.20319/pijss.2018.41.87104.
- Moorosi, P. & Bantwini, B.D. (2016). *School district leadership styles and school improvement: Evidence from selected school principals in the Eastern Cape Province (special issue)*. South African Journal of Education, 36 (4): Art.#1341, 9 pages. [https:// doi.org/10.15700/saje.v36n4a1341](https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v36n4a1341).

- Morgan, P.C., Farkas, G., Hillermeier, M.M. & Maczuga, S. (2009). *Risk factors for learning-related behaviour problems at 24 months of age: Population-based estimates*. Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology.
- Modisaotsile, B.M. (2012). *The failing standard of basic education in South Africa. Policy brief*. Africa Institute of South Africa. Briefing No.72. Available from <http://www.ai.org.za> (Accessed on 13/10/13).
- Motala, E. & Pampalis, J. (2001). *Education and Equity. The Impact of State Policies on South African Education*. Sandown: Heinemann Publishers (Pty) Ltd.
- Mothibi, K. (2014). *Substance Abuse Amongst High School Learners in Rural Communities*. Psychology. Universal Journal of Psychology.
- Motshega, A.M. (2012). *DBE. The Policy on the Organization Roles and Responsibilities of Education district*. Government Gazette no.35107.
- Mthiyane, S.E., Bhengu, T.T. & Bayeni, S.B. (2014). *The Causes of School Decline: Voices of School Principals and Circuit Managers in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa*. School of Education, University of KZN, Ashwood, South Africa.
- Mudulia, A. (2012). *The relationship between availability of teaching/learning resources and performance in secondary school science subjects in Eldoret Municipality, Kenya*. Journal of Emerging Trends in Educational Research and Policy Studies (JETERAPs), 3(4):530-536.
- Mullin, L.J. (2005). *Management and Organisational Behaviour. 7th edition*. London: Financial Times Prentice Hall.
- Munje, P. (2016). *A Capability analysis on the implementation of the school progression policy and its impact on learner performance*. Journal of Education. issue 66.
- Murunga, F., Kilaha, K. & Wanyonyi, D. (2013). *Emerging issues in Secondary School Education in Education in Kenya*. International Journal Advance Research, 1(3):231-240.
- Murtin, F. (2013). *Improving Educator Quality in South Africa*, OECD Economics Department Working Papers, No.1056, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/5k452klfn9ls-en>.

- Mwamwenda, T.S. (2004). *Educational psychology: An African perspective*. 3rd edition. Sandton, South Africa: Heinemann.
- Myeko, M.S. (2000). *Parental Involvement in Education at senior secondary schooling. Herschel district of the Eastern Cape Province Bloemfontein*. University of Free State.
- Ndamani, P.L. (2008). *Factors contributing to lack of discipline in selected secondary schools in the Mangaung Area of Bloemfontein and possible solutions*. Interim: Interdisciplinary Journal, (72):177-197.
- Newbold, C. (2018). *How to conduct observations for research*. The Visual Communication Guy.
- Newman, C.M. (2018). *Research Methods Guide: Research Design & Method*. University Libraries. Virginia Tech.
- Ngcongco, P.H.M. (2016). *Exploring the causes of low grade 12 pass rate in two Umlazi District schools, KwaZulu-Natal*. Uir.unisa.ac.za>handle.
- Nicolaidou, M., & Philippou, G. (2003). *Attitudes towards Mathematics, Self-Efficacy and Achievement in Problem Solving*. In M.A. Mariotti (Ed.), *European Research in Mathematics Education III* (pp.1-11). Italy: University of Pisa.
- Njoroge, C.W. (2000). *Factors affecting availability acquisition and utilization of resource in the teaching of English in selected Kenyan Secondary Schools*. A Masters Research Thesis. Kenyatta University.
- Njoroge, P.M., & Nyabuto, A.N. (2014). *Discipline as a Factor in Academic Performance in Kenya*. Journal of Educational and Social Research. vol 4 No.1(2014).
- Nutbrown, C. (2011). *Ethical issues in the Portrayal of Young children in Arts-based educational research: qualitative inquiry*, 17, 3, 3-14.
- Nyarko, K., Kugbey, N. & Kofi, C.C.(2018). *English Reading Proficiency and Academic Performance Among Lower Primary School Children in Ghana*. SAGE

- Odok, A.O. (2013). *Contemporary family structures and students' academic performance in secondary schools in Ikom Local Government Area, Cross River State*. Journal of Sociology 4(4) 87-94.
- OECD. (2016). *Low-Performing Students: Why They Fall Behind and How to Help Them Succeed*. PISA, OECD publishing, Paris.
- Ogbemudia, M. & Alasa M.V. (2013). *Influence of home environment on the academic performance of primary five pupils' in English Language in Orhionmwon Local Government Area of Edo State*. Department of Early Childhood and Special Education, University of Uyo Akwa Ibom State. Merit Research Journal of Review vol. 1(15) pp.120-125.
- Oluka, S., & Okurut,C. (2008). *Performance in primary education in the Teso region: an exploratory study*. Nairobi: UNESCO. <http://www.unesco-uganda.ug/index.php?option=com-docman&task=cat-view&qid=48&Itemid=81>.
- Ontario Ministry of Education Report (2017) Annual report on schools: Competing priorities.
- Oriji, M.G., Ringim, K.J., Boman, A. & Emmanuel, A. (2016). *Trade unionism on Academic Performance and Development of Nigerian Universities: A Comparative Study*. Journal of World Economic Research. volume 5, issue 6, 91-100.
- Oster, A. (2006). *Parental unemployment and children's school performance*. Working Paper Series. 2006:5, IFAU-Institute for Evaluation of Labour Market and Education Policy.
- Owoeye, J.S., & Yara, P.O. (2011). *School Facilities and Academic Achievement of Secondary School Agricultural Science in Ekiti State, Nigeria*. Journal of Social Science. vol.7, no.7 64-74.
- Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM). G.N.222 of 1999. Government Gazette No.19767.
- Palani, K.K. (2012). *Promising Reading Habits and Creating Literate Society*. International Reference Research Journal. vol 11 issue 2(1) pp. 91.
- Patton, M.Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*. 3rd Sage Publications; Thousand Oaks. CA.

Payne, N. (2017). *Grade 9 subject selection: how to help guide your child*.
www.news24.com

Pearson-Stuttard, J., Kypridemos, C., Collins, B., Mozaffarian, D., Huang, Y., Badosz, P. & Micha, R. (2018). *Estimating the health and economic effects of the proposed US Food and Drug Administration voluntary sodium reformulation: Microsimulation cost-effectiveness analysis*. PLoS Med 15(4): e1002551.doi: 10.1371/ journal.p.med.1002551.

Penuel, W.R., Fishman, B.J., Yamaguchi, R. & Gallagher, L.P. (2007). *What makes Professional Development Effective? Strategies That Foster Curriculum Implementation*. American Educational Research Journal, 44(4):921-958.

Perumal, M. (2011). *Key strategies to raise teacher morale and improve school climate*. Distinguished Fulbright Awards in Teaching Program. Fulbright Project. South Africa.

Peters, G.W. (2014). *Parental Involvement in the College-going Process: A Q Methodology Study*. UNF Graduate Thesis and Dissertations.
digitalcommons.unf.edu.

Pintrich, P.R. (2003). *A motivational science perspective on the role of student motivation in learning and teaching contexts*. Journal of Educational Psychology, 95(4), 667-686.

Placier, P. & Richardson, P. (2002). *Handbook of Research on Teaching*, 4th ed. American Educational Research Association.

Priestley, M. & Sime, D. (2005). *Formative assessment for all: a whole –school approach to pedagogic change*. Curriculum Journal. volume 16(4).

Price, J.H. & Murnan, J. (2004). *Research Limitations and the Necessity of Reporting Them*. American Journal of Health Education. 35 (2):66-67. DOI:10.1080/19325037.2004.10603611.

Porres, A. (2016). *The impact of teacher absenteeism on student achievement: A study on U.S public schools, using results of the 2011-2012 Civil Rights data collection*. (Master's thesis). Georgetown University, Washington: DC.

Rammala, M.S. (2009). Factors contributing towards performance of Grade 12 Learners at Manoshi and Mokwatedi High schools. Turfloop, Polokwane, Limpopo.

Raleigh, A. (2016). *The importance of grade 9 subject choice*. www.abassessments.co.za.

Ringim, K.J. (2017). *Trade Unionism on Academic Performance and Development of Nigerian Universities: A Comparative Study*. Research Gate.

Rivkin, S.G., Hanushek, E.A. & Kain, J.F.(2005). *Teachers, Schools and Academic Achievement*. *Econometrica* 73 (2): 417-58.

Riukin, S.G., Hanushek, E.A. & Kain, J.F. (2005). *Teachers, Schools and Achievement*. *Econometrica* 73(2):417-458.

Rockoff, J.E. (2004). *The Impact of Individual Teachers on Student Achievement: Evidence from Panel data*. *American Economic Review* 94(2):247-52.

Rodgers, J.R. (2001). *A panel-data study of the effect of student attendance on university performance*. *Australian journal of education*. Journals. Sagepub.com.

Rodriguez, L. & Brown, T. (2009). *From voice to agency: Guiding principles for Participatory Action Research with Youth*. *New Directions for Youth Development*, pp. 19-34.

Republic of South Africa. (1996a). *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*. (Act 108 of 1996). Pretoria: Government Printer.

Ruiz-Valenzuela, J. (2015). *In brief...Parental job loss: the impact on children's school performance*. *CentrePiece-The Magazine for Economic Performance* 460, Centre for Economic Performance,LSE.

Saiduddin, J. (2003). *Factors affecting achievement at Junior High school on the Pine Ridge Reservation*. Spain: Ohio State University.

Sayed, Y. & Jansen, J. (2005). *Implementation of Education Policies. The South African Experience*. Cape Town: University of Cape Town.

Schaller, J. (2009). *Short-Run Effects of Parental Job Loss on Child Health*. *American Journal of Health Economics*. doi:10.1162/AJHE-a-00106.

- Schenkel, B. (2009). *The impact of attitude towards mathematics performance*. Unpublished MA Thesis, Mariette College.
- Schmulian, A. & Coetzee, S. (2011). *Class absenteeism: reasons for non-attendance and the effect on academic performance*. Accounting Research Journal, Emerald Group Publishing, vol. 24(2), pages 178-194, September.
- Schwandt, T.A., Lincoln, Y.S., & Guba, E. G. (2007). *Judging interpretations: But is it rigorous? Trustworthiness and authenticity in naturalistic evaluation*. New Directions for Evaluation (114), 11-25. doi: 10.1002/ev.223.
- Schwandt, T.A. (2007). *The SAGE Dictionary of Qualitative inquiry (3rd Ed.)* University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.
- Schwartz, G. (2008). *How Do Drugs and Alcohol Impede Students' Academic Progress?* ST. Lawrence University.
- Seaberg, J.R. (1998). *Utilising Sampling Procedures*, in Grinnel, R.M. Social work and research and evaluation. 3rd Edition. Itasca, IL: Peacock.
- Seale, C. (1999). *Quality in Qualitative Research*. Sage Journals, Inc. <https://doi.org/10.1177/107780049900500402>.
- Sekhukhune, M. (2008). *Poor students face massive financial stress*. The Mail and Guardian. 08 April 2014.
- Seobi, B.A. & Wood, L. (2016). *Improving the instructional leadership of heads of department in under-resourced schools: A collaborative action-learning approach*. South African Journal of Education, volume 36, number 4.
- Senay Sen, H. (2013). *The attitudes of university students towards learning*. Procedia- Social and Behavioral Sciences. 83 .947-953.
- Shaffee, N.S., Ahmad, E.M., Idris, S., Ismail, R. & Ghani,E. (2019). *Factors influencing accounting students' underperformance: A case study in Malaysian public university*. International journal of Education and Practice, 7(1):41-53.
- Shah, J. & Inamullad, H.M. (2012). *The impact of overcrowded classroom on the academic*. 2 (2012) 2231-4245.

- Shahzad, M.N., Sajjad, S., Ahmed, M.A. & Asghar, Z. (2013). *The Role of “Radical Change” in Medium of Instruction and Its Impact on Learning*. Journal of Language Teaching and Research 4(1). DOI: 10.4304/jltr.4.1.36-44.
- Simasiku, L., Kasanda, C., & Smit, T. (2015). *Barriers to Code Switching in English Second Language medium classrooms*. International Journal of English Literature and Culture. vol.3(1), pp 7-13. doi:10.14662/IJELC2014.077.
- Silverman, D. (2000). *Doing qualitative research: A practical handbook*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Singh, Y.G. (2011). *Academic Achievement and Study Habits of Higher Secondary Students*. International Referred Research Journal 3(27) pp.2
- Smith, L. (2010). *Report on focus group interviews in South African urban school district*. Johannesburg: University of Johannesburg.
- Smith, L. (2016). *How Important Is Homework to Student Success?* Study.com. retrieved from <https://study.com>
- Smits, J., Huisman, J. & Kruijff, K. (2008). *Home language and education in the developing world*. Nijmegen:UNESCO.
- Spera, C. (2005). *A review of the relationship among parenting practices, parenting styles, and adolescent school achievement*. Educational psychology review 17 (2) Springer
- Stake, R.E. (2005). *Qualitative Case Studies*. in N.K. Denzin and Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* (pp.453-466). Thousand Oaks, CA. Sage publications Ltd.
- Stears, M. (2009). *How Social and Critical Constructivism can inform Science curriculum design: A Study from South African Education Research*,51(4):397-410.
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J.M. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques*. Sage Publications, Inc.
- Strydom, H. (2011). *Participatory action research*. In: DE VOS, A.S., STRYDOM, H., FOUICHE, C.B. and DELPORT, C.S.L. (eds.) *Research at grass roots: for the social sciences and human service professions*. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers, 491-506.

Stott, A.E., Dreyer, H. & Venter, P.(2015). *Consequences of the Striking the right balance*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.

Strydom, W.J., & Puren, K. (2014). *From space to place in urban planning: Facilitating change through Participatory Action Research*. Wit press. com.

Suleiman, Y. & Hammed, A. (2019). *Perceived causes of students' failure in mathematics in Kwara state junior secondary schools: implication for educational managers*. International Journal Educational Studies Mathematics, 6 (1):19-33

Sunil, K., & Madhuri, K. (2005). *Poor School Performance*. The Indian Journal of Pediatrics. vol. 72(11): 961-7. PubMed.

Susan, B. (2001). *Morale Matters: When Teachers Feel Good about Their Work, Research Shows, Student Achievement Rises*. American School Board Journal, vol.188 no.1 pg. 40-43.

Tabaeian, M. (2016). *The Effect of Parental Over-involvement on Educational Attainment*. Conference paper. Sheikh Bahaei University. Retrieved from Research Gate. <https://www.researchgate.net/publications/308611703-The-Effect-of-Parental-Over-involvement-on-Educational-Attainment>.

Talsma, K.L., Schuz,B., Schwarzer, R. & Norris, K. (2018). *I believe, therefore I achieve (and vice versa): A meta-analytic cross-lagged panel analysis of self-efficacy and academic performance*, Learning and Individual Differences. vol.61, pp.136-150. doi: 10.1016/j.lindif.2017.11.015.

Tan, C. (2020). *The impact of Covid-19 on student motivation, Community of Inquiry and learning performance*. Asian Educ.Dev.Stud.

Taylor, W. (2016). *Parent Involvement: How Much is Too Much?* Learning Essentials.[learningessentialsedu.com>parent-involvement](http://learningessentialsedu.com/parent-involvement).

Taylor, G. & Adalsteinsdottir, E.B. (2003). *Empowerment, job characteristics and intrinsic motivation: An examination of the role of managerial autonomy-support*. London School of Economics and Political Science, London, UK.

Taylor, G., Jungert, T., Mageau, G.A.,Schattke, K., Dedic, H., Rosenfield,S. & Koestner, R (2014). *A self-determination theory approach to predicting school achievement over time: the unique role of intrinsic motivation*. Elsevier Inc.

- Taylor, S. & Coetzee, M. (2013). *Estimating the Impact of language of instruction in South African Primary Schools: A Fixed effects approach*. Stellenbosch Economic Working Papers: 21/13.
- Transky, A.L.R. (2020). *The Relationships Among Teacher Absenteeism and TVAAS Growth and Observation Scores, Student Achievement, and Student Absenteeism in a Rural School District in the First Region of Tennessee*. Milligan College, Tennessee.
- Threlfall, J.M., Seay, K.D., & Kohl, P.L. (2013). *The parenting role of African American fathers in the context of urban poverty*. *Journal of Children and Poverty*, 19(1),45-61.
- Tshitangano, T.G. (2016). *An exploratory study of the need for curriculum review of Master of Public Health Degree at a Rural-based University in South Africa*. *African Journal of Primary Health Care & Family Medicine*. Vol 8, No 2. a993. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4102/phcfm.v8i2.993>.
- Tswana, Y. & Hlati, O. (2017). *Teachers not coping with overcrowding*. CAPE ARGUS.
- Triyoga, A. (2010). *Some hindrances in using ready-made textbooks*. Post Graduate program. English Education Department. Ahmed Dahlan University. Blogspot. <http://arilia.blogspot.co.uk/2010/06/some-hindrances-in-using-ready-made.html>. Accessed on 17/12/2013).
- Trochim, W. (2000). *The Research Method Knowledge Base*. 2nd Edition, Atomic Dog Publishing, Cincinnati.
- Trochim, W.M.K. (2006). *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches, 6th Ed.* from <http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/contents.php>.
- Topor, R., Keane, S.P., & Calkins, S. (2010). *Parent Involvement and Student Academic Performance: A Multiple Mediation Analysis*. *Journal of Prevention and Intervention in the Community*. DOI: 10.1080/10852352.2010.486297.
- Tshiredo, L.L. (2013). *The Impact of the Curriculum Change in the Teaching and Learning of Science: A case study in under-resourced school in Vhembe district*. University of South Africa.

Ulug, M., Ozden, M.S., & Eryilmaz, A. (2011). *The Effects of Teachers' Attitudes on Students' Personality and Performance*. *Procedia-Social and Behavioural Sciences*. volume 30, pages 738-742.

Uys, D. (2010). *The functions of teachers' code switching in multilingual and multicultural high school classrooms in the Siyanda District of the Northern Cape Province*. University of Stellenbosch.

UNICEF Annual Report. (2014). Unicef ISBN: 978-92-806-4809-6.

Universal Journal of Educational Research 5(9) 1614-1620, 2017.

<http://www.hrpub.org>

Van-Breda, M.J. (2006). *Guidelines for Empowering Secondary schools Education in Loco Parentis. In Addressing Truancy among early Adolescent Learners*. University of South Africa.

Van der Westhuizen, P.C., Mentz, P.J., Mosoge, M.J., Nieuwoudt, H.D., Steyn, H.J., Legotlo, M.W., Maaga, M.P., & Sebego, G.M. (1999). *A quantitative analysis of the poor performance of Grade 12 students in 1997*. *South African Journal of Education*, 19(4):315-319.

Van Deventer, I.V. & Kruger, A.G. (2009). *An educator's guide to school management skills*. Pretoria: Van Schaik.

Van Rensburg, H.E., & Smit, B. (2004). *Finding Your Way in Qualitative Research*. Van Schaik Publishers, Pretoria.

Vatterott, C. (2007). *Becoming a middle level teacher: Student focused teaching of early adolescents*. New York: McGraw Hill.

Wadesango, N. & Michingambi, S. (2011). *Causes and Structural effects of student absenteeism: a case study of three South African universities*. *Journal of Social Sciences- Taylor & Francis*.

Walliman, N. (2005). *Your research project: A step-by-step guide for the first-time researcher (2nd ed.)*. London Sage Publications Ltd.

Waymack, N. (2014). *Teachers absent from class way too much*. Retrieved from usatoday.com

- Wills,G. (2019). *Teachers' unions and industrial action in South African primary schools: Exploring their impacts on learning*. Development Southern Africa. Volume 37, issue 2, pp. 328-347.
- Witz, K.G & Lee, H. (2009). *Science as an ideal teachers' orientations to Science and Science Education reforms*. Johannesburg, SA: University of Witwatersrand.
- www.scielo.org.za. *Underperformance in social studies in grade 5-7 in Namibian primary schools*.
- Yavuzer, H. (2000). *Okul cagi cogugu (School age child)*. Istanbul: Remzi.
- Yin, R.K. (2003). *Case Study research: design and methods*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.
- Yusuf, H.O. (2015). *Assessment of teachers' attitude towards the teaching of reading in primary schools in Kaduna metropolis*. International of humanities and social science. 10. (1), 14-109
- Zan, R., & Di Martino, P. (2007). *Attitude towards Mathematics: Overcoming the Positive/Negative Dichotomy*. In B. Sriraman, Ed., The Montana Mathematics Enthusiast (Monograph 3, pp.157-168). The Montana Council of Teachers of Mathematics.
- Zangqa, S.N. (1999). *Factors which influence the academic achievement of senior secondary pupils in the rural Eastern Cape*. University of South Africa, Pretoria, <<http://hdl.handle.net/10500/17871>>
- Zanotti, C., Morgan, A., Currie, D. & De Looze, M. (2009). *Social determinants of health and well-being among young people*. Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children (HBSC) study: international report from 2009/2010 Survey.

ANNEXTURE A

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR GRADE 12 TEACHERS.

1. In general terms, which factors can you identify as causing grade 12 learners to perform poorly in final exams?
2. Is there any direct or indirect role that parent play which makes grade 12 learners to perform poorly at school? If yes, please explain how?
3. How can the academic performance of grade 12 learners be affected by the learners' home environment?
4. Explain briefly the contribution the school environment can have in leading towards the poor academic performance of grade 12 learners?
5. Do teachers' qualifications somehow have any negative impact towards academic performance of grade 12 learners?
6. How do the study methods used by learners contribute to their poor academic performance?
7. Do learners' attitudes contribute to their poor academic performance in grade12?

ANNEXTURE B

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR SMT MEMBERS

1. At a scale of 1-5, (1 being very poor and 5 being excellent), how effective is the monitoring of teachers' work in this school?
2. As an HOD how often do you monitor the following?
 - 2.1. Lesson plans
 - 2.2. Curriculum coverage
 - 2.3. Control of learners' work
3. Do HODs in this school moderate the quality of formal and informal tasks given to learners?
4. Do HODs conduct result analysis of learner performance after formal tasks have been written?
5. Do HODs ensure that teachers address challenges identified during the analysis of results? If yes, please explain how?
6. As an HOD, do you have a mechanism to measure whether progress has been made in addressing the previously identified challenges?
7. Do you think teachers' qualifications cause the poor academic attainment of grade 12 learners?
8. How often do you conduct capacity building workshops for grade 12 teachers?
9. How often do you conduct class visits?

ANNEXTURE C

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR PARENTS

1. Do you ensure that your child/children is/are afforded enough time to do homework and to study?
2. How frequent do you check your child's/children's books and homework?
3. Who assists the child if he /she faces challenges with his/her school work while at home?
4. Do you, as a parent, show interest in your child's education by, for example, attending parents meetings, visiting his/her school to check on his/her progress?
5. Do you think the home environment contributes to poor academic achievement of grade 12 learners?

ANNEXTURE D

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR LEARNERS

1. Do you think the low financial income at home contributes to your poor academic performance? Explain why?
2. Do you think the size of the family can make learners to perform poorly at school?
3. How does the lack of parental support make learners to perform poorly?
4. Do you the inadequate level of education of parents make you to perform poorly?
5. Does the shortage of textbooks in the school contribute towards poor academic performance?
6. Do planned and unplanned school programs cause learners to perform poorly?
7. Does the policy of progression make you to develop a negative attitude towards learning and studying learners?
8. Does not finishing the syllabus make learners to fail?
9. Do you think late coming by makes them to perform poorly at school?
10. How does learners' negative attitude towards learning and studying due to the progression policy contribute towards poor academic performance?

ANNEXTURE E

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT FOR PARENTS

Interviewee code: PB-3

Interviewer: The researcher

Location: 30 Jan van Riebeeck street Ermelo

Date: 23 August 2020

1. Do you think parents ensure that their children are afforded enough time to do homework and to study?

Yes they do. The challenge lies with our children; they do not give themselves time to do their homework and to study.

Secondly mostly they need monitoring, they do not want to do their schoolwork on their own, and they want to be pushed into doing their work.

Thirdly, our children are more on social media, Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter which takes a lot of their time while parents on the other side think learners are busy doing their homework.

But the issue can also be twofold because sometimes parents want their chores to be done at home before, but they do give time even though it is not enough.

Parents do give enough time to learners especially grade 12 because they know the importance of grade 12, but everything lies with the learners whether they fruitfully use the time given to them or not.

2. How frequent do you check your child's/children's books and homework?

As parents, teachers always advise us to check learners' books daily to see if they have homework or not. At home as parents sometimes we are busy or we do not have the knowledge how to assist learners, but we do check partially. Sometimes as parents we do not understand the syllabus of today, so we need assistance from neighbours. We actually lack understanding of the work kids have to do.

3. Who assists the child if he /she faces challenges with his/her school work while at home?

As i indicated in the previous question, other parents ask for help from other people who are more educated like teachers who are neighbours, dropouts, sometimes even those that have done matric before also assist by conducting extra classes for that child who has requested assistance.

4. As a governing body member, do you think parents show interest in their children's education by, for example, attending parents meetings, visiting his/her school to check on his/her progress?

Parents are encouraged to attend meetings and this year they have shown interest because they understand the importance of the meetings. For example, during our first meeting in 2020 attendance was 90% turn out.

But the challenge is that as blacks we do not support learners and we leave everything in the hands of teachers. Parental support is not enough but it is getting there. As governing body members, we are still trying to fine-tune the mentality of parents to attend meetings. Programs are in place to ensure that parents visit the school to discuss learner progress, but very few parents visit the school willingly to check on the progress of learners at school.

5. Do you think the home environment contributes to poor academic achievement of grade 12 learners?

Yes it does. We do not have resources at home. Resources like internet, data and cell phone.

Overcrowding in our homes, siblings or younger sisters need to be catered for by the elder child who may be the same child doing grade 12 while as a kid one also needs to study.

Poverty is the main factor. We think of poverty first before addressing the need of the learner so that he passes at school, for example, parents prefer to buy food for the rest of the family instead of buying a school essential which will assist only one learner.

The mind set of parents must be fine-tuned to learn to assist their kids even if they do not have resources. We must encourage our kids to study effectively and have enough time to study.

ANNEXTURE F

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT FOR GRADE 12 TEACHERS.

Interviewee code: TA-2

Interviewer: The researcher

Location: School B

Date: 26 August 2020

1. In general terms, which factors can you identify as causing grade 12 learners to perform poorly in final exams?

Amongst many factors I can identify I can count content gap, primary parent involvement, lack of accountability and learner –teacher ratio.

- Content gap- we are faced with a high volume of learners being progressed from lower grades all the way to grade 12 which creates a huge content gap which is not easy to identify.. As a grade 12 teacher you are most likely to see that learner for the first time in that class and you do not know where that child is lacking in terms of academic content. By the time you identify that gap, it will be too late. As grade 12 teachers in the past, we used to receive learners who have passed grade 11 on their own or who have done well in the lower grades, so it was easy to assume that this particular child understands this particular academic content, but now you are receiving kids with a gap and when you engage with kids you see that they have no idea about what you are talking about. For example, a Learner who has never passed mathematics in grade 8,9,10 and 11 is expected to pass mathematics in grade 12
- Primary parent involvement- biological parents of a child or legal guardian are not as close to learner's academic journey as they should be. Schooling hours are not enough to assist learners. We expect parents to come in and take over where we left so that their children can achieve their goals. For example, here at school we have about 6 periods a week. In a case of my subject, I have 4 periods per week when broken down it means I have 4 hours per week to cover a huge amount of content. Teachers as secondary parents can put in all the efforts to pass learners

but as soon as they leave school premises the “I am a learner” tag stays at the school premises. We respect the fact that parents are not specialists in the subjects we teach, but we expect them at least to ensure that their children do have time for their books and to do their homework at home.

- Lack of accountability- One thing which makes me to work hard as a teacher is because I know that I am accountable for the results learners receive. If learners fail I am accountable. If learners pass I am accountable for my results. Why would I work hard if I know that I am not accountable to anybody? Learners are not accountable for any of their results or performance. Education has 4 stake holders (learner, parent, educator and state), all four stakeholders need to be accountable for results.
- Teacher –learner ratio- this one I want to link it to content gap. As a grade 12 teacher you have received the high number of learners who have not passed a particular subject and those learners assembly in one class of 50. Such classrooms make it very difficult for educators to give learners individual attention, especially with the huge content gap. We cannot deny the fact that our learners need that individual attention in order to cover that content gap to enable them to pass.

2. Is there any direct or indirect role that parent play which makes grade 12 learners to perform poorly at school? If yes, please explain how?

- Yes: parents have a direct role in making grade 12 learners to perform poorly in grade 12. Parents need to be involved in their children’s academic journey without fail. Parents need to work closer with both the learner and educators and be on the same level and have common goals, in this case our goal is have grade 12 passing their exams. As educators we cannot pull alone. As educators we do double job, we teach and motivate these learners at the same time. The question is, do parents have that tag that “my child is a learner”; do they sit with their children and talk to them about the importance of passing grade 12? Parents should get their children down and get them to study so that they can pass their exams.

3. How can the academic performance of grade 12 learners be affected by the learners' home environment?

- Learners or kids are very sensitive to environment, be it at home or community. The most painful fact is that learners respond effectively to community environment more than they do to their schooling environment. They need to be loved and appreciated in all levels at the same time they must be well versed on what is expected of them and at the same time receive all support available. A kid coming from a strong family background, in terms of being loved and security, turns to perform better at school than a kid who is from a family with a weak family background. If learners receive the support from outside the home environment, they are most likely to be then controlled in the streets resulting in loss of interest in academic route.

4. Explain briefly the contribution the school environment can have in leading towards the poor academic performance of grade 12 learners?

- School environment can be described in the context of classroom sizes and in terms of teacher-learner ratio. We have huge numbers in classes does not accommodate learners with special needs. Our numbers allow only learners who are academically stronger. We cannot focus on learners who may have the need for an individual attention. With the pressure of our academic content where we need to focus on finishing the ATP, we cannot assist learners who need special care or individual care from a teacher. As teachers we can easily complete the ATP but our focus is to assist learners to pass not to finish the ATP. Our schools do not have up to date laboratories, learners are not accommodated in the practical half of subjects. The world has revolved, we cannot claim that the school has a library, no one wants to go to the library and read books, but we read everything from our gadgets. Our kids are interested in internet. Like now I am from my class trying to explain something, they did not understand, but after playing for them a video from YOU TUBE they understood.

5. Do teachers' qualifications somehow have any negative impact towards academic performance of grade 12 learners?

I would not ground it to negative impact. But sometimes having an over educated teacher is not a good deal for the child. For example, if you have a teacher with a PHD teaching GRADE 12 learners, normally the level of expectation from his learners might be too high. He might be working alone. But at the same time, it might be good because you would have got your qualifications from conducting a number of research studies, and most of the time research studies are conducted focussing on the mind of the child.

6. How do the study methods used by learners contribute to their poor academic performance?

- Learners are not prepared for “after schooling”, instead they are prepared to pass. We just teach them how to name or define. We hardly teach them applications. As a result, they cannot deal with questions they have never seen in any of the formal or informal tasks during the year. It is not only the study methods but also the teaching method. Not enough time is spent studying and preparing for exams or formal tasks but instead few hours before the tasks will be spent browsing through preparing for the exam. I am not sure if our kids have enough time to study.

7. Do learners’ attitudes contribute to their poor academic performance in grade12?

- Yes, most learners’ attitude has developed to be negative due to the fact that learners are mostly progressed without any effort, so they do not know what it takes to pass. If learners do not do well in any of the subjects they are taking, the will to fight is not there but they rather give up. They don’t have a method or equation of passing because they have been in grade12 through policy assistance not their own effort. If progressed from grade 10 the learner sees no need to fight because they tell themselves that at the end of the year they will be promoted to the next grade. The will to fight comes back at the last minutes which cause them to fail. So, their attitude does cause them to fail in grade 12.

ANNEXTURE G
INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT WITH SMT MEMBERS.

Interviewee code: SMTA-1

Interviewer: Researcher

Location: School A

Date: 4 September

1. At a scale of 1-5, how effective is the monitoring of teachers' work in this school?

Monitoring of teachers' work at Ithafa MSTA is very effective. Constant monitoring is done every month according to our annual monitoring programme, with the aim of checking the amount and quality of work given to learners and identifying challenges.

2. As an HOD, how often do you monitor the following, and what challenges do you experience which might cause poor academic performance of grade 12s in the school?

2.1. Lesson plans

2.2. Curriculum coverage

2.3. Control of learners' work

2.1. Lesson planning

Submission to HOD is done every Friday for the following week.

Challenges identified include poor adherence to submission dates with some teachers claiming not having enough time to plan; lack of institutional support and insufficient instructional material/ equipment; too much paper work. My view is that the lack of planning leads to poor utilization of time (time wasted), frustration caused by mistakes done when teaching.

2.2. Curriculum Coverage

It is checked every month according to our annual program. We have ATPs that we use as our threshold. Curriculum enrichment is linked with educational achievement.

Challenges identified include absenteeism or classes not attended, poor planning/ utilization of teaching time (e.g. educator making copies during teaching time), disturbances (school disturbing programs during teaching and learning time; circuit/region – workshops called early where teachers need to leave classes and attend workshops), gaps in learner knowledge (trying to close knowledge gaps from previous grade leads to delay in delivering the new content. What I think can be done is that educators must follow the ATP and stipulated times. If absent, the educator must make arrangements to cover the work (e.g., extra classes especially in GET)

2.3. Control of Learners' Work

It is checked every month. We have subject performance standards that guide us on how much work must be given per week and per subject.

Challenges identified include educators end up concentrating on quantity (number) and compromising quality, in class works and home works, other questioning styles are neglected (e.g. multiple choice question and definitions). Mostly questions are about calculations. This makes learners to see this type of questions for the first time in the exam question paper. Last challenge pertains the poor utilization of previous question papers- educators rely mostly on textbooks.

3. Do HODs in this school moderate the quality of formal and informal tasks given to learners?

Educators are given 4 days to mark and submit learners' work for moderation. The moderation is mostly done after the task is written (Post moderation). Pre-moderation is compromised, especially when the paper was not set internally.

Challenges identified are that meeting the 4 days for marking and submitting is a problem. Educators complain with the number of learners per class that is too high (e.g., we have classes that are full to capacity with 69/70 learners per class. If they rush again the quality of marking is compromised. They make mistakes and some are tempted to ask other people to mark for them. In externally set question papers, most of the time it is not possible to pre-moderate because the code arrives in the morning when the paper will be written. Mistakes are picked up in the centers when

learners are already writing. This discourages or demotivates them because instead of focusing on answering the questions, they end up correcting mistakes.

4. Do HODs conduct result analysis of learner performance after formal tasks have been written?

It is done. We pick randomly 10% of the scripts and do item analysis which also still needs to be improved.

Challenge experienced is that not all educators do it. Mostly they use general knowledge to write the SPIPs (subject performance improvement plan).

5. Do HODs ensure that teachers address challenges identified during the analysis of results? If yes, please explain how?

Yes, after writing the SPIP, which must clearly explain the exact challenge identified, and state the time frame for addressing the challenge. Teachers must provide evidence; this is monitored monthly when checking learners' books. What the teacher said will do, must be provided/ clearly indicated on learners' books.

6. As an HOD, do you have a mechanism to measure whether progress has been made in addressing the previously identified challenges?

No specific tool is used to check SPIP, but it is checked during the ATP coverage monitoring. Comments must be given on SPIP.

7. Do you think teachers' qualifications cause the poor academic attainment of grade 12 learners?

Yes, actually in all grades: an under qualified educator cannot produce results. e.g., in Physical Sciences there are topics that are challenging which cannot be taught using general knowledge whereas a well-trained teacher will be able to deliver the content and assist learners.

Challenges experienced: in the lower grades (8 and 9) most of the time we have teachers that are experts to the subject or are not well versed with the content. This leads to misconceptions and wrong things being taught. Therefore, as HOD, I may only pick that up when checking learners' books, of which sometimes it may be too late, and the damage is already done. Even in class visits, teachers can impress you during that lesson but when you go out, the following lessons may not be taught

correctly, and as an HOD you will pick that very late during monitoring. Under qualified teachers must be encouraged to register or upgrade with recognized universities.

Secondly some educators are converted from being a sales assistant to teaching and through distance learning. Most of those were not writing assignments on their own, hence the knowledge of content that they might have is not the same as the one who did teach full time. This type of educators, mostly they are given lower grades where they teach wrong things and that leads to misconceptions.

8. How often do you conduct capacity building workshops for grade 12 teachers?

Truly speaking, it is not often. That grade is always busy. They have morning classes, normal teaching time, afternoon classes, evening classes and weekend classes.

9. How often do you conduct class visits?

They are done once a term.

That is a challenge because that is why problems are picked up very late. It is not also possible to do them every week since I am also expected to teach.

ANNEXTURE H

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT WITH LEARNERS

Interviewee code: LA-2

Interviewer: The researcher

Location: School A

Date: 14 September 2020

1. Do you think the low financial income at home contributes to your poor academic performance? Explain why?

It will not affect us a lot because the majority of learners are learning so that they can try to change the situation at their homes. We have no excuse because the government does everything for us. You are responsible for changing your own family background. If you are short of other school things, you can talk to your teachers to assist where they can instead of making excuses.

2. Do you think the size of the family can make learners to perform poorly at school?

It depends on the type of person you are. But if you are from a bigger family and you live far from libraries, and are surrounded by noisy neighbours, you will not have time to study, and it will affect your performance at school.

3. How does the lack of parental support make learners to perform poorly?

It can. You can think that they do not care about the effort you make, or no one appreciates you, or they do not understand the challenges you come across at school. If parents do not support you, you are not going to perform better at school.

4. Do you the inadequate level of education of parents make you to perform poorly?

No, it does not. In fact, that should be the only way that should push you or encourage you to do well at school so that you can change the situation around. At school, try to mix with other children who understand better than you.

5. Does the shortage of textbooks in the school contribute towards poor academic performance?

No, it does not. There are many ways of getting more information like visiting other schools and have discussions with learners from other schools about your school work. Or you can ask teachers to get more information instead of crying over the shortage of textbooks.

6. Do planned and unplanned school programs cause learners to perform poorly?

I do not think so. Other programmes can assist you and change the way you view things. Learners should stay after school to cover up the time they lost during the day so that they do not fail, especially when they do not have time to study at home. These programmes must be limited to avoid utilising too much of our tuition time because we may end up being behind schedule and not finishing the syllabus.

7. Does the policy of progression make you to develop a negative attitude towards learning and studying learners?

It can do it, especially if you have been condoned more than once, you become familiar with the idea that you will relax and end up being condoned especially when you behave yourself. Condoning learners is not a good thing, learners must learn that for one to succeed in life, one needs to work hard. Condoning learners kills their mind set and their will to work hard in life generally.

8. Does not finishing the syllabus make learners to fail?

Yes. During examinations you can come across a chapter you have not treated in class, only to find that , that chapter has more marks. If you write the same chapter the same chapter you will definitely fail it, which can make you to fail your examinations.

9. Do you think late coming by makes them to perform poorly at school?

Yes, because the information you lost, which was done when you were still coming, you will not get it again. You cannot even expect the teacher and the whole class to repeat just to accommodate you.

10. How does learners' negative attitude towards learning and studying due to the progression policy contribute towards poor academic performance?

Condoning learners is like begging them to pass even though they themselves do not care about their education. Such a learner can even influence other learners not to study hoping that they will also be condoned, adding that studying is just a waste of time.

ANNEXTURE I: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

02 General Botha Avenue

De Bruin Park

Ermelo

2350

15 April 2018

To: The HOD (Mpumalanga Department of Education)

The District Director (Gert Sibande District)

The Circuit Manager (Msukaligwa 1)

Principals of schools (Cebisa and Ithafa)

Grade 12 Teachers

Re: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH

I enclose this application requesting to be granted permission to conduct a research in Gert Sibande district, Msukaligwa 1 Circuit, Cebisa and Ithafa Secondary Schools. The research is based on the factors giving rise to the poor academic attainment of grade 12 learners. If permission is granted, and teachers in the two schools agree to be participants, they will then be interviewed individually. A list of questions to be used during the interviews is attached as annexure A. The interview will be thirty minutes long.

Participation in the study is voluntary and without risk or harm. Findings of the research will be disclosed to Mpumalanga Department of Education, Gert Sibande District office, Msukaligwa 1 Circuit office and the two schools understudy.

I trust that my request will meet your favourable consideration.

Yours faithfully

Sipho K. Motha (Mr)

Cell: 083512354

ANNEXTURE J- PERMISSION FROM SCHOOL B

Tel: 084 229 3588
Fax: (086) 540 5346
Enquiries: Maboea T.S
ithafacomp@gmail.com



P.O. Box 2581
Ermelo
2350

Dear Mr Motha

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH

The above bears reference:

Kindly be informed that your request for permission to conduct a research at our school is hereby granted.

I hope you will find the above in order.

Thank You


MABOEA T.S (Mrs)
Cell Number: 072 202 2575
Date: 04 June 2020

ITHAFA COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL
P.O. BOX 2581 ERMELO 2350

2020-06-04

TEL: 017 819 2216

ANNEXTURE –K – PERMISSION FORM TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE



University of Limpopo
Department of Research Administration and Development
Private Bag X1106, Sovenga, 0727, South Africa
Tel: (015) 268 3935, Fax: (015) 268 2306, Email: anastasia.ngobe@ul.ac.za

TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
ETHICS CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

MEETING: 24 April 2020

PROJECT NUMBER: TREC/72/2020: PG

PROJECT:

Title: Possible Factors That Cause Underperformance in Grade 12: A Case of Cebisa and Ithafa Schools, In Ermelo, Mpumalanga Province

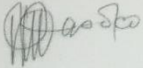
Researcher: SK Motha

Supervisor: Prof LT Mabasa

Co-Supervisor/s: N/A

School: Education

Degree: Master of Education in Curriculum Studies



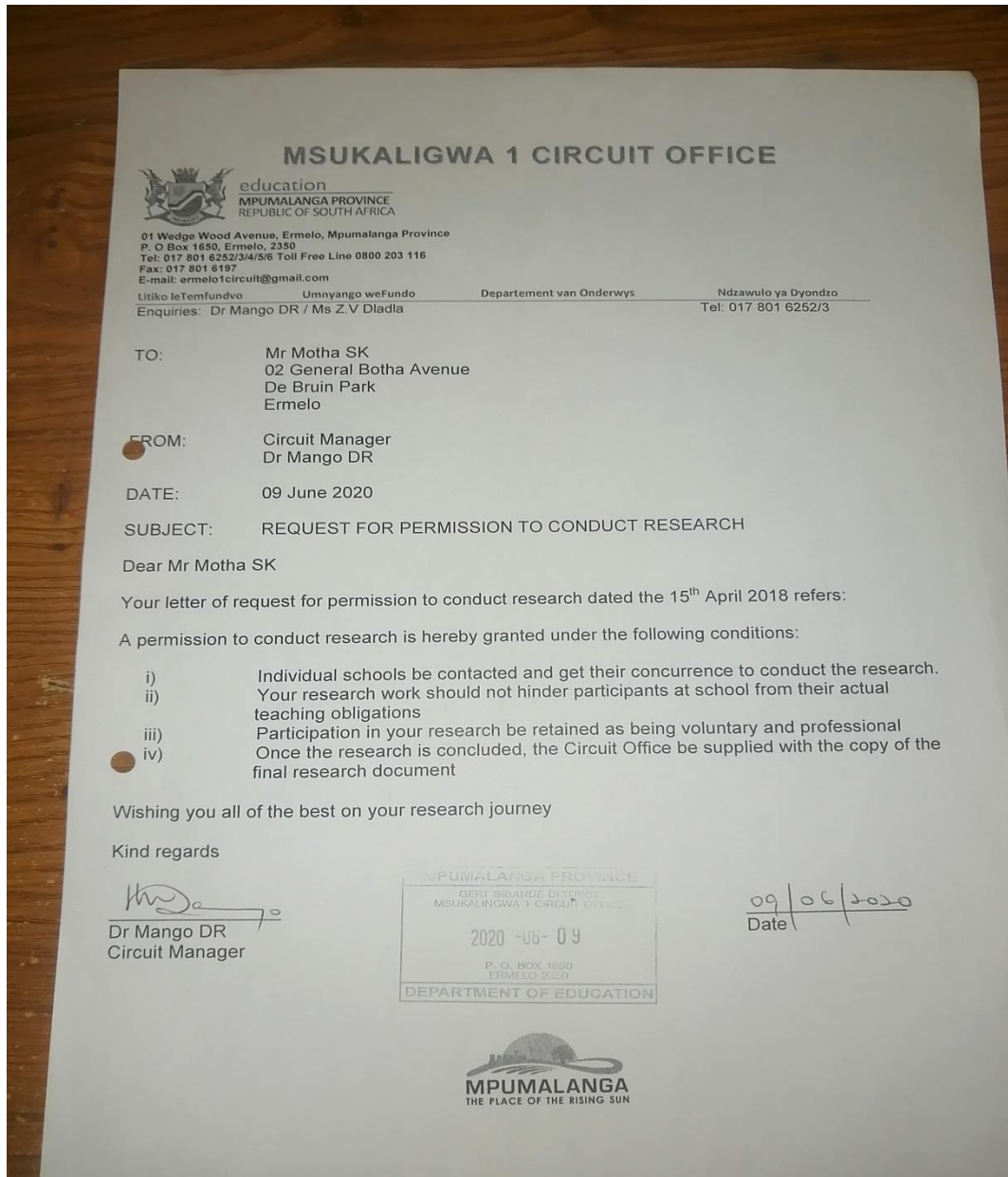
PROF P MASOKO
CHAIRPERSON: TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
The Turfloop Research Ethics Committee (TREC) is registered with the National Health Research Ethics Council, Registration Number: REC-0310213-031

Note:

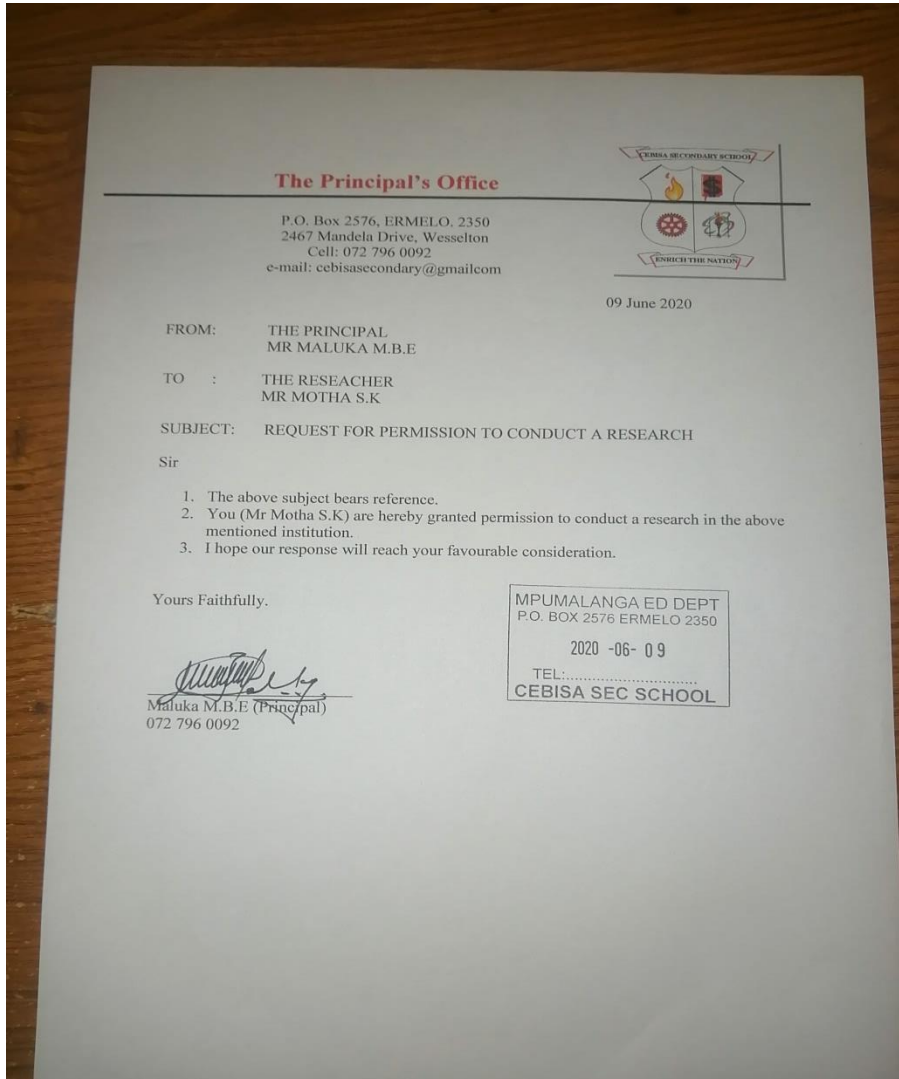
- i) This Ethics Clearance Certificate will be valid for one (1) year, as from the abovementioned date. Application for annual renewal (or annual review) need to be received by TREC one month before lapse of this period.
- ii) Should any departure be contemplated from the research procedure as approved, the researcher(s) must re-submit the protocol to the committee, together with the Application for Amendment form.
- iii) PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER IN ALL ENQUIRIES.

Finding solutions for Africa

ANNEXTURE –L – PERMISSION FROM MSUKALIGWA 1 CIRCUIT



ANNEXTURE – M- PERMISSION FROM SCHOOL A



ANNEXTURE –N- PERMISSION FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



education
MPUMALANGA PROVINCE
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Ikhahanga Building, Government Boulevard, Riverside Park, Mpumalanga Province
Private Bag X11341, Mbombela, 1200.
Tel: 013 766 5552/5115. Toll Free Line: 0800 203 116

Libiko le Tomkundvo Umnyango we Fundo

Departement van Onderwys

Ndzawulo ya Dyuniso

Mr. S.K. Motha
02 General Botha Avenue
De Bruin Park
ERMELO
2350

RE: APPLICATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH: MR. S.K. MOTH
(Pride@saymail.co.za) 0799110272

Your application to conduct research study was received and is therefore acknowledged. The title of your study reads thus: "Possible factors that cause underperformance in grade 12: a case of Cebisa and Ithafa schools in Ermelo of Mpumalanga Department of Education." Your request is approved subject to you observing the provisions of the departmental research policy which is available in the departmental website and available on request. You are also requested to adhere to your University's research ethics as spelt out in your research ethics document. We trust that the aims and the objectives of the study will benefit the department, especially the learners and the teaching staff and all officials in the department of education.

In terms of the research policy, data or any research activity can only be conducted after school hours as per appointment with affected participants. You are also requested to share your findings with the relevant sections of the department so that we may consider implementing your findings if that will be in the best interest of the department. To this effect, your final approved research report (both soft and hard copy) should be submitted to the department as soon as you complete your research project. You may be required to prepare a presentation and present at the department's annual research dialogue. For more information kindly liaise with the department's research unit @ 013 766 5476 or a.baloyi@education.mpu.gov.za.
The department wishes you well in this important project and pledges to give you the necessary support you may need.

MR. J.R. NKOSI
ACTING HEAD: EDUCATION

22/07/2020
DATE

