Assisting Grade 12 learners in township schools to perform optimally: A case study in the Tshwane South District of Gauteng Province

by

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DECLARATION

I, MAHLATINI MBUISA, declare that this work on assisting Grade 12 learners in a township school to perform optimally is my own work and has not been previously submitted for the award of any degree. All contributions and quotations from other people used in this dissertation are indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my wife, Ellen Mbuisa, and my children, Nonhlanhla, Morgan and Nothando for instilling in me the sense of hard work, commitment and dedication which I needed to complete this study.

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to find solutions to problems relating to the fact that many township learners are not optimally prepared for the Grade 12 final examination resulting in them having limited possibilities for further studies and after-school employment. The main research question focused on how Grade 12 learners can be assisted to perform optimally in the final examination. A qualitative research approach was adopted using focus group interviews. School management team members and Grade 12 educators and learners from one township secondary school were selected as participants. The main factors that assist Grade 12 learners to perform optimally in the Grade 12 final examination relate to well executed leadership functions, competent teaching, learner commitment, effective policy implementation and sound school, home and township conditions. A school intervention programme that included formal studying by camping on the school grounds improved Grade 12 performance significantly.
KEY WORDS

Bachelor passes; Grade 12 final examination; Instructional leadership; Learner performance; Negative conditions; School intervention programme; Township schools.
ABBREVIATIONS / ACRONYMS

**AIDS:** Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome  
**CAPS:** Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement  
**CEM:** Council of Education Ministers  
**GDE:** Gauteng Department of Education  
**HIV:** Human Immune Virus  
**HoDs:** Heads of Department  
**NCS:** National Curriculum Statement  
**NQF:** National Qualifications Framework  
**NSC:** National Senior Certificate  
**OBE:** Outcome Based Education  
**RDP:** Reconstruction Development Programme  
**SBA:** School Based Assessment  
**SGB:** School Governing Board  
**SSIP:** Secondary Schools Improvement Programme  
**UNISA:** University of South Africa
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CHAPTER ONE
OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The fact that the South African education system is in crisis is generally known. Spaull (2013:26) confirms that an objective outsider would agree that the weight of available evidence favours the judgement that South African education provisioning is in dire straits. Paton (2013:4) states that many learners in township schools are academically two years behind their peers who are attending suburban schools. The fact that not all is well in the South African education system, is especially relevant to township schools where learners have to obtain diploma and certificate passes in the Grade 12 final examination. One of the challenges faced by many secondary schools in the country is the challenge of increasing the number of bachelor passes in the Grade 12 final examination. Bachelor passes enhance learners’ chances to be enrolled for a bachelor degree at a university or to become part of the labour market. Since learner performance is a reflection of social structures in the society, township learners are more affected in terms of access to education, retention in school, career opportunities in the labour market and admission to bachelor degrees at universities (Landsberg, Kruger, & Swart, 2011:6).

The focus of this research is to investigate how learners can be assisted through educational policies and by school leadership and educators to perform optimally in their final Grade 12 examination in order to be prepared sufficiently for post-school studies. Determining the specific problems responsible for inhibiting learners’ preparedness for Grade 12 final examination and ways of solving these problems functionally are part of the study’s focus.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO STUDY

1.2.1 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework underlying this study on effective teaching and learning involves instructional leadership models which emerged from research on effective school management in the early 1980s. Instructional leadership involves all the actions school
leaders on all levels of school functioning carry out to improve teaching and learning. Comprehensively considered, instructional leadership comprises the tasks of defining the school mission, managing the instructional programme and promoting the school climate to enable effective teaching and learning (Hallinger, 2003:329). Each of these dimensions of instructional leadership contains specific job functions such as defining the purpose of schooling, setting school-wide goals, providing adequate resources for teaching and learning, supervising and evaluating teachers, coordinating staff development initiatives and fostering collegial relationships with and among teachers (Hallinger, 2003; Southworth, 2002). Instructional leadership is essential to a study on improved learner performance, school effectiveness and successful school change (Hallinger, 2003:333). Instructional leadership is therefore relevant to this study insofar as understanding how best the models of instructional leadership can be applied to township schools in order to adequately prepare learners for their final Grade 12 examination.

1.2.2 Management structures

The management structures of a school play a pivotal role in preparing learners to perform optimally in the Grade 12 final examination. Hoy and Sweetland (2011:296) identify two contrasting management structures, namely professional and bureaucratic structures which should both be applied at school to ensure optimal functioning. The school management should create enabling structures through a bureaucratic organisational approach whereby rules and regulations are treated as guidelines to direct educators as professionals to achieve their goals of effective teaching for the sake of successful learning, rather than using rules and regulations as a tool to punish educators. Management structures and leadership styles play a crucial role in the survival of the school as an organisation. In fact, under-performance and unpreparedness in the Grade 12 final examination is directly ascribed to ineffective management structures at school. Marishane and Botha (2011:5) emphasise that management and leadership are increasingly recognised as the primary player in the success or failure by learners to perform optimally in the Grade 12 final examination. It is commonly said that a school with everything else but without good management will fail, whereas a school with nothing but an effective management team will succeed. In this regard school management is the key factor differentiating average from excellence.
1.2.3 Educators

Educators are at the heart of curriculum implementation and delivery (RSA, 2013:182). Educators play a pivotal role in teaching and learning, and in determining extra input needed to prepare Grade 12 learners more adequately for furthering their studies after school. Since effective teaching and learning is the key to unlock excellence in learner performance, educators are accountable for successful learning. Botha, Kamper and Van Niekerk (2011:15) state that educators are accountable for the teaching and learning process that takes place at school. Accountability within the school context can be defined as being responsible, liable and answerable to parents, learners and the community at large (Mestry, 2004:27). As educators are held accountable for learners' preparedness to write the final examination, it is important to investigate how educators can optimally prepare learners for the Grade 12 final examination. One possibility is that a shortage of qualified educators needs to be addressed concertedly with professional development endeavours. Learners' performance is also affected by how educators at school conduct themselves professionally with regard to high morality which is accompanied by noble work ethics. All these factors need to be investigated in order to fully prepare Grade 12 learners for the matric examination and post matric studies.

1.2.4 Educational law and policy

The history of the South African education system is known for the fact that although good innovation was planned for the curriculum and policy formulations, implementation did not materialise as planned due to not considering the specific school context. School policies and educational acts have to consider the specific school environment or else they will become obsolete and irrelevant. School based policies should be tailored so that they meet the needs and challenges of the learners at that particular school. Coetzee and Bray (2010:3) interpret policy as a mere decision of the government on what to do or not to do. In this regard education policy reflects the will of the government of the day on the plan of action that is proposed and finally adopted. Policy, therefore, represents a set of rules or principles which govern how people should behave in an organisation (Coetzee & Bray, 2010:3). With this study on optimal learner performance, the focus is on what hinders and what enhances learner performance in the final Grade 12 examination. A relevant theme
related to learner performance and which will form part of this study are the promotion requirements imbedded in the national curriculum statements.

With a school-based management arrangement, schools are mandated to formulate their own policies to govern the day to day running of the institution. In this regard school policies give guidelines to those who are involved in decision making and implementation of these decisions which, for the purpose of this study, pertain to decisions on teaching and learning activities. Part of this study on learner performance is to evaluate the school-based policies that serve as guiding tools for learner performance and to identify the extent to which these contextual policies affect effective teaching and learning.

1.2.5 Learners

Apart from teachers who are subject experts and who are well-prepared for every lesson to ensure optimal learner engagement, learner performance is also determined by learners’ personal inputs and learners’ home background. Further, learners are not equally gifted and educators should take into account individual differences as these differences pertain to aptitude, interests and ability when preparing learners for the final Grade 12 examination (Landsberg et al., 2011:36).

1.3 MOTIVATION FOR STUDY

The researcher, as a school principal and classroom practitioner, has noted with concern that many learners fail to obtain bachelor passes in the Grade 12 final examination in township schools, unlike in former model C schools where learners perform satisfactorily. With reference to pass rates in Gauteng specifically, the 2013 Gauteng Annual Report (2013/14:23) indicates that the 2013 matric provincial pass rate was 87%. This pass rate comprised of 38% bachelor passes, 34% diploma passes and 15% certificate passes. The yearly result analysis of township schools in Gauteng shows that many learners fail to obtain bachelor passes in their final Grade 12 examination. This is a cause for concern for learners, educators, school management teams, and parents of township schools. It is in this respect that the researcher wanted to conduct an investigation on how Grade 12 learners can be assisted by the different stakeholders to prepare optimally for the Grade 12 final examination.
The issue of learners failing to obtain bachelor passes with the Grade 12 final examination is not a problem of Gauteng township schools alone. This is a problem experienced nationwide because the 2013 results for bachelor passes throughout the country were below 40%. The bachelor pass rate was so low because of poor performance in township schools when compared to former Model C schools. The status quo should be that township learners should perform at the same level with former Model C schools in terms of producing quality results in the Grade 12 final examinations. The intent of the research was, therefore, to contribute with answers on how to prepare Grade 12 learners for the final examination more adequately. In this study on learner performance the teaching methods, management structures and school policies were reviewed. It was anticipated that the research findings could contribute to thoughts on decision making in township schools relating to optimally preparing Grade 12 learners for their final examination. Concurring with James and Sally (2010:76), decision making is a vital and an effective tool in improving learner performance in schools.

1.4 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Many learners in township schools fail to perform optimally in the Grade 12 final examination. Therefore, there is need to determine how to assist these learners in order to be prepared adequately so that they can further their studies, or enter the labour market meaningfully after having passed Grade 12 convincingly. Against this background, the following research question was formulated:

How can Grade 12 learners in township schools be assisted to perform optimally in their final examination?

In order to answer this question, the main research question was divided into the following three sub-questions that were investigated first so that the solutions to the sub-questions could contribute to the solution of the main research question.

- What are the factors inhibiting learners to perform adequately in the Grade 12 final examination?
- What are the factors assisting learners to perform optimally in the Grade 12 final examination?
• How can positive factors for optimal performance be applied to assist learners in their Grade 12 final examination?

1.5 AIMS OF THE STUDY

The aim of this research was to find solutions to the problem relating to the fact that many learners attending township schools do not pass the Grade 12 examination convincingly, therefore limiting their possibilities for further studies, or meaningful labour market entry. In order to answer the research question, the aim of the research was to investigate how Grade 12 learners can be assisted to pass the final examination satisfactorily. Related aims included:

• To identify factors inhibiting learners from performing optimally in the Grade 12 final examination.
• To identify factors assisting learners to perform adequately in the Grade 12 final examination.
• To identify ways of utilising positive factors to assist Grade 12 learners to perform optimally in their final examination.

1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

With this study on Grade 12 learner performance, data was collected by both a literature study and an empirical investigation. Data collected through conducting a literature study was used to support the conducting of the empirical investigation, the latter to be discussed below.

1.6.1 Research paradigm and research approach

An interpretivist research paradigm was adopted in this research. With reference to the research design as the general plan of how the research was set up, who the participants were and what the method of data collection was, three major categories of research approaches are identified, namely quantitative, qualitative, and a mixed-methods research approach (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:20). The qualitative research approach was used in this research because it demands the researcher to study the phenomenon in its
natural settings. Rensburg, Alpaslan, Du Plooy, Gelderblom, Van Eeden and Wigston (2011:85) view the qualitative research approach as a simplified and formalised approach, in which the researcher does the investigation in a more detailed manner. As a qualitative research approach uses words to study and describe data in its natural occurrence, the possibility of understanding the studied phenomenon is improved.

A case study is one of the approaches to a qualitative inquiry which entails the study of a specific case as a bounded system examined in-depth over a period of time and exploring a multiple set of naturally occurring data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:24). The in-depth focus on a specific phenomenon in its natural context is carried out by considering the perspectives of participants involved in the phenomenon. The case study can be viewed as a way of organising social data for purposes of viewing social reality. In this study on Grade 12 learner performance the researcher chose the case study design because it allows the researcher to directly interact with field participants. Individuals are likely to reveal personal information in the presence of the researcher if they are familiar with the situation and if they do not feel threatened. The researcher considered the case study design as ideal because the researcher was dealing with a social unit which was a specific school that was investigated intensively and analysed deeply without any aim of generalisation to similar situations.

### 1.6.2 Selection of sites and participants

With reference to the population as the entire group of people which the researcher wants to study in order to determine some characteristics, the population should represent an entity of a group of people who share common characteristics for the sake of purposefulness for the specific study (Rensberg et al. 2011:150). The population for this study on learner performance in the Grade 12 final examination consisted of all township schools in the Tshwane South District of Gauteng Provence. There are 97 schools in the Tshwane South District and among these, 40 are township schools. The research site as the actual context in which the study took place was a secondary school in the Tshwane South District. The selected secondary school is situated in the Mamelodi township where the school was established in 1980. The school was chosen as the research site because it is a township school and from statistics on pass rates for previous years it is clear that the research site resembles the situation of many learners failing to obtain bachelor
passes in the Grade 12 final examination, resulting in these learners not being able to further their studies or enter the labour market successfully.

Participants who took part in the study were drawn from the research site. Constraints stemming from time limits and due to the fact that the selected school meets the features of Grade 12’s not succeeding with good pass rates, the researcher considered one research site studied in depth as sufficient to collect meaningful data to answer the research question effectively. With the qualitative approach used in this research, participants were selected on the basis of the knowledge of the phenomenon under study. Participants were, therefore, people who were information rich on the reasons for weak learner performance and on ways to counter the status quo realistically.

The sample of the study was eight Grade 12 learners, six Grade 12 senior educators, two HoDs, one deputy school principal and the school principal. A total of eighteen participants contributed to the generating of data for this study on learner performance in Grade 12. The sample of Grade 12 learners was selected because they are to write the final examination. Four boys and four girls were selected to cater for gender balance. The compilation of the learner sample represented the school head boy and head girl, three top achievers in Grade 12 and three slow learners in Grade 12. The learner leaders were selected to provide information that was rich on how learner leadership affects and enhances performances in the Grade 12 final examination. The top achievers were dedicated and ready to progress hence meaningful data were collected from their perspective to provide meaningful answers to the research questions. Slow learners were interviewed to identify learning barriers in the teaching and learning process. The senior educators had good knowledge on the subject content and the kind of learners they teach. The senior educators had taught the subject for many years and, knowing the learners’ backgrounds, these educators understood how important it is for these learners to engage in proper schooling in order to be prepared for possible social mobility. The HoDs, deputy school principal and the school principal play a pivotal role in establishing enabling structures to enable learners to perform optimally in the Grade 12 final examination.
1.6.3 Data collection

In order to collect data to answer the research questions satisfactorily, interviewing was used. Rensberg et al. (2011:179) view interviewing as a functional method to collect data. The researcher chose interviewing as data collection method because interviewing permits free responses from participants. The interviewees were given the latitude to express opinions and ideas spontaneously and adequately granting the interviewer enough room to probe further, giving the participants an opportunity to qualify the responses they made. This could result in collecting valuable data and discovering matter that the researcher was not aware of when he started with this study. In this study the data collected from interviewing were complemented by documentary analysis of policy implementation that is based on national legislation at the specific research site.

Interview schedules were referred to during the different interviews (Appendix D – H). The researcher paid much attention to the interview questions included in the interview schedules because the success of an interview depends on adequate planning. Follow-up questions that were asked during interviewing were included in the final interview schedules. Enough space for note taking was available on the interview schedules. A tape recorder was used during interviewing to provide a verbatim record. The interview tapes were transcribed so as to enable the researcher to analyse each interview in detail. Focus group interviews were used to collect data. Each group of learners was interviewed separately, that is, slow learners, top achievers and learner leaders. The six Grade 12 senior educators formed a focus group interview, while the HoDs, deputy principal and the principal constituted another focus group interview. A total of five focus group interviews were conducted.

1.6.4 Data analysis

With reference to Mouton (2006:108) data analysis is understood as the action of categorising the data that was collected into manageable units, themes, patterns, trends and relationships. The data collected through recorded interviewing were transcribed in order to be analysed in relation to the theoretical framework for the study which pertains to educational leadership as instructional leadership for effective learner performance. Data analysis was followed by data interpretation as the building of data into a coherent whole.
representing major themes emerging from the empirical research. The collected and analysed data was interpreted under different headings to represent the categories and sub-categories that emerged from an analysis of the qualitative content.

1.6.5 Trustworthiness/transferability

Trustworthiness can be achieved through reflexivity which is the degree to which the researcher makes a self-introspection throughout the entire research process and which relates to the ability and the extent to which the researcher builds trust among the participants (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delport, 2011:46). This was achieved through establishing good relationships with participants and respecting the individual rights of participants. The researcher constructed flexible questions and constantly re-phrased interview questions to suit the purpose of collecting meaningful data for problem solving. Strategies such as debriefing, field logs, auditability and collaboration of findings were explored in order to enhance trustworthiness. The researcher made sure that what the participants said was recorded and transcribed accurately to avoid misrepresentation of participants’ perceptions. The principle of dependability was achieved through focusing on methodological rigour and coherence to generate acceptable and reliable data. The principle of credibility was addressed by subjecting the research process to auditing to check for an acceptable level of quality and appropriateness. In order to achieve confirmability, the research findings were reviewed to check whether the findings were confirmed by data collected during the literature review.

1.6.6 Ethical considerations

Ethics are concerned with beliefs about what is right or wrong from a moral perspective to represent research actions that are morally justifiable (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:117). In this regard research ethics pertains to what is morally and socially acceptable with regard to the integrity of the research and the well-being of research participants. In order to meet the moral obligation of the scientific discipline of being ethically accountable for reporting on the true findings at all times, the researcher complied with all recommendations on fully reporting the findings and avoiding fabrication and plagiarism.
To ensure that the well-being of the participants is respected, the researcher sought ethical clearance from the research ethics committee of the College of Education at Unisa. After having been granted ethical clearance, the researcher applied for permission to carry out the research from the management team and school principal of the research site. For this research to be ethically acceptable the researcher took into consideration the rights of participants with regard to full disclosure of the study to each and every participant, voluntary participation, informed consent, and privacy.

1.7 CONCEPT CLARIFICATION

1.7.1 Grade 12 learner

Grade 12 learners are learners who are in their final year of schooling and they are also referred to as matriculants. These learners write the National Senior Certificate examination and they are awarded certificates by Umalusi. These different school certificates grade learners to be admitted to certificate, diploma, or degree studies at Further Education and Training colleges and universities. The National Senior Certificate examination is an exit point channelling learners to different tertiary institutions depending on their performance in the final examination. It is therefore imperative that learners perform optimally in the final school examination because this Grade 12 final examination determines matriculants’ future study and/or occupation possibilities.

1.7.2 Bachelor passes

A bachelor pass represents an achievement rating at level 4 on the NQF with a score of 50% and more in four designated subjects at the national senior certificate level. A bachelor pass rating is used as an entry requirement to study for a bachelor’s degree at university. For learners to achieve bachelor passes they need to be optimally prepared for the final examination. A bachelor pass is an indication that learners have been adequately prepared regardless of their differing abilities. The barometer of bachelor passes is used as an indicator for being thoroughly prepared by school to equip learners with competencies for whatever kind of after-school training.
1.7.3 Township schools

Township schools refer to those schools found in the disadvantaged communities and are attended by black learners coming from mostly low socio-economic status backgrounds. Many of the parents who live in these communities are working class people earning low salaries whereas others are unemployed. A large majority of these parents cannot afford to pay for their children’s education. Township schools are in general disadvantaged in terms of infrastructure and learning facilities. The teacher-learner ratio at these schools is high. As many of these learners are exposed to physical and emotional neglect they are receptive to substance abuse and gang-related activities affecting their performance at school negatively.

1.8 ORGANISATION OF THE DISSERTATION

The study is organised into five chapters of which the contents for each chapter is briefly explained below:

Chapter one: The thrust of this chapter is to put the focus of the study into context and it comprises a general orientation to the research. This includes the introduction to the research, reflection on the background to the study and the motivation for the study. The focus of the study, the aims and objectives of the study and an explanation of the research design are matters that are addressed in this chapter.

Chapter two: Chapter two is devoted to a literature review on the theories on instructional leadership underlying the focus on improving learner performance in the Grade 12 final examination of learners attending township schools. In this chapter literature is reviewed in the context of educational management and leadership to determine how school leadership and management create enabling school structures conducive to educators optimally preparing Grade 12 learners for the final examination. Literature on how educators can improve learner performance is reviewed. Lastly literature is considered on learner performance in township schools where learners perform satisfactorily regardless of their societal conditions due to salient factors serving as enabling conditions (Kamper, 2008:11).
Chapter three: This chapter deals with the design of the empirical study, the research approach that was used, the research methods that were applied and the nature and magnitude of the research population and sample size as arranged with specific sampling procedures. The instruments for collecting data as well as the data analysis procedures are described. The research ethics that are considered and measures of ensuring trustworthiness of the research are also accounted for in Chapter three.

Chapter four: The research results of the empirical investigation are dealt with in this chapter. The data collected during the empirical investigation that were analysed and interpreted are represented in Chapter four.

Chapter five: This chapter contains a summary of the findings from the literature study and the empirical investigation with conclusions and recommendations stemming from these findings. A report on limitations of the study is included in this chapter. Suggestions for further study are presented in this chapter.

1.9 SUMMARY

The current situation in many South African township schools is that many learners do not pass Grade 12 and many of those who do pass do not pass in such a way so as to ensure further studies or labour market entry opportunities. In order to improve the quality of matric passes in township schools, factors inhibiting progress need to be determined so as to counter these hindering factors with realistically enabling endeavours possible within context.
CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW: AN EXPLORATION OF THEORIES AND PRINCIPLES UNDERPINNING THE ROLE OF INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP IN IMPROVING LEARNER PERFORMANCE IN TOWNSHIP SCHOOLS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The theoretical framework underlying this study on effective teaching and learning involves instructional leadership models which emerged from research on effective school management, school improvement and change implementation in the early 1980s (Hallinger, 2003:331). Instructional leadership is defined and the models of instructional leadership are discussed. Particular attention is paid to how the instructional leadership models can turn around under-performing schools. The contribution made by educators, learners and educational policies in improving learner performance are also outlined as part of the literature review. The last section of this chapter focuses on the culture of teaching and learning in the South African schools as these schools represent schools in township areas. Conditions in township schools are explored in order to determine their effect on learner performance in the Grade 12 final examination. Attention is paid to how some township schools are producing good results despite a host of challenges prevalent in townships in rural-related areas. Lastly, leadership qualities needed to transform township schools are discussed.

2.2 DEFINITION OF INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

Instructional leadership involves all the actions education managers on all levels of school functioning carry out to improve learner performance. The main focus of instructional leadership, as cited by Hallinger (2003:332), are coordinating, controlling, supervising and developing curriculum instructions. Southworth (2002:77) states that instructional leadership focuses on the behaviour of educators as they execute their duties in the classroom. Instructional leadership relates to the core business of the school, which is teaching and learning as it takes place in the classroom in order to improve learner performance. Kruger (2003:206) points out that instructional leadership encompasses the provision of resources, support and direction by the school principal to educators and learners in order to achieve bachelor passes in the Grade 12 final examination.
Instructional leadership is viewed as setting high expectations and standards for educators and learners through the creation of a school culture conducive for teaching and learning. Southworth (2002:77) points out that instructional leadership focuses on school variables such as school culture and school leadership because these variables directly affect educators' behaviour when they engage in teaching and learning activities with learners in the classroom. Blasé and Blasé cited in Southworth (2002:78) view instructional leadership as a blend of curriculum planning and implementation, supervision of curriculum and instruction and the continued professional development of educators. Instructional leadership is a directive top chain approach to school leadership that emphasizes school principals' coordination and control of instructional programmes (Day, Harris & Hatfield, 2001:41).

Considering all these opinions of different authors on the concept of instructional leadership, it is clear that instructional leadership encompasses all the activities carried out by school leaders on different levels of authority to ensure that teaching and learning take place effectively. In this regard the role of the school principal as executive leader is important; however, the role of the teacher as classroom manager is equally crucial for effective teaching and learning.

2.3 MODELS OF INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

The most comprehensive and widely used models of instructional leadership are those developed by Hallinger and his colleagues consisting of three distinct dimensions, namely, defining the school mission, managing the instructional programme and promoting the school climate (Southworth, 2002:77). Each of these dimensions of instructional leadership contains specific job functions such as defining the purpose of schooling, setting school goals, disseminating and communicating the purpose of the school's vision, mission and goals which are components of defining the school mission. It is the responsibility of the school principal to work with staff members to formulate specific, relevant and contextualised school policies such as the school admission policy, the health and safety policy and the code of conduct for both learners and educators. The school principal with the management team of the school determine a clear school vision, goals and a mission statement and convincingly articulate these to learners, educators, and parents as
important stakeholders. The school's vision with related mission statement and goals focuses on promoting the desirable academic performance of the learners (Hallinger, 2003:132). Every school needs to design a clear strategic plan and operational marketing strategy in order to transform its vision into reality (Murgatroyd, 2006:09).

The second dimension of instructional leadership, which is, managing the instructional programme, consists of supervising and evaluating instruction and monitoring learners' progress. When these functions are further delineated, they comprise the following functions of the school principal: lesson observation, book inspection, checking lesson plans, syllabus completion, moderation of tasks and file inspection (Marishane & Botha, 2011:91). Managing the instructional programme also demands the school principal to monitor learners, educators and staff attendance. This second dimension further demands the school principal to analyse results, verify mark schedules and issue reports to parents on time. The main focus is on monitoring the core business of schooling which is teaching and learning to ensure that learner performance is enhanced. In order to manage all of these tasks, the school principal liaises closely with the deputy school principal and heads of department. Southworth (2002:78) confirms that school principals achieve intended learner outcomes through mediated efforts by other people such as heads of department and educators.

Co-ordinating staff development initiatives, fostering collegial relationships among staff, motivating and rewarding educators and learners, protecting instructional time and maintaining high visibility comprises the third dimension of instructional leadership. The key areas of instructional leadership involve dealing with staff, learners and parents which foster inter-professional relationships which are critical to school success (Southworth, 2003:83). This implies having a collaborative team of educators who are professional, open minded, have unity of purpose and work together to achieve common goals. This third dimension of instructional leadership focuses on building high morale among staff members and learners by recognising and rewarding outstanding efforts and achievements. Visibility demands that the school principal should be there for staff members when they need professional advice and support. Educators should be offered an opportunity to develop their professional and academic qualifications by encouraging them to be life-long learners. Instructional leadership demands that school principals develop a consistent culture of teaching and learning in which all members work together.
as a team. All these demands relate to positive attitudes and team work as the cornerstone for improving learner performance in the Grade 12 final examination.

Southworth (2002:77) contributed to instructional leadership theory by identifying two distinct views with instructional leadership, namely broad and narrow. The narrow view focuses on planning, coordinating, supervising, controlling and evaluating the instruction programme. The narrow dispensation encompasses the school principals’ direct and strong leadership on curriculum and instruction in the teaching and learning process. On the other hand, the broad view focuses on the organisational structure and organisational culture of the school representing an overarching concept on instructional leadership endeavour. Hallinger and Heck (2002:87) further reviewed these two views on instructional leadership by determining a three dimensional model consisting of direct, indirect and reciprocal effects (Southworth, 2002:77). The direct effect of instructional leadership focuses on the school principal as responsible for improving learner performance. The school principal’s leadership function such as class visits, provision of resources and book inspection, influences the outcome of the Grade 12 final examination. The indirect effect of instructional leadership relates to the school principal achieving outcomes desired by the school through other people who include the deputy school principal, subject heads and educators. Delegated functions such as class visits and moderation by subject heads enable the instructional leader to achieve school goals via an indirect path (Hallinger and Heck cited in Southworth, 2002:78).

The reciprocal effect of instructional leadership portrays the school principal as being at the top of the school structure with the influence of the school principal cascaded through all the school structures until it reaches the learners. In this scenario, school principals create a working climate conducive to success insofar as influencing educators to have positive attitudes towards their work resulting in improved learner performance.

Hallinger (2009:142) redefined the instructional leadership model to consist of five main, but broad views. These views include building a sustainable school vision, shared leadership, leading a learning community, data analysis and decision making, and monitoring the curriculum and instruction. Exploring, building and sustaining a vision imply establishing a school vision which demonstrates the unique culture of the school and its main objectives and goals. A vision incorporates all stakeholders to ensure that all
concerns are taken into consideration which necessitates full support during implementation of the vision (Van Niekerk & Van Niekerk, 2006:86). The dimension of shared leadership emphasises that the school principal is not the only player in improving the learner performance, but should share this responsibility with different members in the hierarchy of authority and leadership structures in the school.

Leading a learning community implies that principals are role models in the school and community. School principals have to lead by example in whatever they are doing because they are the torch bearers of the community (Lashway, 2003:33). The school principal must, for example, use data from result analyses to make informed and corrective decisions. The most salient role of the school principal is monitoring curriculum and instruction which justifies the existence of the school. This dimension of monitoring the instructional programme represents the primary function of school principals in their endeavours for excellence in education (Marishane & Botha, 2011:87). In order for school principals to carry out their instructional leadership tasks effectively, the act of leadership is important as this leadership pertains to ensuring that teaching takes place for the sake of successful learning. Two leadership approaches are discussed next, namely leadership for learning and transformation leadership.

2.4 LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

The birth of the leadership for learning model came as a result of Hallinger’s 40 years of empirical research on instructional leadership. The leadership for learning model summarises the main features of the three models of leadership, namely instructional leadership, transformational leadership and shared leadership. The leadership for learning model focuses on how leadership contributes to school improvement and learner achievement by exploring means and ways of how school principals can achieve their vision of improving learner performance (Day et al., 2010; Hallinger, 2003; Hallinger 2011:129; Leithwood et al, 2008). The leadership for learning model highlights that, leadership practices in a school are shaped by the school environment and are the result of how school principals respond to the environment. It states that leadership effectiveness should also be embedded in the personal characteristics of the individual school principal such as beliefs, values, knowledge, experiences, leadership sentiments, leadership focus, context for leadership and shared leadership (Hallinger, 2011:129).
2.4.1 Value leadership

The leadership for learning model emphasises the importance of values in shaping leadership. Hallinger (2011:130) states that values guide leaders towards aspirations and provides ways by which leaders achieve their aspirations. To this end, school principals must prioritise terminal values which include academic achievement, learning growth, equity in learning and social development. Self-discipline, integrity, fairness and caring are instructional values that the school principal must nurture in order to achieve terminal values (Hallinger, 2011:130). Every school has its own core values that guide the day-to-day running of the school. It is the duty of the school principal to defend and protect what the school values most through decision making on conflict resolution, planning resource allocation and staffing (Hallinger, 2011:131). Succinctly stated, values shape the thinking and action of school principals as they create a culture of teaching and learning in schools.

2.4.2 Leadership focus

Leadership focus explores avenues through which leadership is linked to learning by indirect means that include vision, goals, academic structure, processes and people (Hallinger, 2011:131). Hallinger and Heck, cited in Hallinger (2011:133), identified vision and goal setting as the most important avenues through which the school principal indirectly impacts and affects teaching and learning. Vision and goals inspire learners and staff members to contribute and sacrifice their efforts to achieve the goals through a narrow range of intended outcomes. Leadership focus also emphasises that learner achievement can be improved through creating enabling leadership structures in the school so as to improve the organisational climate of the school. The organisational structure of the school must have a clear and well defined hierarchy of authority with specific job functions. These structures enable the school principal to indirectly impact on achievement through collaborative leadership (Hallinger, 2005:136).

The leadership for learning model also emphasises, as its focus, that research findings indicate that the problems of learner achievement cannot be solved only by the school leadership but by the successful implementation of the process of change for improved effectiveness in learning. Systematic and planned change impacts positively on shaping and enhancing the culture of teaching and learning in schools. Capacity building in
leadership is focused on human resource training and development. Hallinger (2011:133) states that the school principal’s support for professional development of educators yields positive results on improving learner performance.

### 2.4.3 The context for leadership

The school context plays a pivotal role in determining the effectiveness of leadership in schools. Each school has a unique culture, climate, environment and different features such as staff characteristics, hierarchy, availability of resources and work relationships that affect leadership practices (Hallinger, 2011:135). Different leadership styles, which include situational and contingency leadership styles, are relevant to specific contexts with specific situations. The ‘one size fits all’ leadership approach fails to take into cognisance the contextual differences in which schools exist (Leithwood et al., 2008:518).

### 2.4.4 Shared leadership

Although school principals play a pivotal role in influencing learners’ outcome, the input of school principals’ leadership is achieved through the co-operation and co-ordination of the input of all the stakeholders in the schools. For that reason, the school principal should create strategies of involving others in making collective decisions. The strategies may include voting, forming a quorum, consensus, decision making and delegation (Hallinger, 2011: 137).

### 2.5 Transformational leadership

Closely associated to instructional leadership is the concept of transformational leadership which is central to improving learner performance within times of dynamism as associated with technological developments. The transformational leadership model as developed by Leithwood during the 1990s represents the instructional leadership dimension of managing the instructional programme as demanded by societal change (Hallinger, 2003:335). The model consists of seven components, namely individual support, shared goals, vision, intellectual stimulation, culture building, rewarding high expectations and modelling.
In contrast to instructional leadership per se which portrays the principal as orchestrating teaching and learning improvements in the school, transformational leadership includes collaboration in the leadership of teaching and learning (Day et al., 2001:49). It presupposes a leading-from-the-middle approach from the educational leader based on a strong people-oriented arrangement to ensure staff commitment. Transformational leadership seeks to create a climate which increases the commitment of staff members to seeing the link between what they are accomplishing and the vision of the school. Based on transformational leadership principles, the cultivation of the culture of effective teaching and learning is the cornerstone to achieving quality results in the Grade 12 final examination.

2.6 LEADERSHIP MODELS AND LEARNER PERFORMANCE

Research findings indicate that the school principal plays a pivotal role in ensuring that effective teaching and learning take place in the school. This is done by improving the culture of teaching and learning and by so doing creating quality education in schools (Kruger, 2003:206). Quality management of instructional programmes by the instructional leader is the key aspect in creating conducive conditions that promote a sound culture of teaching and learning which ensures the production of quality results such as the Grade 12 final examination results. School effectiveness studies, emanating from research, put emphasis on the influence exerted by the school principal on the efficiency and success of schools.

Quality teaching and learning is the path to unlocking excellence in creating a sound culture of teaching and learning (Kruger, 2003:206). Findly and Findly cited in Marishane and Botha (2011:86) state that, if a school has been effective, or achieves quality results, it will be attributed to the instructional leadership of the school principal. Research findings support that school principals play a vital role in creating an environment that characterises efficient schools. In order for school principals to achieve the goal of improving learner performance in the Grade 12 final examination, they have to formulate contextualised school visions and manage the instructional programmes properly. These two functions relating to vision conceptualisation and instructional programme management are vital in improving learner performance and are discussed next.
2.6.1 Vision, goals and mission statement

All the models of instructional leadership put emphasis on school vision and goals as the foundation for improving learner performance. Hallinger (2011:136) points out that the formulation of a focused vision and the setting of clear goals creates the foundation for other functions of the school principal to be implemented successfully. Vision gives direction on how to move the school towards attainment of desired goals. Marishane and Botha (2011:28) assert that the school vision serves as a compass point that shows the predetermined destination and the direction the school principal and followers will take to arrive at their destination. The leadership vision provides answers, direction and solutions to problems affecting underperforming township schools. In order to have a focused vision and clear goals, the school principal must be visionary and see beyond the horizon (Marishane & Botha, 2011:48). Being visionary can be likened to whale hunting where the watchman directs the skippers of the whale boat in the direction where the whales are. In this case the watchman is the person with the sharpest eyes and the quality of his vision determines the failure or success of the crew. Similarly, the school principal’s quality of vision determines the success or failure by learners to achieve quality results. A school principal without a vision is just like a person looking for direction without a compass point. In short, the success of the school to reach its goal of obtaining more bachelor passes depends on the quality of the school principal’s vision.

Transforming the school from its present state to the desired status the school must have a clear strategic plan. Davidoff and Lazarus cited in Botha et al. (2011:18) define strategic planning as a rational process of building the school vision, mission and goal setting pursued by schools to improve the quality of learning. Waltuck (2005:38) points out that strategic planning involves developing a sense of where we are and a sense of where we want to be. Strategic planning is a long term plan through which the school visions its future and procedures set out to achieve school goals. The school vision should reflect the desired state of the school and the process to achieve this state.

Building the school vision is a shared leadership responsibility carried out by all stakeholders of the school. Including all stakeholders develops a sense of ownership of the vision which necessitates full support during the implementation stage (Botha et al,
A collaborative vision building inspires all members to work tirelessly towards achieving the school’s goals and objectives.

Articulating the vision implies the school principal sharing the school vision with different stakeholders during staff meetings, parents’ meetings and parents and learner consultations. A well drafted school vision, gathering dust in the school principal’s office without eloquent articulation and implementation is as good as not having a vision at all. Hallinger (2011:137) points out that a school vision comes into life only through the implementation of the school’s daily functions such as the management of the instructional programme on a daily basis.

2.6.2 Managing the instructional programme

Managing the school's instructional programme involves curriculum management, supervising teaching and learning, monitoring and evaluation of the curriculum. Curriculum management implies that the school principal must put in place what is needed for teaching and learning to take place which includes, among other things, staffing, class allocation, subject allocation, time-tabling, examination time-tabling, allocating furniture to classrooms and allocation of responsibilities and duties to heads of department and subjects heads (Kruger, 2003:209).

Supervision of the teaching and learning process by the school principal, deputy school principal, heads of department and subject heads is the cornerstone of improving learner performance in schools (Kruger, 2003:209). Supervision of learning and teaching involves functions such as formal and informal class visits. Class visits enable leaders to observe the teaching and learning process taking place in the classroom. It enables the school principal and the school management team to identify the strengths and weaknesses of individual educators and to plan specific developmental programmes for the concerned educators (Southworth, 2002:82).

Other functions of supervision include book inspection, file inspection for both educators and learners, and lesson plan inspection. This enables the subject heads and school principals to identify content coverage, depth of content, syllabus coverage and the amount and relevance of work given to learners by educators (Wedekind, 2013:36). Blasé
and Blasé cited in Kruger (2003:207) point out that those informal visits by the school principal have a positive impact on learner performance in the sense of securing the impression of leadership interest and concern for teaching and learning. Therefore, school principals should walk through classrooms and pop into classrooms to influence and confirm the sound culture of teaching and learning prevailing in the school. Good instructional leadership entails encouraging efficient use of instructional time, designing procedures to minimise disruptions and supervising the use of material and personnel.

Instructional leadership models put more emphasis on monitoring the curriculum and instruction as the core business of the school principal. In monitoring, the school principal has to make sure that measures put in place to ensure effective teaching and learning are adhered to. By monitoring, the school principal checks whether timetables are followed, planning is taking place, whether marking is accurate and consistent, if the assessment is of the right standard and the required cognitive levels are addressed, and if the assessment is in line with the annual teaching plan, vision and school goals (Marishane & Botha, 2011:110). The school leadership should focus on monitoring the implementation of the curriculum to ensure that curriculum standards are met. As primarily teachers with well-developed technical skills, school principals need to be practising teachers and need to know what is taking place in the classroom in order to be able to address the problems educators and learners encounter. School principals should observe educators positively and provide constructive feedback which aims at solving problems and improving instruction.

The school principal plays an essential function in establishing and sustaining a positive school climate that makes learning enjoyable and that confirms a sense of purpose which enables educators and learners to be supported (Kruger, 2003:10). To achieve their goals, school principals should strive to create and maintain a sound culture of teaching and learning through a collaborative approach of shared and transformational leadership which empowers others to take part in leadership responsibilities. The school principal should set the tone by creating a school culture that is human, mentally comfortable, has warm human relationships and has professional support in terms of resources and guidance (Patterson, 2004:75). School principals have to develop a collaborative environment that focuses on sustaining a continuous teacher relationship that creates a positive atmosphere in the classroom (Steyn, 2005:47).
2.7 EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT AND ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURES

As stated in paragraph 1.2.2, educational management and organisational structures are increasingly recognised as the primary players in the success of or failure by learners in the Grade 12 final examination. Many schools with good leadership are producing more pleasing results than schools with everything else but without good management. To this end school management is the key factor differentiating mediocrity from excellence. Van Deventer and Kruger (2003:66) state that management of teaching and learning comprises of planning, coordinating, delegating, leading, organising, policy making and controlling school functions and activities. In essence, management encompasses the four field processes of learning, organising, leading and controlling the effort of members and using all other organisational resources to achieve the intended goals and school vision. Educational management is the process through which school leaders and staff members seek to coordinate school activities and utilise the resources at their disposal in order to ensure various tasks and functions of the school are fulfilled as efficiently as possible (Marishane & Botha, 2011:85). The ability of the school manager to plan, organise, coordinate and distribute physical and human resources effectively results in preparing learners optimally for the Grade 12 final examination. In this regard management is the key to the success of the school in achieving quality results in final examination.

The management structures and leadership styles of a school play a crucial role in improving learners' performance in the Grade 12 final examination. Hoy and Sweetland (2001:298) determined two contrasting management structures, namely professional and bureaucratic structures. When the two structures are applied constructively, they result in improved learner performance at schools. The school should have a functional organisational structure which forms the boundaries within which the school carries out its functions effectively. The management structures should provide a structured environment which gives educators and learners a sense of security.

The main features of the bureaucratic structure are formalisation and centralisation (Hoy & Sweetland, 2001:297). Formalisation is the extent to which formal rules, policies and procedures are applied within the fixed boundaries established by the school. Hoy and Sweetland (2001:299) further state that centralisation focuses on the control of decision making in the school. Bureaucratic organisational structures are highly centralised and
decisions are made by the top management. Educators and learners operate within cohesive structures and fixed boundaries (Hoy & Sweetland, 2001:201).

As stated in paragraph 1.2.2, the school management should create enabling structures through a bureaucratic approach whereby rules and regulations are treated as guidelines and not tools to punish educators. The bureaucratic rules and procedures can be applied constructively by using well-executed schemes and schedules to control the work and behaviour of both educators and learners. Hoy and Sweetland (2001:298) assert that in an enabling structure rules and procedures are flexible guidelines that depict best practices which help followers to handle crises and unexpected events at work places. The bureaucratic structure provides a structured school environment which determines standards for newly appointed educators and which serve as functional guidelines for productive behaviour.

The professional organisational structure is a phenomenon which is personnel oriented. Zengele (2011:33) points out that the professional organisational structure rose from the professional nature of educators' work. It is based on the notion that educators execute their jobs professionally because their functions are based on the knowledge and skills acquired during training. Professional management structures advocate for decentralisation of power and authority to different levels of management in the structure. The school principal should create enabling procedures which foster trust among staff members and view problems as opportunities to learn new ideas. Enabling structures call for collaborative participation in problem solving (Hoy & Sweetland, 2001:298).

Enabling structures help school leaders and followers to work within the framework of authority, while maintaining their roles and responsibilities. School leaders should strive to create enabling structures which are flexible, cooperative and collaborative rather than cohesive, rigid and centralised. Professional structures allow educators to make decisions based on their knowledge and expertise and this provides an opportunity for educators to experience a sense of achievement and job satisfaction. Involve educators in decision making, and make them feel that they are important to the process of education and this will result in them putting more effort into their teaching and taking ownership of the task at hand.
Effective school management can be fully achieved when both bureaucratic and professional structures are applied effectively by the school. School leaders should strive to strike a balance between the bureaucratic organisational structure and the professional organisational structure in their management functions (Zengele, 2011:36). The four dimensions of sound management by Wilkins (2002:121), namely an inclusive collaborated structure, effective communication, integrated professional development and learning focused on leadership should be applied to maintain a balance between bureaucratic and professional structures.

2.8 LEARNERS

As was pointed out in paragraph 1.2.5, apart from well-prepared subject teachers, learner performance is also determined by learners’ commitment and dedication to their school work. A barrier to effective teaching and learning is a negative attitude of learners towards learning (Ntombela & Raymond, 2013:7). Effective teaching and learning requires dedication and effort from the learners. Negative attitudes from learners might emanate from stereotyping and learner differences such as race, class, gender, religion, ability and sexual orientation (Pienaar et al., 2013:8). The consequences of these negative attitudes often lead to labelling. It is difficult to recreate identity from a preconceived, labelled position (Exley, 2008:68).

Optimal preparation of learners to pass the Grade 12 final examination is fundamentally affected by the socio-economic status of many township schools. Many learners in township schools walk long distances to school and by the time they reach the school they are too tired to be responsive to any teaching and learning (Ntombela & Raymond, 2013:8). These geographical barriers are intensified by the lack of basic support and grim conditions within many township learners’ internal family environments. Van der Berg, cited in Pienaar (2013:25), reported that extreme poverty and hunger leads to psychological conditions that deny learners from acquiring knowledge due to reduced participation in the classroom. Many learners cannot afford to have lunch during their breaks and such conditions lead some learners to engage in improper associations with elderly people, peer learners and educators in order to raise money to cover their financial needs (Bloch, 2009:75). Such situations normally lead to teenage pregnancies and exposure to HIV and AIDS, failure, trauma and distress (DoE 1997:614). Kamper (2008:3)
states that township learners are often ill, are hungry, have improper clothing, and are always tired by the time they reach school due to the distance they walk to school. Kamper (2008:3) further points out that many township learners often transfer from school to school due to parents who are migrating in search of jobs. There are not enough health care facilities in townships and learners have to walk long distances to get treatment and medication and by so doing lose out on tuition time at school (Bloch, 2009:78). Many township learners do not have proper school uniforms, especially jerseys and blazers, because many parents cannot afford them due to their socio-economic status which results in these learners being cold during winter and prone to all kinds of illnesses. Due to these conditions many township learners have no motivation to study and have low achievement expectations. A factor intensifying these grim conditions are learners’ low language proficiency in the language of teaching and learning at school, which is English in most cases and which is learners’ second language (Ntombela & Raymond, 2013:10).

Norwich cited in Pienaar (2013:56) identified three learning channels according to which learners learn, namely visual, auditory and tactile–kinaesthetic. Learners differ in their preferences concerning learning styles and this might be attributed to their cultural background. This calls for teachers to take into account individual differences when planning learning and teaching activities. Teachers should create learning environments that cater for different learning abilities so that all learners can reach their full learning potential (Raymond, 2012:61).

With regard to these three channels of learning, Carol (2013:4) states that many learners in township schools are unable to perform extended writing, the ability that underlines the development of all further cognitive skills in different areas. According to Carol (2013:4), the National Schools Effective Study co-ordinated by JET Educational Services indicates that Grade 5 learners in historical black schools have an educational backlog equal to over two years’ worth of learning and these inequalities widens as their schooling continues. The study found that learners who receive love, care and security at home, who are exposed to English as the language of teaching and learning at home, who listen to English at home and those who read alone due to their parents’ example and encouragement, are significantly better prepared for school and for life in general than those who lack these home environments related support systems.
2.9 EDUCATORS

The introduction of new policies in the education system such as the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) resulted in the introduction of new topics and in change in the depth of subject content in other topics. Such changes in the curriculum should be accompanied by extended in-service training for educators on new topics and on the depth of the content rather than superficial three day workshops which focused on narrating the changes on the curriculum. Due to these curriculum changes which seem not to have an end in the South Africa education system, many educators lack subject knowledge. According to a study conducted by the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium in 2007, only 32% of South African mathematics educators have mastered the desirable subject content (Paton, 2013:4). These educators are mainly teaching in schools with good performance records. This implies that many learners, especially in township schools, are taught by educators who are not suitably qualified in terms of the subject knowledge. As a result many learners fail to obtain quality results in the Grade 12 final examination. This problem is further compounded by the fact that many of the practicing educators were trained during the apartheid era and the training tended to be rigid and authoritative (Ntombela & Raymond, 2013:9). No proper professional development programmers have been put in place to enable these educators to be responsive to changes which are consistently taking place in the South African education system.

Many of the educators in township schools are novice educators who need guidance and mentoring by experienced educators (Kamper, 2008:11). Many senior and experienced educators transfer from township schools to former model C schools because of poor working conditions in township schools. As a result many beginner educators find teaching posts in these poor schools without the availability of proper mentoring opportunities by skilled and experienced senior staff. The result is that many schools in South Africa, which mainly includes township schools, do not have a proper induction programme for beginner educators, hence many novice educators are left on their own to sink or swim in their careers (Black, 2001:47). Due to the lack of proper induction programmes many beginner educators practice ‘drill and kill’ teaching which affects learner performance and the quality of teaching and learning in the schools (Ntombela & Raymond 2013:9). Many township educators work in poor schools and as a result they have low learner expectations, low self-esteem and low motivation to work (Kamper, 2008:13). As such, all these factors
affect their performance in the classroom resulting in learners failing to obtain bachelor passes in the Grade 12 final examination.

Due to the deficit model of the apartheid era and other problems relating to the particularity of the specific family environment, many educators do not have the knowledge to support different cognitive, emotional, physical and psychological developmental needs of learners in the same classroom (Ntombela & Raymond, 2013:8). The apartheid model did not prepare educators to teach a range of learner abilities in order to include different skills from different environments and the model views those who cannot cope with the mainly cognitive academic learning load as incapable. Hugo and Miller cited in Ntombela and Raymond (2013:9) contend that the only way to achieve transformation in schools is through a proper and relevant teacher development programme which is sensitive to multiple intelligences with different cognitive strengths in humans and which relates to different ways of learning. In order to overcome the problem of a rigid and inappropriate teacher training programme as was carried out during the apartheid-era, a professional development programme for teachers should place the educator at the heart of the education system in order to be sensitized to multiple intelligences also with regard to teacher training itself (Moletsane, 2004: 203).

Many professional development programmes in the post-apartheid era did not materialize so there has been little transfer of knowledge, skills, and content from training programmes to classroom situations. This status quo remains because teachers’ professional development programmes are not contextualized to meet the contextual needs of individual educators and schools. Steyn and Van Niekerk (2012:44) contend that professional development is crucial in creating effective learning in schools and improving learner performance within context. Focusing on the development of human resources is the key to improving the quality of teaching and learning in schools. Clinical supervision and close monitoring are needed during teacher training so as to produce educators who are holistically equipped to teach effectively (Baloyi, 2011:176). In order for educators to teach effectively, their knowledge of their subject content must be on an appropriate level to ensure successful learning through well-planned facilitation. The key to unlocking excellence in township schools is the school principals’ passion for upliftment of the poor, the educators’ commitment and learners’ positive self-esteem and security at school.
2.10 THE INFLUENCE OF EDUCATIONAL LAW AND POLICY ON TEACHING AND LEARNING

In 1994 South Africa experienced dramatic and profound change in the governance of the country. This new political dispensation paved the way for the adoption of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996, as the supreme law of the country (Coetzee & Bray 2010:1). The new constitution brought transformation in the entire governmental system and provided the legal framework within which the democratic government would work to achieve reconciliation, reconstruction and freedom of all people (Coetzee & Bray, 2010:1).

The change in the political landscape and the adoption of the democratic Constitution of the Republic of South Africa brought transformation and democratic structures in the South African education system. The entire education system transformed from being discriminatory and for a minority to a single non-racial education system which takes into cognisance human diversity, dignity and equality. These fundamental changes transformed the entire educational ideologies, value system and ethos for schooling. In order to effect these changes, new laws and policies such as the South African Schools Act, Act 84 of 1996, the National Educational Policy Act, Act 27 of 1996, the South African Council for Educators Act, Act 31 of 2000, and many other education laws were adopted. These laws and policies provide government with action plans to attend to specific education issues. Coetzee and Bray (2009:3) defines educational law as a system of rules, norms and values that create order in the entire education system. These values and norms should be shared by the majority of people in the specific society. McMillan and Schumacher cited in Coetzee and Bray (2010:23) view policy as what the government intends to do in order to solve specific issues in the education system and situations. However, it should be noted that not all educational policies are made by government; some educational polices are formulated at provincial, district and school level.

Despite massive investment in education and dramatic changes in educational laws and policies, since 1994, massive disparities in learner performance still exist between township schools and former model C schools. The educational laws and policies should aim at an effective and efficient educational system that equips learners with skills and values to guarantee economic growth and increased opportunity for employment creation.
Why effective and efficient teaching and learning is not happening in all schools is due to the effect of educational laws and policies in different environments, which will be discussed in the ensuing paragraphs.

The South African Schools Act, Act 84 of 1996 allows for decentralization of power to school governing bodies (SGBs). The SGBs are invested with powers to govern public schools (Baloyi, 2011:95; Diamond, 2015:1). The decentralization of power to SGBs, entitles them to perform certain functions for the school (Diamond, 2015:5). The functions of the school governing body are stated in the South African Schools Act, in section 20(1). One of the functions of the SGB of a public school is to draw up the school budget in consultation with the parent community and set up school fees to be paid by parents if it is a school fees paying school (Diamond, 2015:31). Other functions include determining the language policy of the school, the admission policy for learners, adopting a code of conduct for learners and adopting the school’s constitution. A school’s school governing body has powers to recommend the appointment of educators and to deal with disciplinary cases of both learners and teachers (South African Schools Act, 84 of 1996).

The policy of decentralization of powers to the SGBs was a noble notion which resulted in stakeholders taking part in decision making and ownership taking concerning their schools and the teaching and learning provided to the learners in their schools (Diamond, 2015:18). However, this policy had its own challenges like any other policy promulgated by the Department of Basic Education. Some of the SGBs are not functioning to their full expectation because of a lack of skills and competency by parents who serve on the school governing bodies (Baloyi, 2011:95; Diamond, 2015:7). The main reasons for SGBs failures relate to a lack of proper training for serving members, low levels of education amongst parents and a general lack of technological and other network connections. Some more reasons which result in poor governance of public schools by school SGBs are a lack of financial skills amongst SGB members, poor communication skills and non-existent management skills, especially in township and rural-related schools (Bloch, 2009:91). Poor infrastructure in township and rural schools also hampers the effective performance of SGBs (Mojela & Thwala, 2014:1255). Baloyi (2011:95) states that some of the members of school governing bodies do not have enough time to engage in school matters. Some of the SGB members do not have transport to attend meetings which results in high absenteeism during SGB meetings where important, strategic management
related discussions must be made (Diamond, 2015:10). The ineffective governance of township schools by their SGBs results in poor performance by many township learners in the Grade 12 final examination (Baloyi, 2011:60).

In 1997 outcome based education (OBE) was introduced to replace the apartheid education curriculum. The aim with OBE was to provide a unified curriculum across the country in order to reduce inequalities in the provision of education to all learners. Under the OBE dispensation all learners wrote the same examination in all provinces (Bloch, 2009:114). Like any other education policy, the OBE policy had its own unintended consequences. One of the challenges of the outcome OBE curriculum was the level of the language used, which was too complicated for teachers and learners (Baloyi, 2011:108). It used many foreign technical terms which made it difficult for teachers to convey their messages and for learners to understand these messages.

Related to the complexity of the OBE curriculum was insufficient training to prepare educators for the OBE curriculum (Bloch, 2009:114). Training was in the form of in-service workshops which took a period of less than three days to cover the entire curriculum (Baloyi, 2011:109). Some of the facilitators were ill-prepared and inadequately trained to train the educators. Bloch (2009: 114) described the workshops as form-filling and signing of the register to show compliance of attendance.

Effective implementation of the outcomes based education curriculum was further hampered by insufficient support resources (Mojela & Thwala, 2014:1254). Block (2009:114) points out that outcomes based education requires top quality human and other resources and sufficient infrastructure for it to be effective. The former white schools were in a better position to implement OBE because they had sufficient funding possibilities, adequate physical infrastructure and able human resources compared to black schools. As a result many township and rural schools found the implementation of OBE a great challenge (Baloyi, 2011: 110). This created a difference in the provision of education between the schools with ample and those with meager resources and it resulted in poor learner performance by learners from black schools in their Grade 12 final examination.
Another unintended result of OBE was that it produced learners who were not competent in reading and writing (Bloch, 2009:115). Baloyi (2011:108) argues that OBE lacked focus on the foundations of learning where learners should focus on reading, counting and writing in order to be able to continue with advanced skill empowerment. In this regard Baloyi (2011: 109) points out that, basic to all human related endeavour, learners should be able to read and write first so that they can comprehend the concepts they are taught in order to apply these advanced concepts in global, knowledge-based societies.

Due to its many weaknesses the OBE curriculum underwent review and it finally changed to the National Curriculum Statement (Baloyi, 2011:109). However, there is much concern that the pass mark requirement set for the National Senior Certificate (NSC), namely achieving an average of only 30%, set low standards and expectations (Wedekind, 2013:1). The NSC pass mark of 30% signals that learners have only mastered one third of the subject content they are supposed to know (Wedekind, 2013:1). This sets low standards and low expectations among learners and as a result many of the learners struggle to cope with university work and with the basic skills and learning demands required in general within the labour market (Bloch, 2009:61). Good achievement in the Grade 12 examination is a realistic indicator of success in higher education programmes and in the labour market in general (Wedekind, 2013:5). Many learners at township schools are pre-occupied only with passing Matric not taking into consideration the quality of their passes (Wedekind, 2013:2). As a result of low expectations set by the National Senior Certification Body, many learners fail to achieve bachelor passes in the Grade 12 final examination and are ill-prepared for basic employment in the labour market. The result is a society with high rates of unemployment while an acute scarcity of crucial skills is encountered in the labour market.

A low pass mark requirement in the NSC is further compounded by the National Policy pertaining to the Programme and Promotion Requirements of the National Curriculum Statement Grade 1-12 which sets the school based assessment mark to be 40% and examination 60% for Senior Phase, Grades 7-9 (Wedekind, 2013:1). As a result of this assessment system arrangement many learners in the lower grades find themselves passing at the end of the year before they write the final examination. Many learners therefore do not care to prepare for the year-end examination which defeats the purpose of assessing required outcomes. Many Grade 9 learners are progressed to high school
without being fully prepared for high school, hence the snowballing effect of poor performance in the Grade 12 final examination.

Many learners are not fully prepared for the Grade 12 final examination because the National Senior Certificate is no longer serving the purpose it was intended at its inception in 2006. The intention of the NSC was to cater for a relatively smaller segment of learner population who choose the academic pathway leading to university (Wedekind, 2013:3). The NSC articulated a post-compulsory further education and training comprising of schools that focused on academic pursuits, schools that focused on vocational training and schools that focused on work-based learning (Wedekind, 2015:7). The intention of the policy was that the learners would complete Grade 9 and choose one of the three pathways of academic, vocational, or direct work-based knowledge and skills.

The idea of Grade 9 being an exit point never materialized. Colleges were not expanded and the National Certificate vocational was not developed as envisaged by the policy makers of the NSC. The academic pathway remained the only alternative the majority of Grade 9s had as their next step (Wedekind, 2015:10). Matric remained the only exit point and the Grade 12 final examination has to perform the function it was not designed for. Many learners do not perform well in the Grade 12 final examination because they had no other option but to take this academically inclined pathway. Bloch (2009:61) emphasises that many school learners in the current education system are not adequately prepared for higher education due to interest, ability and personality that do not relate to what is required of higher education. The schooling system is therefore not preparing the majority of learners according to their interests and abilities (Wedekind, 2015:12). If the current purpose of the NSC is to channel all learners into universities, the pass mark should be raised to a bachelors pass because that is the minimum entry requirement for universities. Wedekind (2015:28) writes that there is need to carefully reconsider the purpose of the qualification and adjust the categories of pass marks accordingly.

Apart from the exclusively academically inclined pathway for school entrants, another contributing factor towards poor performance by Grade 12 learners in their final examination is the language policy. Ntombela and Raymond (2013:7) contend that the language of teaching and learning in many township schools which is English, is a second language for the township learners. Many learners fail to express themselves fully in the
examination because the examination is not in their mother tongue. To complicate matter, learners in Grade 1 to 3 are taught in their mother tongue as the language of teaching and learning. They have to switch to English in Grade 4 and this puts them at a disadvantage because they are now using a second language as the language of teaching and learning (Wolhunter, 2010:272). With this arrangement these learners are automatically placed in a position of being three years behind their peers who started using English as the language of teaching and learning in Grade 1. This situation is, however, exacerbated by parents who prefer their children to be taught through the medium of English for reasons related to global competitiveness and the world of work.

Many black South African children are faced with a culture dilemma because the home and school cultures are different and they have to choose between the two. Parents at home communicate in their mother tongue and children communicate in the language of teaching and learning which is English (Landsberg & Kruger, 2011:40). Many parents are not proficient in the language of teaching and learning; as a result they cannot assist their children with homework. This causes frustration, anger and low self-esteem among parents who develop a negative attitude towards schooling (Landsberg & Kruger, 2011:41).

2.11 THE CULTURE OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN TOWNSHIP SCHOOLS

Many schools in South Africa are not providing quality education to learners as envisaged by the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Bloch, 2009:59). The culture of effective teaching and learning in township schools is being affected by a number of factors. Learning as it takes place in South African schools, the conditions in township schools affecting effective teaching and learning and the way in which some schools in impoverished areas manage to produce good results regardless of hampering conditions, are elicited next. This discussion is followed by a final focus on leadership qualities needed to turn around township schools.

2.11.1 Learning as experienced in South African schools

The attainment of democracy in 1994 democratized the South African education from a minority segregated education system to a single unified system. Since the attainment of
democracy, the South African education system has undergone dramatic changes in order to address the inequalities brought about by the apartheid system (Mafora, 2013:34; Pretorius, 2010:136). Despite all the efforts by government to transform the education system since 1994, evidence points to the fact that inequalities still exist in the South African education system (Baloyi 2011:11; Bloch 2009:59). The current education system perpetuates and reproduces inequalities which some authors believe to be solely the result of the apartheid education system arrangement (Bloch, 2001:59; Mafora, 2013:38). The two-tier education system of “haves” and “have nots” still exists in the South African education system with the latter comprising the majority of learners representing black learners in township schools with parents being illiterate and unemployed and the “have” minority representing learners in former Model C schools with parents from all races being employed and literate, (Baloyi 2011:11). Bloch (2009:58) states that impoverished schools channel learners into society without skills or qualifications and leave them with continued disadvantages when compared to the minority fellow South Africans in former Model C schools.

Regardless of the democratic dispensation since 1994 there are two parallel systems of education running concurrently under the unified system of education. The education system has produced two distinct types of schools, the poor schools in the sense of disabling learner potential and the rich schools empowering learners for adulthood. Bloch (2009:59) has referred to these poor schools in the townships as ‘sinkholes’ because they deprive and exclude learners from receiving quality education. These poor schools in townships and rural areas form the second system of education trapped in the survivalist second economy (Bloch, 2009:59; Van der Merwe, 2011:772). The present education system fails to end this two tier character of provisioning, and has in fact intensified the exclusion of marginalized poor learners from quality education (Van der Merwe, 2011:774). Bloch (2009:58) refers to the current South African education system as a national disaster because the system is not optimally preparing learners for responsible citizenship by producing quality education resulting in positive outcomes with the Grade 12 final examination. Learners’ performance in regional and international testing serves as evidence of this ill-preparedness of learner’s to make use of the opportunities after school within the knowledge-based society. South African learners are the worst performers in Mathematics and Mathematical Literacy both internationally and regionally (Bloch, 2009:58).
Factors contributing to the continuance of inequalities between township schools and former Model C schools are the socio-economic status of the school and the learner, the language of teaching and learning, the funding policy in terms of parents’ contributions to the school fund, or the lack thereof, and the family background of many learners who do not receive the parental care and motivation crucial for progress in school.

According to a study by Taylor and Yu (2009) learners’ socio-economic status is the determinant factor for poor learners’ performance in township schools (Baloyi, 2011:22). Van der Merwe (2011:774) refers to the socio-economic status of learners as the social capital available to them and defines social capital as the total of multiple support resources available to the learner. If these resources are utilized effectively, they result in improved learner performance. Taylor and Yu (2009:36) in their study on learner performance variations between former Model C schools and township schools concluded that the school’s socio-economic status is a major determinant of the disparities in learner performance between poor and rich schools. Poor family backgrounds in terms of multiple resource challenges that are accompanied by inappropriate sexual relations, non-existent home support, violence and the general presence of disintegrated families are compounded by the school’s poor socio-economic status which comprehensively represent the challenges disadvantaged schools have always faced (Baloyi, 2011:23; Van der Merwe, 2011:773). The school’s and the learners’ socio-economic status determine learner performance in the Grade 12 final examination. Conducive socio-economic conditions of former Model C schools, due to parental concern for their children’s well-being and parental contributions to the school’s well-being are the main determinants of learners’ ability to progress, which, where not available, results in sustained inequity in the South African education system.

Van der Berg (2008:22) points out that poverty impacts negatively on learner performance in township schools. Poverty in the second economy reduces the learners’ ability to learn and in some cases excludes the learners from school before they reach the school’s exit points (Bloch, 2011:59). Poverty prevents township learners from accessing quality education which the minority learners get from the former Model C schools (Mafura, 2013:39). Baloyi (2011:24) attributes the cause of poor learner performance in black schools in the Grade 12 final examination to the dysfunctional state of those schools. It should be noted, however, that commendable effort has been made since 1994 in trying to
provide resources to black schools to try and counter inequalities in the education system (Pretorius, 2010:132). However, sufficient resources alone cannot improve the quality of education provisioning. The solution lies in the planned and effective use of resources, improving home relations, coupled with constructive school leadership for motivated teaching and learning (Van der Merwe, 2011:771).

The language of teaching and learning perpetuates and reinforces the inequalities in the South African education system. Although the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996, has 11 official languages, only English is increasingly being used as the language of instruction after Grade 4 (Pretorius, 2010:119). Wolhunter (2010:269) points out that failure to develop and empower indigenous languages has resulted in a two tier system of education further perpetuating existing inequalities in education and the labour market. English is an internationally recognized language and the labour market in South Africa values English, hence the continued use of English as a language of teaching and learning (Wolhunter, 2010:272). The use of English as language of teaching and learning has a negative impact on learner performance in township schools because English is the second language to the majority of township learners (Baloyi, 2011:25; Mafora, 2013:39). The tendency by township educators for code switching by using different languages interchangeably suggests that the language of teaching and learning matters most for learners to understand concepts. For many learners in township schools who do not perform well in their Grade 12 final examination, the reason does not mainly relate to weak capabilities but to not comprehending the instruction given in the language of teaching and learning (Mafora, 2013:39). If Afrikaans speaking learners are taught in Afrikaans up to tertiary level because Afrikaans has reached the level of a scientifically sophisticated language, the demand is there to develop African languages accordingly in order for mother tongue speakers of African languages to be taught in their mother tongue too, including tertiary level tuition (Baloyi, 2011:143).

Educator quality is viewed as one of the factors contributing to disparities in learner performance in the South African education system. Educator quality can be viewed as the ability to produce high standards of work and taking full responsibility of the class (Baloyi, 2011:115). Educator quality is viewed as the teacher having appropriate subject content, having knowledge and skills of facilitating content effectively, having talent in the art of classroom practice and the passion to always put the wellbeing of learners first (Baloyi,
2011:117). Considered comprehensively good educators have competencies in the language of instruction, they care for learners, they adapt to different learning environments, they recognize learners’ needs, they have the ability to lower the teaching content to the level of the learners, and they create an effective teaching environment Baloyi (2011:117).

Mafora (2013:34) points out that there are still inequalities in the content delivery at former white and black schools resulting into differences in learner performances in former white schools and former black schools. Baloyi (2011:144) argues that educators at former white schools have better subject and pedagogical content when compared to former black schools. This is attributed to high professionalism accompanied by positive work ethics possessed by many educators at former white schools. Many of the educators at former white schools have improved their qualifications after their initial teacher training. Apart from the intrinsic motivation for professional development, this qualification improvement is also due to accessibility to universities found in towns. Bloch (2009:101) pointed out another factor which is teacher training. The move to take teacher training exclusively to university made it inaccessible for the impoverished due to the cost involved with university training as opposed to college training. The result is that many teachers who are teaching in impoverished areas lack opportunities for professional development in order to improve their teaching abilities.

The policy of rationalization and equalization of teachers across race groups resulted in many educators resigning from the teaching fraternity in most former white schools (Bloch, 2009:101). Due to better working conditions at former white schools, many experienced teachers moved from former black schools to take up posts left vacant by educators who resigned due to rationalization and equalization in 1996 and 1997. This intensified the unequal distribution of quality educators in the South African education system. As a result many Grade 12 learners in township schools are not fully prepared to write the final school examination.

Many policies have been developed in the education sector since the dawn of democracy in 1994 (Mafora, 2013:34). The executions and implementation of educational policies is one of the challenges facing the South African education system. Failure by the education authorities to successfully implement policies has led to continued learner performance
disparities between the former white schools and the black schools (Bloch, 2011:102). The de-racialization and desegregation of all public schools opened doors for the black learners to enroll in former white schools. Large numbers of learners from the middle-class economy, who could afford it, moved to the former white schools (Van der Merwe, 2011:771). Although the policy of desegregation was a milestone in restructuring the education system in South Africa, it has its own limitations and negative consequences (Baloyi, 2011:92). The movement of black middle-class learners from black schools to former white schools created class inequalities in education. The impoverished who could not afford to pay school fees remained trapped in the dysfunctional township schools. Baloyi (2011:143) points out that inequality in education attainment manifests itself currently along classes as opposed to exclusively racial lines which were experienced before de-racialization.

One of the remarkable policies developed by the government which appeals mostly to the poor is the National Norms and Standards for school funding. As a result of this policy, poor schools were declared no–fee schools. This means, parents of learners attending these schools are not paying school fees. The South African Schools Act, Act 84 of 1996, gives rights to SGBs to determine school fees for schools in quintiles 4 and 5 to compensate for the substantially less government subsidy allocated to quintile 4 and 5 schools. Many parents of learners attending quintile 4 and 5 schools are affluent parents that can afford to pay high school fees charged by school governing bodies (Mafora, 2013:39), however, the number of learners discharged from paying school fees at former Model C schools is growing exponentially yearly. Nevertheless, high school fees coupled with huge sums of money from fundraising activities sustain inequalities in the South African education system. The generous government allocations which schools in quintile 1, 2 and 3 receive as opposed to the almost non-existent allocations to quintile 4 and 5 schools cannot match the amount of money raised by former model C schools through school fees and fundraising (Baloyi, 2011:99). The result is that township schools do not have the finances to arrange for adequate human and physical resources in order to ensure quality education within context.

Quality education still eludes many South African schools 20 years after the dawn of democracy. The socio-economic factors of the school and learners, educator quality, the language of teaching and learning, and school policies perpetuate and reinforce
inequalities in the education system. Prior to desegregation of the education system these inequalities manifested themselves along racial lines. Given the current situation, these inequalities appear along class lines. The fact however remains that quality education is still not available for all learners due to a complexity of reasons including political agendas and family background conditions which determine learner interest, abilities and aptitudes.

2.11.2 Conditions in township schools

The apartheid education system of segregation contributed to the inequalities in education along racial lines between the blacks and whites. Pretorius (2010:117) points out that the education system during the apartheid regime was racially and ethnically segregated. The radical educational transformations since 1994 yielded positive results in some instances but failed to completely eradicate inequalities in education provision between the poor and the rich. In fact, the education system today perpetuates and reinforces the inequalities sustained by apartheid, however, currently along class lines (Bloch, 2009:58). The effects of educational inequalities in townships and rural areas are so devastating that Bloch (2009:58) describes these schools as dysfunctional disaster zones. This paragraph explores the conditions in township and rural-related schools, as a result of the current education system and the apartheid regime. The main focus is on parents of learners in township schools, the learners themselves, violence in the township environment, service provisioning, infrastructure and educational policies.

Parents of learners in township schools are trapped in a survivalist economy, and they are not able to escape due to financial and skills constraints. Bloch (2009:59) points out that these parents are trapped in the second economy which is characterized by unemployment and severe poverty. The parents are hopelessly observing a poverty cycle repeating itself with their children attending township schools. The parents are living in devastating poverty left by the legacy of apartheid and due to other limiting personal situations (Diamond, 2015:6). Many of these parents live in houses built by the government through the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP). Some of the parents migrated from rural areas to informal settlements in peri-urban areas in their plight for possible employment (Bloch, 2009:75). Many of the parents survive on social grants, especially pensions and child grants (Bloch, 2009:75). Some of the parents survive on informal trading, selling all kinds of consumables such as fruits, vegetables and sweets.
Taverns and tuck-shops are a common feature in the township communities. Many of the parents cannot afford to pay water and electricity bills, or to buy food, school uniforms and school stationery for their children (Kamper, 2008:2; Bloch, 2009:75).

Parents in township schools struggle to assist their children in educational work because they were excluded from attaining quality education by the racially segregated education system and due to limiting personal situations. The education levels of parents have an impact on learner performance. In this regard Bloch (2009:77) points to statistics about children of parents with educational levels lower than that of Grade 10, of which only 30% of them in general attains matric. This educational attainment increases to 56% if at least one parent has Grade 10 or 11. This is again increased to 74% if the parents have matric whereas 84% of learners attain matric if parents have a degree (Bloch, 2009:77). The majority of parents in township schools have a possible maximum educational attainment of Grade 10. The educational attainment, with its explicit influence on the socio-economic status of parents in township schools impacts negatively on learner performance in the Grade 12 final examination.

The current education system affects conditions applying to township learners negatively. Bloch (2009:154) contends that the majority of township schools are dysfunctional because they are failing to provide equality education to poor learners. The education system is reinforcing and reproducing the social and economic marginalization of impoverished and vulnerable poor learners (Bloch, 2009:58; Mafora 2013:39). Bloch (2009:59) refers to the education system in township schools as a “sinkhole” because the system is excluding these learners from getting quality education which the minority of South African learners is getting from former Model C schools. The system is excluding learners from schools, colleges and universities which could possibly have given them better futures. The current education system is therefore channeling township learners to a second economy with fewer prospects of a bright future (Bloch, 2009:11). The township schools doom the hopes and aspirations of learners and blocks them from accessing opportunities that can brighten their future. Ironically, the very system which is supposed to empower impoverished learners to better their future is blocking them from developing their full potential. These are the conditions which township learners are experiencing in the current education system.
Many of the township learners are not prepared to learn by the time they reach the school because of reasons relating to the negative conditions prevailing within their homes (Baloyi 2011:69; Bloch, 2009:75; Van der Merwe, 2011:773). Apart from the lack of emotional support at home very few of the learners arrive at school with nourishing food and a proper school uniform. Many of the learners walk long distances to school and by the time they arrive they are too tired to fully participate meaningfully in the teaching and learning process. Even when these children manage to get into the classroom, many of them are not equipped with the basic learning resources necessary for teaching and learning because many learners in township schools share basic resources such as pencils, pens, rubbers and rulers (Baloyi, 2011:44). Against the background of the importance of good nutrition for proper progress, many of the learners in impoverished schools present themselves at school on an empty stomach because of a total lack of food at home. Bloch (2009:77) points out that these learners are nutritionally challenged and that they do not have the ability to concentrate during the teaching and learning process. Van der Merwe (2011:778) confirms that learners participate fully in the learning process only after having their daily meal as provided by the national feeding scheme at school. The extent of poverty in township schools is such that the meal learners get at school, provided by the feeding scheme, is for many learners, the only meal they have for the whole day.

Poor health conditions in the external environments of township schools intensify the conditions influencing successful learning negatively. Bloch (2009:78) identified the following as diseases of poverty, namely malnutrition, fetal alcohol syndrome and intestinal worms. Intestinal worms are very common in poverty stricken areas such as rural areas and informal settlements. These worms cause discomfort, tiredness and a total lack of concentration by learners in class. These conditions confirm that learners in township schools present themselves to school with major problems to overcome before they start thinking about school work (Bloch, 2009:79). The HIV/AIDS pandemic is also directly or indirectly affecting learners in former black schools. Some learners act as heads of their families at an early age after losing their parents. They have to face the challenges of feeding the family and at the same time deal with school work. Bloch (2009:79) points out that these conditions expose girls to sugar daddies and drug abuse which finally leads to school dropout. Some children find themselves open to the drug trade and gangsterism as a way of raising money.
One of the challenges facing many impoverished learners is the impact of role models. The role models in many township schools are gangsters who are driving fancy cars with radios playing loudly. They are wearing designer labels, gold chains and expensive gold watches (Bloch, 2009:76). This creates a wrong impression on township learners who end up thinking that the only way to get rich is through crime. Under such circumstances it becomes hard to convince learners that education is the qualitative route to success (Bloch, 2009:76). Some learners who are members of gangs bring violence to schools resulting in a situation in which the culture of violence in the township communities has been introduced into schools. There are reports of learners attacking fellow learners, and teachers and school principals having weapons such as knives to protect themselves. Schools are no longer safe places for many learners in South Africa. Some schools of thought argue that the culture of violence in our schools was inherited from mass protests of learners and students during the struggle for democracy (Mafora, 2013:41). The mass protest by students and learners created a culture of lawlessness in schools and the remnants are still present in schools. This was evidenced through the mass destruction and violent protests by many university students across the country by the end of 2015 and again at the end of 2016. Many students think that the only way of solving problems is through violence.

Pretorius (2010:120) states that the 2001 report on the school register of needs confirms that the historical white schools remain better resourced than the former black schools, despite the progress made in the infrastructure development since 1994. The 2007 update on the school register of needs confirms that there are still challenges in the infrastructure development in schools (Mojela & Thwala, 2014:1254). Pretorius (2010:121) put it differently by saying that although the report concluded that 74% of schools are in good condition, there is still a substantial backlog in infrastructure development. Schools built by communities using mud still exist (Bloch, 2009:81). Such schools are in danger of collapsing during heavy rains or storms. Bloch (2009:81) witnessed that some plastic toilets and pit latrines still remain in some rural schools which confirm that there are still many areas which experience challenges in infrastructure provisioning in the South African educational system. Although the government increased the number of schools and the number of classrooms in schools, overcrowding still remains in township schools (Pretorius, 2010:121). Bloch (2009:82) states that 79% of schools have no library facilities and 60% of secondary schools have no laboratory facilities, 31% depend on borehole
water and 61% of schools use the bucket system and pit latrines without proper sewage systems. The majority of these schools are located in rural areas and informal settlements (Mojela & Thwala, 2014:1254). All these factors contribute towards poor learner performance in the Grade 12 final examination.

The conditions in township schools are not conducive for effective teaching and learning (Mojela & Thwala, 2014:1255). Bloch (2009:82) writes that impoverished schools are not inviting and appealing to both teachers and learners. Pretorius (2010:120) adds that the conditions of the infrastructure are not suitable for occupation. However, it should be noted that not all township schools are in this bad state and the government has made recommendable progress in addressing the disparities between the former white schools and former black schools (Mojela & Thwala, 2014:1256). The government has tried to reduce the level and magnitude of the disparities but it has not yet completely eradicated the disparities. Some schools in impoverished areas still need improvement (Mojela & Thwala, 2014:1255).

2.11.3 Pockets of excellence in township schools

Despite economic hardships, some township and rural schools are producing quality results in their Grade 12 final examination (Bloch, 2009:132; Kamper, 2008:1; Van der Merwe, 2011:773). The research by Van der Merwe (2011:771) in KwaZulu Natal province is an indication that schools in poverty stricken areas can provide quality education to learners through ethics of being and doing by the school principal and educators. Kamper (2008:01) in his investigation into the role of leadership in high-poverty schools finds that some impoverished schools are producing quality results through effective leadership. More recently, Tlhabye (2016:9) writes that one secondary school in Mamelodi Township has earned itself much needed renovation thanks to a 100% academic record by its 2015 matriculants. This is one of the two secondary schools in Mamelodi Township which achieved a 100% matric pass rate record in 2015. Another school in Hamanskraal Township also achieved a 100% pass rate. This is testimony that some township schools are getting it right.

It is very important to acknowledge what the government has done since 1994, which is now helping some schools in impoverished areas to improve the quality of teaching and
learning. The policy of compulsory education from seven years to the completion of grade 9 and the policy of no fee-schools has made education accessible to all learners in South Africa and they are now more than 12 million learners in schools today (Bloch, 2011:125). Another major achievement was the unification and amalgamation of the different racially segregated systems of education into a single national department of education. This saw all children doing the same curriculum across the country and writing the same examination in Grade 12. The provision of teaching and learning materials, infrastructure development and access to education have improved remarkably in some impoverished schools due to the policy of pro-poor school funding (Bloch, 2009:125).

A significant achievement has been noted in the matric pass rate since 1994 (Bloch, 2011:126). The following are the national increases of the matric pass rate over the years: 1994: 55%, 2003: 55%, 2008: 63% (Bloch, 2009:126). The Minister of Basic Education, Angie Motshekga announced the 2015 matric pass rate of 70.7%. The trend shows that the matric pass rate has improved over the years. However, what matters most is the quality of passes which allow learners access to universities and colleges. The following are university endorsements; 1994: 18%, 2003: 19%, 2006: 16%, 2008: 20% (Bloch, 2011:126). The 2015 university endorsement, as announced by Angie Motshekga on the 5th of January 2016 on national television was 33%. These statistics show that there is an improvement in the provision of quality education to South African learners.

The steady improvement in matric and university endorsements has been a result of some of the township schools which have defied their socio-economic status by improving their matric pass rate. (Bloch, 2009:134, Kamper, 2008:10). Although Kamper (2008:2) described the impoverished schools as “struggling” and “sinking” due to their impoverishment, there are some notable exceptions as noted by Van der Merwe (2011:772). These schools have achieved better results through principals’ leadership abilities and collaboration from members of staff (Mafora, 2013:38). Supplementing resources, effective leadership, motivated staff, teamwork, teaching of moral values, relevant programmes of parental involvement and rendering service to the community were identified by Van der Merwe (2011:778) as factors which are making these schools providing quality education to learners in township schools and rural areas.
Kamper (2008:8) emphasises the importance of ensuring that learners’ physical wellbeing is maintained through the provision of food and health care. All school principals investigated by Kamper (2008:8) took learners’ food security as a top priority. As stated earlier, learners can fully participate in meaningful learning only if they are well fed (Van der Merwe, 2011:778). The feeding scheme at all no-fee schools as provided by the government is playing a significant role in improving learner performance in the Grade 12 final examination. The availability of adequate human and physical resources is a determinant factor in the provisioning of quality education in impoverished schools. Vigorous fundraising activities and sourcing of donations have helped some township schools to provide quality education to learners (Van der Merwe, 2011:778).

Effective leadership is another determinant factor in the provision of quality education to some township schools that are getting it right (Bloch 2009:136; Kamper 2008:12; Van der Merwe, 2011:778). The school principals’ leadership qualities such as approachability, compassion, empowering staff, accommodating everyone and transparency have helped township schools to provide equality education to learners (Mafora, 2013:38). Kamper (2008:3) also confirms that invitational leadership has contributed to improved learner performance in schools. Bloch (2011:141) points out that some school principals achieved their goals of providing quality education by attending leadership courses such as those organized by the University of the Witwatersrand Department of Education. It is important that school principals should attend refresher courses on leadership so that they are abreast with all the developments in the educational fraternity.

Van der Merwe (2011:780) identified teacher quality as a factor which helped to improve the provision of quality education to learners in townships and rural areas. Educators were determined and they walked the proverbial extra mile by engaging learners during Saturdays and holidays (Kamper 2008:9). These educators view teaching as a calling and their work as God given, to save the impoverished learners and lead them to a better life (Van der Merwe, 2011:780). Kamper (2011:9) adds on by saying that teachers know their work and acknowledge that learners’ progress depends on monitoring by educators and those in authority.

The teaching of moral values to learners contributed significantly to improving learner performance in impoverished schools. Starrat (2005:402) refers to morals and values as
the neglected dimension, because most schools focus on results, forgetting the moral aspect of education to learners. Starrat (2005:402) argues that learning should not concentrate on subject content only but should be holistic encompassing the moral aspect of educative teaching and learning. The education system should produce learners who fit well into society, both professionally and socially. The teaching of moral values results in learners being honest, responsible, caring and respectable (Van der Merwe, 2011:781). These moral principles in general result in disciplined environments which in turn results in improved learner performance in the Grade 12 final examination, also in township schools. Bloch (2009:132) points out that these moral-based schools are weapon and drug free zones. Put differently, discipline in schools is the cornerstone to achieving quality education. Learners in disciplined schools are not only taught to respect educators, elders and fellow learners, but also to respect school property and their natural environments (Bloch, 2009:133). When the environmental policy is written in bold letters it encourages learners to respect trees, flowers, and school grounds and to use water and electricity sparingly (Bloch, 2009:132).

Educational tours play a crucial role in improving learner performance by extending the horizon of learner perception. This extension of learner perception is also applicable to township and rural schools. Bloch (2009:132) emphasises the advantage of educational tours for learners from impoverished areas to places of interest such as Robben Island, Cape Point, the Police Museum in Pretoria and the sugar cane fields in KwaZulu Natal to extend learners’ experiences beyond their normal day to day living. These outdoor activities enable learners to relate what they learn in the classroom and what they experience in the field as motivation for continuous learning. Educational tours for learners from impoverished schools are possible through fundraising and donations from private businesses (Kamper, 2008:9).

Parental involvement is a determinant factor in the provision of quality education to learners (Diamond, 2015:9). Kamper (2008:9) confirms this by saying that all school principals mentioned the crucial role of parental involvement in their schools’ success. Parents should be partners with the school in the education of their children. Regardless of their financial status parents can contribute to the provision of education of equality to learners by involving them in fundraising activities, relying on parents for the moral support with learner discipline and doing social service to school such as maintaining school
grounds and taking part in school events. Kamper (2008:9) points out that it needs the whole village to raise a child. Put differently, all people should be involved in the education of learners. By so doing most schools opened doors to parents and some parents are using school classrooms for church services and for adult basic training. This has improved interaction between the school and the parents, resulting in improved learner performance in the Grade 12 final examination (Bloch, 2009:132). It is clear that impoverished township schools can produce excellent results which are comparable to results produced by former model C schools if all stakeholders are dedicated to achieve what is possible within their specific contexts.

2.11.4 Leadership in township schools

A special type of leadership is needed to transform township schools, so that they can produce quality results in the Grade 12 final examination (Mafora, 2013:39). Township schools have special school leadership challenges which need strong leadership qualities to transform these schools through their vision, expectations, standards, provision of resources and service delivery (Kamper, 2008:12, Steyn; 2006:17). In relation to instructional leadership as discussed in paragraphs 2.2 and 2.3, Kamper (2008:12) contends that the invitational leadership model is the appropriate leadership style needed in high–poverty schools. The principles and values of invitational leadership and the role of school principals with invitational leadership as this leadership applies to poverty stricken schools, are discussed next.

In order to overcome the challenges of learner performance in township schools, there are values and principles concerning poverty which should be addressed. Firstly, the rich must change their perceptions and attitudes towards poverty. The privileged should consider the poor as having equal rights to quality life and equal access to quality education (Xianzuo, 2013:9). Effort must be made by the privileged to narrow the gap between the poor and the rich by donating towards the education and the well-being of the poor. The poor should be regarded as equal human beings to the rich and they should have access to opportunities which make their future lives better (Kamper, 2008:3).

The second principle which can transform poverty stricken schools is respect for the poor. The poor should not be considered as second class citizens and their dignity as human
beings equal to the rich should be accepted (Mafora, 2013:40). Decision making should involve all people regardless of their social economic status (Diamond, 2014:18). Van der Merwe (2011:787) states that constructive involvement of parents in the education of their children results in parents providing the much needed support, despite their illiteracy.

The third principle in alleviation of poverty in township schools and rural areas is collaborative effort by all stakeholders. Learners, educators, school leaders, government, the private sector and the rich should work together to alleviate poverty in township and rural-related schools (Kamper, 2008:3). A shared sense of purpose is vital in improving the quality of education given to the poor (Van der Merwe, 2011:780). Kamper (2008:3) states that cooperation among the schools in the immediate environment and the outside world produces required results to achieve success. Such cooperation should be based on mutual understanding and openness. Personal relations and mutual trust must be developed and sustained among all stakeholders so that the effects or causes of poverty can be understood by all stakeholders. Understanding the causes and effects of poverty at grassroots level helps all stakeholders to cooperatively find lasting solutions for poverty alleviation. These solutions should bring about radical and total transformation of individual human beings from poverty to a better life. Better life means having access to opportunities which will improve one’s social mobility.

These principles of leadership are relevant to effective leadership needed in high poverty schools because these principles are directly linked to invitational leadership (Kamper, 2008:3). The invitational leadership model was developed from a synthesis of leadership styles in an attempt to find appropriate leadership models which can tackle contemporary issues affecting leadership in high poverty schools (Steyn, 2005:19). The invitational leadership model uses the word ‘invitation’ in the sense that the school principal’s leadership qualities communicate and inform others that they are worthwhile in the development of the school. Put differently, the principal’s leadership qualities encourage staff members to put more effort into their work resulting in improved learner performance in the Grade 12 final examination. Steyn (2005:19) contends that the invitational model of leadership is the best model to turn around township schools to become excellent and effective schools. The notion of invitational leadership includes basic principles such as optimism, respect, trust and intentional care. When further explored, optimism constitutes the belief that educators and learners have the potential which can be tapped for
development and growth. The principle of respect is based on caring for others, while trust is the building of good relationships among educators and learners. Intentional care involves provision of opportunities to develop untapped talents in learners and educators (Mafora, 2013:39).

Optimism is the notion that individuals have untapped capabilities responsible for development and growth. These capabilities need resources, an environment and opportunities to enable individuals to develop their potential. Considered from an educational perspective, this means that township and rural schools must be resource rich and have dedicated educators so that children of the poor can fully develop their potential. For this to happen, children of the poor must be treated as children who are born with abilities and talents equal to the children of the rich. In this sense, children of the poor should be provided with rich environments which will nurture and develop their talents to their full potential. School principals should view all learners as having potential to excel and achieve good results in their final Grade 12 examination.

Respect is the second principle of invitational leadership. Respect for the poor as equal human beings to the rich is an important aspect in invitational leadership. Learners should be taught not only to respect human beings but the environment and school property (Bloch, 2009:133). In this regard the school principal should respect all learners and staff members regardless of their social background. Trust is the cornerstone for alleviating poverty in township schools (Kamper, 2008:4). It is based on having faith in what educators and learners are doing at school. Learners should trust that their educators are there for them every day and that they know their subject content. Parents should have trust that their children are in safe hands at school and teachers should trust that learners receive quality care and support at home.

Caring for others is the last principle of invitational leadership. The school principals should be sensitive to learners’ backgrounds and take into cognizance learners’ diversity in the classroom (Van der Merwe, 2011:783). Physical resources such as food and clothes should be availed to learners in impoverished schools through the national government feeding scheme. The school principal's duty as the executive leader of a school within a specific community is not only of supervising the teaching and learning but also to care for the needy in the community (Van der Merwe, 2011:787). It is also important that moral
principles such as caring should be taught to learners through encouraging them to pay condolences, if the parent of a fellow learner passes on, or when trauma is experienced within a specific home environment such as losing all belongings through fire. Learners should also be taught to donate their old school uniforms and offer assistance to the needy children.

School principals and educators of township schools should ensure that the learners’ quality of life is enhanced through provision of food, clothing, healthcare, counselling, guardianship, study materials and offering additional support (Kamper, 2008:11). To ensure that learners are supported and cared for, schools should provide additional support in the sense of serving as study centres after hours to cater for learners who do not have study opportunities at home (Bloch, 2009:56). The school should go an extra mile by providing basic needs and guidance to child-headed families in the community. A sense of dignity and responsibility must be instilled in the learners through encouraging them in their educational endeavours rather than criticising their failures. This will enable learners to build self confidence and self-esteem (Bloch 2009:67). The school principal and educators should do individual child study so that they can identify individual talent and develop the child’s talent to its full potential.

Educators should extend their roles to that of counsellors and caregivers so that learners can experience that they are truly cared for (Kamper, 2008:13). Educators should go beyond their normal working hours and provide tuition over weekends and during holidays. The school principal should have a passion and compassion for the poor and should work tirelessly for their upliftment through providing quality education (Kamper, 2008:14). The school principal must have the willingness to give to the poor, see the school as his home and learners as his own children. The school principal must have total commitment to school functions and school buildings and should model the commitment through self-discipline, enthusiasm, being visible and coping with dilapidated facilities by motivating educators and learners to a joint endeavour of upholding what they have. The principal should be the facilitator of learning through providing educators with what they need as is reasonably possible to facilitate effective teaching and learning. The school principal should empower educators to make decisions in their departments and chair departmental meetings so that they are exposed to leadership opportunities while contributing to joint endeavours for improved performance.
All leadership efforts and activities should focus on instructional leadership which pertains to teaching and learning as it takes place in the classroom (Kruger, 2003:206). Learner excellence should be a top priority for poverty stricken schools. The instructional leadership model monitors learners’ progress meticulously and effectively and allows for immediate action to correct misconceptions or mistakes. In this regard school principals of impoverished schools should use the instructional leadership model to improve matric results in their schools. School leadership in poverty stricken areas requires a supportive role through invitational leadership (Kamper 2008:10). This role requires school principals to be like military personnel in identifying and providing top quality resources to facilitate effective teaching and learning which results in the provision of quality education to the impoverished learners. In this sense the school principals become facilitators of the teaching and learning process. In their role as facilitators of teaching and learning, school principals should constructively involve all stakeholders in the change process of improving learner performance in the township schools. This can be achieved through creating strong and expanded networks with the community and the outside world. The school principals should achieve their tasks through demonstrating compassion for the poor, the learners, the educators and for care-givers (Kamper, 2008:10).

School principals of high-poverty schools should have particular leadership qualities and traits. The following are some of the leadership qualities and traits which the school principals of high poverty schools should possess in order to transform impoverished schools into excellent schools (Kamper, 2008:13). School principals should have knowledge and understanding of how poverty affects learner performance in South African schools. School principals need to go deeper in understanding the causes and effects of poverty and also need a deeper understanding of how the poor feel about their situation. Furthermore, school principals should be knowledgeable about measures to alleviate poverty in the South African schools. After having the knowledge and understanding of poverty and the measures to alleviate it, school principals need to take centre stage in the struggle to eradicate poverty in the South African schools.

These school principals should view the school as a growth opportunity centre and a learning organisation where learners, educators and the illiterate have the opportunity to learn (Kamper, 2008:13). The school principals of these high-poverty schools need to believe and trust that all learners have capabilities to excel academically regardless of
their social background. Above all, school leadership in impoverished schools should have a strong belief that their schools have the potential to provide quality education to all learners.

As stated in paragraph 2.6.1, school principals should be visionaries. By being visionaries, school principals must cast their vision beyond the visible horizon and expect the unexpected (Marishane & Botha, 2011:67). Put differently, school principals should be able to foretell what the future holds for their organisations before any reasonable member can do that. Marishane and Botha (2011:67) point out that school principals should be able to create an inviting and sustained school environment that is conducive to effective teaching and learning. This can be achieved through acquiring all the resources needed by the school to support effective teaching and learning (Kamper, 2008:13). In order to get the needed resources, school principals need to explore each and every available avenue in order to create support networks for the school.

Strong and effective leadership is the cornerstone for providing quality education to the poor (Van der Merwe, 2011:784). To show that leadership is a serious matter in improving learner performance in township schools, Kamper (2008:14) suggests that principals of non-performing schools should be removed from their positions. This implies that some township schools are not performing because of ineffective leadership. Kamper (2008:14) points out that the solution to end the problem of high poverty schools lies in effective school leadership. The instructional and invitational leadership models are irrefutably needed in high poverty schools to improve the provision of quality education to the poor.

2.12 SUMMARY

Improving learner performance is still a challenge to many township and rural schools with the result that the provision of quality education still eludes many schools in impoverished communities. Of the many factors contributing to poor performance in township schools the ones pertaining to a lack of human and physical resources and the factors pertaining to educational policies that are not relevant to conditions in rural and township schools are the most crucial.
Instructional leadership as the theoretical framework underpinning this study has been reviewed as important in improving learner performance in the Grade 12 final examination. A number of instructional leadership models were identified with these models emphasising the school principal's role as the determinant factor in improving learner performance in impoverished schools. It was clear that effective school leadership needs enabling management structures to enable it to improve learner performance such as the performance of Grade 12 learners in township schools.

Learners, as important stakeholders in the teaching and learning process, rely on the fulfilling of their basic school needs such as food, uniform and stationery for them to participate effectively in the teaching and learning process. Many of the township learners go to school without these basic needs with snowballing negative results in the Grade 12 final examination. Educators as the most important human resource in schools and the most determinant factor in improving learner performance need constant attention with regard to professional development and boosting low teacher morale. Unequal distribution of experienced and competent educators between former black schools and former white schools due to unintended policy arrangements perpetuates inequalities in learner performance between the two types of schools. This unintended policy arrangement is exacerbated by ineffective curriculum implementation leading to unintended results, further affecting learner performance in high-poverty schools.

Segregated education perpetuated by race is increasingly perpetuated by class resulting in sustained inequality despite major investment and dramatic transformation in educational policies since the democratic dispensation. The result is that conditions in township and rural schools are not conducive for effective teaching and learning impacting on the demand on government to provide top quality resources to impoverished schools. Basic service delivery, in terms of water supply, electricity, sanitation and libraries is still inadequately impacting on the motivation for teaching and learning in impoverished environments. Despite all these challenges in township and rural schools, some schools are producing excellent results in their Grade 12 final examination due to strong leadership by school principals, constructive parental involvement, and dedicated teachers. Of these factors, a specialised type of leadership is needed to transform township schools to become excellent schools. Instructional leadership and invitational leadership emerged as
indispensable to improve learner performance in the Grade 12 final examination in township schools.
CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the methods, procedures and techniques which were chosen and used to collect empirical data in order to answer the formulated research questions. The focus of this chapter is to describe how data was collected and what strategies, procedures and channels were followed to collect the required data for this study.

The first part of this chapter describes the aims of the empirical study, which presents the main purpose of carrying out the empirical investigation. The aims outline the intent of the study. The second part of the chapter explains the research paradigm and research approach adopted for this study and the justification for choosing the research paradigm and research approach. This is followed by a discussion of the sampling strategies used to select the participants. The methods, procedures and techniques used to collect data as introduced in paragraph 1.6 are elaborated on in this chapter. The procedure for data processing and data analysis is explained and the way of ensuring validity and reliability and adhering to ethical considerations are finally addressed.

3.2 RESEARCH AIMS

The purpose of carrying out the empirical investigation was to collect data to answer the main research question: How can Grade 12 learners in township schools be adequately prepared for the final examination so that they can enter the labour market successfully or further their studies? In order to find solutions to problems affecting learner performance in the Grade 12 final examination in many township schools, the aim of this study was to find ways of helping these learners in township schools to perform optimally in the final examination. Further explored, the aim of the study was to identify factors hindering or assisting Grade 12 learners in township schools to perform adequately in the final examination.
3.3 RESEARCH PARADIGM

Jourbish, Kurram, Fatima and Haider (2011:2083) describe a research paradigm as a body of knowledge or a framework of beliefs, values and norms in the context in which research takes place. A research paradigm is a model which shapes our comprehension of the world around us and those whom we interact with. It guides and gives direction on the choice of suitable procedures, techniques and methods to be used to collect, analyse and interpret data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:5). Three main research paradigms are discussed next, namely the positivist, the interpretivist, and the critical realism research paradigms.

3.3.1 The positivist research paradigm

Positivists contend that only knowledge which is scientifically generated using mathematical statistic models is true and authentic (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:5). Positivism formed the foundation for scientific experiments and statistic investigation. Positivists believe that the world can be understood using scientifically derived evidence (Jourbish et al., 2011:2083). The belief is that knowledge is authentic when it is derived from scientific experimentations, hypothesis testing and mathematical statistics. McMillan and Schumacher (2010:5) point out that the positivist paradigm emphasises a single reality of known knowledge based on scientific evidence and numbers. The emphasis is that the study of human beings can be done the same way as the study of nature by using a framework of rules and procedures for collecting, analysing, interpreting and reporting data. The positivist research paradigm limits the use of contextual factors and multiple theories when interpreting data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:6). In other words, there is no need for the researcher to analyse and interpret data in an attempt to make sense of it because there is already existing knowledge which can help in this regard. From this discussion on the nature of a positivist research paradigm, it is clear that this study on improving learner performance in township schools does not fall under the positivist research paradigm because the study is based on understanding the factors which affect learners to be adequately prepared for the Grade 12 final examination.
3.3.2 The interpretivist research paradigm

Interpretivists argue that knowledge and truth are not generated by scientific experiments and mathematical calculations only, but that people bring their own experiences and understanding of phenomena of the world to generate authentic knowledge (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011:21). Interpretivists contend that knowledge is constructed through multiple social realities using systematic procedures (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:6). Cresswell (2007:27) points out that people’s experiences, culture and perceptions play a pivotal role in the social construction of knowledge about the world and that people cannot fully understand the world if scientific and mathematical models alone are used to generate knowledge. Interpretivists take professional judgement and perceptions into account when interpreting and analysing data. The interpretive research paradigm puts emphasis on context and values as opposed to numbers as emphasised by positivists (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2006:287). Cohen et al. (2011:26) state that the interpretive research paradigm seeks to interpret and comprehend the world according to its actors. Put differently, the main focus of the interpretive research paradigm is to understand the subjective world of human experiences through attaching meaning, analysing and interpreting data (Terre Blanche et al., 2006:279).

From this discussion on the nature of an interpretivist research paradigm, it is clear that this study on understanding and improving learner performance in township schools falls within an interpretive research paradigm because the intention of the study is to understand factors inhibiting learners from performing optimally in the Grade 12 final examination. Cresswell (2007:27) states that if the intent of the study is to interpret the meanings people have about the world, the research falls within the interpretive research paradigm. With this study on improving learner performance in township schools using interviews as a data collection method, it resides with a qualitative research design as a research approach relating to an interpretive research paradigm. This study explores the phenomenon of poor learner performance in township schools from the perspective of participants through semi-structured interviews which is methodology that is employed with an interpretive research paradigm. Rensburg et al. (2011:179) state that the interview method employed in an interpretive research paradigm leads to a multiplicity of views that advance the understanding of perceptions of participants under study. This leads to a better understanding of the phenomenon of study. Therefore, this study on determining
factors influencing learner performance in township schools is positioned within an interpretive research paradigm.

### 3.3.3 The critical realism research paradigm

Although the critical realism research paradigm is not relevant to this study on learner performance in township schools, it is important to understand critical realism in order to have clarity on the fact that an interpretivist research paradigm is the most applicable for this study. Critical realism emphasises that scientific methods are not sufficient to explain the phenomena of the world satisfactorily (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:7). The world can be better understood if knowledge is generated by both the interpretive and positivist research paradigms. Cresswell (2007:27) argues that positivism and interpretivism do not exist in isolation to each other. Critical realism emphasises that positivism and interpretivism must complement each other in generating authentic and true knowledge. There is a dialectical relationship between positivism and interpretivism (Cohen et al., 2011:31). The critical realism research paradigm puts emphasis on the fact that the world can be understood from a set of three assumptions, namely empirical, actual and real (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:7). The assumptions of the empirical paradigm provide the world with evidence that can be observed and the actual is what exists in the world and is independent of what we know about the world. The assumption of the ‘real’ drives humans to act and provide responses to their actions. This leads to the interpretation of the world through complementing methodologies (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:7). Although these complementing methodologies could have benefitted the outcome of this research on learner performance in township schools in terms of more thorough findings, a mixed-methods research approach was not applied. The study is conducted representing research for a dissertation of limited scope. Using a mixed-methods research approach based on critical realism research paradigm would have been too comprehensive. Furthermore, the findings for a better understanding of learner performance in township schools are sufficiently derived through an interpretivist research paradigm. This study on learner performance seeks to understand the causes of poor learner performance through interpreting data that was collected during interviewing, making this study to relate to an interpretive research paradigm as stated in paragraph 3.3.2. These three major research paradigms discussed here, namely positivism, interpretivism and critical realism, represent the foundation for the three broad research designs, namely quantitative, qualitative and
mixed-methods research approach respectively. These research approaches are discussed next.

## 3.4 RESEARCH APPROACH

As stated in paragraph 1.6.1, a research design is a systematic and planned process of setting up the research, choosing the participants and methods of collecting, analysing and interpreting data. Yin (2003:20) points out that a research design is a logical sequence that connects empirical data to the literature review, research questions, data analysis and conclusions. A research design is a general system followed to identify a problem, review literature, identify methodology, interpret data and make conclusions (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:10). Mouton (2006:55) states that a research design is a blueprint of how the study is conducted. Put differently, a research design describes how the study is conducted and determines the methodologies involved in the study. Part of research methodology which logically adheres to the specific research paradigm is the research approach. Three major research approaches were considered in order to determine why the qualitative research approach is the most appropriate approach for this study on learner performance in township schools.

### 3.4.1 Quantitative research approach

A quantitative research approach has its roots in positivism and focuses on scientific and mathematical statistics as a method of collecting data (Rensburg et al., 2011:84). Mouton cited in Rensburg et al. (2011:85) defines the quantitative research approach as a social science approach that is more formalised, controlled and well defined in scope, and is relatively close to the natural sciences approach. McMillan and Schumacher (2010:21) add that quantitative research approaches emphasise objectivity by using numbers, statistics, structure and control.

The quantitative research approach is used to determine the cause and effect between variables and to examine relationships amongst variables (Rensburg, 2011:85). McMillan and Schumacher (2010:21) state that a quantitative research approach uses experimental and non-experimental approaches. In an experimental design the researcher systematically imposes or withdraws an intervention to control what will happen to
respondents. A non-experimental design examines and describes the phenomena under study without manipulating conditions experienced. The quantitative research approach examines the generally acceptable explanation of phenomena in a structured and controlled manner. Knowledge should be based on facts about things that can be observed and measured by means of scientific methods and numerical values (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:21). This research on learner performance in township schools is focused on understanding the phenomenon of study from the perspective and opinion of those involved in its functioning. The study is therefore representing a subjective inspired collection, analysis and interpretation of findings which confirm that the study does not use the quantitative research approach.

3.4.2 Mixed-methods research approach

Tashakkori and Cresswell cited in McMillan and Schumacher (2010:396) describe the mixed-methods research approach as an approach that collects, analyses and integrates findings and makes conclusions using both quantitative and qualitative research approaches in a single study. McMillan and Schumacher (2010:396) state that a mixed-methods research approach combines elements of quantitative and qualitative research approaches to broaden the breadth and depth of understanding the phenomena under study. It is a convergence of viewpoints, traditions, methods and conclusions. The mixed-methods research approach provides insight and enhancement of clarification of results which is not possible when either the quantitative or qualitative research approach is independently used.

McMillan and Schumacher (2010:396) state that the mixed-methods design leads to triangulation of both quantitative and qualitative research approaches at the same time so that a comprehensive set of data is collected. The mixed-methods research approach provides complete and valid results (McMillan & Schumacher 2010:396). The mixed-methods design contributes to the understanding of the behaviour of studied participants. Rensburg et al. (2011:89) confirms that the mixed-methods design is becoming increasingly used because many investigations are best studied using a variety of designs. Although the mixed-methods research approach could have enhanced the findings of the study on learner performance in township schools due to its more comprehensive scope, it
was not adopted due to reasons relating to the sufficiency of findings with a qualitative research approach and the limited scope character of the study.

### 3.4.3 Qualitative research approach

As stated in paragraph 1.6.1, the qualitative research approach is viewed as a social science approach which is not strictly formalised, explicated and defined but in which the researcher does the investigation in a more detailed manner (Rensburg et al., 2011:86). The qualitative research design is founded on symbolic interactionism which emphasises social aspects such as language, meaning and experience (Mouton, 2006:107). The qualitative research approach involves the exploration and description of social or human problems in their natural setting (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:321). The focus is to investigate why things occur as they do (Rensburg et al., 2011:86). It emphasises the study of human behaviour within unique and meaningful situations and interactions. This type of research gives preference to methods and techniques that focus on collecting data that relate to the meanings of human experiences and interactions such as collected via unstructured and semi-structured interviews, participant observation, case studies, recording of life history and studying of autobiographies. Data collected using these methods and techniques is analysed using inductive methods focusing on the specific phenomenon in the specific context.

One of the most distinguished characteristics of the qualitative research design is the investigation of the research problem within its social, cultural and historical context (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:321; Rensburg et al., 2011:86; Terre Blanche et al., 2006:278). There is no manipulation or control of participants and the context in which the study takes place. The qualitative research approach is rich in narrative descriptions because everything recorded is considered important and it contributes to a better understanding of the problem being studied (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:321). The descriptions are in the form of words and not numerical summaries as is used in quantitative research.

This study on learner performance in township schools adopts a qualitative research approach because it carries the characteristics of a qualitative research design focused on gaining a deeper understanding of the studied matter. This study seeks to identify ways of
assisting Grade 12 learners in township schools to perform optimally in their final examination. The research takes place in the natural context, that is, the township school. The researcher’s choice of the qualitative research approach was not only informed by the interpretative research paradigm from which a qualitative research design has its roots, but also by data collecting methods such as interviewing. Intensive probing through semi-structured interviews produces required results. This study was aimed to provide a deeper understanding of learner performance in township schools and this was achieved through qualitative research methods which allowed for the phenomenon to be studied in a more detailed manner. Through the qualitative research design, traditional ways of teaching and learning in township schools were identified. These traditional ways of teaching and learning were investigated so as to find solutions to the problems of Grade 12 learners who are not performing convincingly in the final examination.

3.5 CASE STUDY DESIGN

McMillan and Schumacher (2010:24) state that a case study design is a detailed exploration of a single phenomenon such as a bounded system, an organisation, an institution, an event or a set of human beings bounded by context and time by employing a multiple set of data found in natural settings. This study on improving learner performance is studied in a single school using purposefully selected participants, thus qualifying this study as a case study. Brayman (2004:48) confirms that a single school studied in-depth represents a specific case. Yin (2003:42) identifies two types of case study designs, namely a single case and a multiple case. When the case is unique in nature, or when a case represents other cases and when an investigation is repeated in a different time frame, it represents a single case study. In a single case study attention is also given to subsets and subunits (Yin, 2003:43). A multiple case study consists of many cases which might be holistic or embedded. This study on learner performance in township schools represented a single case study investigation.

McMillan and Schumacher (2010:26) noted that case study designs are interactive in nature because they use interviews as data collecting methods. Case study designs use multiple sources of data, and this study used a literature review, interviews and document analysis as data collection methods (Mouton, 2001:149). This study on improving learner performance adopted a case study design because case study designs are used to
organise educational data (Kombo & Tromp 2006:72). The case study design was ideal for this study because it focused on a single school as a social unit which was studied intensively and analysed deeply in its natural context. The approach enabled the researcher to study the characteristics of individual units in detail, and in this case the learners, educators and school leaders were studied intensively as individual groups. The aim was to probe and analyse multiple elements which constituted the life of the unit. Rensburg et al. (2011:101) emphasise that a case study design involves an in-depth study of various characteristics of a case over a specific period of time. This implies that the data collected is more detailed, comprehensive and varied in nature.

This study on learner performance in a township school adopted a case study approach because it was exploratory in nature and its aim was to identify factors responsible for the continued under-performance of township learners in South African schools. With the focal point of this study being gaining insight into the factors at play in township schools, the case study approach became the most suitable design to carry out the investigation.

Although the case study design was adopted for this study it must be stressed that a case study design has its own limitations and constraints. According to Yin (2003:9) case study designs cannot be generalised to people or to other contexts. Secondly, Yin (2003:10) argues that in a case study design, there is no exactness in findings. This study on improving learner performance in township schools addressed the concerns inhibiting learner performance by probing a vigorous and intensive generation of data to ensure that there is a semblance of findings. Although case study designs cannot be generalised to populations and other settings Yin (2003:10) contends that case study designs can be generalised to theoretical prepositions. Since this study was concerned with the theoretical phenomenon of improving learner performance in township schools, the aim was to add to the existing literature on learner performance in South African schools.

3.6 RESEARCH SAMPLE

Rensburg et al. (2011:151) refer to a research population as the entire target group of persons which the researcher wants to study. With regard to this study, the population is all township schools in the Tshwane South District of Gauteng Province. Due to financial constraints, time limits and difficulty in accessing all participants, a sample was chosen to
represent the entire population. Cohen et al. (2011:100) state that a sample is chosen when the entire population is not able to contribute to the generation of data due to financial and time constraints related to conducting the study with the entire population. Rensburg et al. (2011:151) refer to a sample as a subset of the defined population which the researcher is interested in. Cohen et al. (2011:100) identify two types of sampling, namely probability and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling uses a large sample size with the aim of generalising the findings to other contexts while non-probability sampling uses a small sample size with no intention of generalising the findings.

With reference to the population of this study, non-probability, purposive sampling was used to select one secondary school to be investigated intensively. The selection of this school was not only informed by the fact that it is a township school, but also by its results which show that many learners are not passing the Grade 12 final examination convincingly. The school has been chosen as the research site because its statistics on pass rate resembles situations in many township schools where many learners fail to obtain bachelor passes in the Grade 12 final examination. The result is that many learners are being marginalised and systematically excluded from furthering their studies at universities or entering the labour market as skilled labour force members. The selection of a township school as the research site does not in any way suggest that there are no learners who are passing convincingly in township schools, but the percentage pass rate in many township schools is lower when compared to former white schools. The selection of the research site does not suggest that there are no township schools that are performing very well, but the number of these schools is fewer when compared to former white schools. The reason behind this selection is to study the selected school intensively in order to understand why this status quo still remains after twenty years of massive reforms in education.

The selected school has 1 200 learners with 29 educators. The demography of the learner population is 99,8% blacks and 0,2% coloureds. About 50% of the learners come from the old location which was built before the attainment of democracy in 1994. Nearly 40% of the learners come from the informal settlement adjacent to the old location. The remainder of learners comes from the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) houses which were built after 1994.
Purposive sampling was employed in this study to select participants who are information rich about the topic under study. Participants were deliberately selected on the basis of their knowledge about the research topic so that meaningful information could be collected to sufficiently answer the research question. Information rich participants enabled an in-depth analysis of the phenomenon under study so that the reasons for weak learner performance in township schools were realistically identified in order to be addressed constructively. With the case study approach being used in this study, the sample of the study constituted the school principal and deputy school principal, two HODs, six Grade 12 educators and eight Grade 12 learners.

Grade 12 learners were selected as participants to provide information that was anticipated to be valuable relating to the challenges they are facing in the teaching and learning process in Grade 12. The Grade 12 learner sample was composed of the school head boy and head girl, three high achieving learners and three low achieving learners. Slow learners were included in the sample as they provided insight into the problems faced by mentally challenged learners in the teaching and learning of many township schools. Gifted learners were information rich on what motivates them to keep on working hard. Meaningful data on how learner leadership determines learner performance in the Grade 12 final examination was provided by the school head boy and head girl.

Senior Grade 12 educators were selected as participants on the basis that they have taught their respective subjects for many years and they therefore have good subject content knowledge. Having taught the subject for many years made these educators understand the challenges faced by Grade 12 learners and the importance of adequately preparing these learners for the final examination. It was envisaged that the Grade 12 educators would provide information that was rich on how teacher quality is a determinant factor in improving learner performance in the Grade 12 final examination in township schools.

With instructional leadership as the theoretical framework underpinning this study on learner performance in township schools, school leadership was to provide information rich data on how school leadership enhances or hinders learner performance in township schools. The school principal, deputy school principal and heads of departments are at the centre of the implementation of the curriculum, hence they are well informed on how
effective leadership determines learner performance in the Grade 12 final examination. School leaders were included to generate data that is rich in how instructional and invitational leadership models are determinant factors in creating enabling structures for educators to optimally prepare Grade 12 learners for their final school examination.

3.7 DATA COLLECTION

The data collection methods used in this study represented a literature review, document analysis and interviewing. The choice of the research methods was informed by the fact that this study adopted an interpretive research paradigm, a qualitative research design and a case study approach. Yin (2003:89) argues that the most common method of data collection in a case study design is interviewing. A qualitative research approach is dominated by interviewing as data collection method (Yin, 2003:89).

3.7.1 Interviews

With a qualitative research approach used in this investigation, interviews were used to collect data. Rensburg et al. (2011:179) state that interviews allow the interviewer and the interviewee to personally interact through telephone or face-to-face communication. Interviews can be structured, semi-structured and unstructured. In a structured interview a list of questions is strictly followed during the interviews. In contrast with structured interviews, unstructured interviews allow participants to express their opinions without a list of questions about the researcher’s prior knowledge, experience and opinion. Semi-structured interviews, which are guided interviews, were adopted by this study because semi-structured interviews are appropriate for an in-depth study consisting of focus group interviews. As this study was focused on learner performance in township schools and how learner performance was perceived by learners, educators and school leadership, it was deemed obvious that semi-structured interviews would be appropriate in generating data.

A total of five focus group interviews were conducted with a total of eighteen participants. The first focus group interview comprised of the school principal, deputy school principal and two HODs. The six Grade 12 educators constituted the second focus group interview. The eight Grade 12 learners formed three focus group interviews as follows: two learner
leaders, three top achievers and three slow achievers. The interviews were conducted on separate days. Great care was taken to create a relaxed atmosphere so that participants could express themselves freely. The school principal's office was used for the focus group interview with management participants and the staff room for the focus group interview with the teacher participants. The three focus group interviews with learners were conducted in an empty classroom.

With semi-structured interviewing used to collect data, interview schedules were prepared beforehand to guide the interview process so that the focus of the interview was not lost. De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport (2005:292) contend that when conducting semi-structured interviews the researcher needs to be armed with an interview schedule. Each focus group interview had its own interview schedule with a list of specific questions directed to the participants of that specific focus group interview (Appendices D, E, F, G, H). A total of five interview schedules were prepared and shared with participants so that participants could choose the order in which they wanted to answer the questions. Sharing the interview schedules with participants during the respective focus group interviews allowed participants to have a strong role in determining the interview process which helped participants to express their experiences and ideas spontaneously and adequately (De Vos et al., 2005:297).

The interview schedules as interview instruments were comprised of clear and open-ended questions so that participants had latitude to air their views and express their opinions during the process of the interviewing. In accordance with De Vos et al. (2005:297), the interview questions were neutral, avoiding leading and ambiguous questions in order to eliminate confusion and prejudice. The school leadership interview schedule focused on questions dealing with how leadership qualities and styles determine learner performance in the Grade 12 final examination (Appendix D). The instrument also dealt with school leadership’s opinions on what could be the reason why township schools are not performing well when compared to former white schools. The teacher instrument probed issues such as challenges faced by educators in the teaching and learning of Grade 12 learners (Appendix E). Also, socio-economic factors were raised as issues determining learner performance in many township schools in the South African education system. The learner leadership instrument dealt with matters of how learner leadership enhances learner performance in the Grade 12 final examination. Problems encountered
by learners at home and school were included in the learner leadership interview schedule (Appendix F). The questions on the interview schedule for top achievers focused on what motivates these learners to be dedicated and ready to progress in the Grade 12 final examination (Appendix G). The instrument for top achievers also dealt with learners’ opinions on how teacher quality is a determinant factor in the Grade 12 final examination. Questions on challenges faced by many township learners were included in the slow learners’ interview schedule (Appendix H). This interview schedule also focused on the opinion of learners on how best they could be helped by educators and school leadership to be optimally prepared for the Grade 12 final examination.

3.7.2 Literature review

Literature was reviewed to generate data for this study. International and national literature on learner performance was reviewed to gain insight into what has been researched on the topic. Educational leadership models were reviewed to refine the instructional leadership model as the theoretical framework underpinning this study on learner performance in township schools in South Africa. Literature on township schools was reviewed to gain insight into conditions in township schools; teaching and learning as it takes place in South African schools; and leadership qualities that are needed to transform township schools into sufficiently performing institutions.

3.7.3 Documentary analysis

Educational policy documents promulgated by the research site such as the school admission policy, the Grade 12 examination policy, the code of conduct for learners and the school reporting policy were analysed in order to understand the impact of these policies on learner performance in the Grade 12 final examination. District, Provincial and National memoranda, circulars and policy documents were analysed to determine the extent to which policy change and implementation is a determinant factor in the Grade 12 final examination. The purpose of analysing educational policies was to generate qualitative data to augment data collected through the literature review and through focus group interviews.
3.8 DATA ANALYSIS

With this study on improving learner performance in township schools adopting a qualitative research approach, data was analysed using qualitative research methods of data analysis. According to Rensburg et al. (2011:139) qualitative data analysis is organising, dividing and synthesising non-numerical data into categories, themes and patterns. McMillan and Schumacher (2010:267) state that qualitative data analysis is an inductive process of organising data into categories in order to identify relationships and patterns from collected data. Put differently, qualitative data analysis is a process of organising, examining and interpreting non-numerical data in order to find meaning and to generate findings in order to solve research problems. Analysing data qualitatively helps to gain a deeper understanding of participants’ perceptions about the phenomenon under study (Cohen et al., 2011:410). Qualitative data analysis enables the researcher to make sense of how the participants view the situation under study. Rule and John (2011:87) confirm that qualitative data analysis provides a thick description of the situation because the researcher captures the sense of actions as they occur in the specific context. Coding and labelling data as the qualitative process of data analysis provides an opportunity for the researcher to get closer to the data and to make sense of each and every piece of data on a sentence level (Rule & John, 2011:77).

With regard to this research on learner performance in township schools, data was analysed according to the type of data sets collected during literature review, document analysis and focus group interviews. Data collected through a review of the literature was qualitatively analysed to identify differences, similarities, frequencies and patterns from related international and national literature. The categories and patterns were used to make sense and arrive at identifiable factors which are determinant in learner performance in the Grade 12 final examination. Data collected from document analysis was analysed according to the initial intent of the specific policy against its implementation challenges and achievements. The emerging challenges were further analysed to identify possible corrective measures to improve policy formulation and implementation in order to improve the quality of teaching and learning in all South African schools. A modern technological device which provides clear and audible voices was used to capture the interviews. Data collected from focus group interviewing was transcribed using a word processor for analysis purposes. Data was analysed by coding frequencies and patterns as well as
identifying similarities and differences. Emerging patterns and themes were classified and interpreted in relation to how they influence learner performance in township schools. Data collected from the literature review, document analysis and interviews was triangulated to identify patterns, themes and categories to support the research findings. Cohen et al. (2011:410) refers to triangulation as a process of using multiple sources of data to support research findings. Triangulation reduces inaccuracy and strengthens the truthfulness of the findings (Rensburg, 2011:139).

3.9 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

McMillan and Schumacher (2010:331) refer to validity as the degree to which the interpretations of the findings have the same meaning to both the researcher and research participants. In other words, validity is when the findings of the study truly represent the phenomenon under study. Reliability is the extent to which research methods, procedures and techniques have been applied consistently and accurately throughout the research process (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:179). Put differently, reliability is mostly concerned with the accuracy of data collection methods and consistency and the repeatability of research findings (Creswell, 2007:56).

With qualitative research, validity and reliability is interpreted as trustworthiness and transferability of the research findings. According to Rule and John (2011:107) trustworthiness is when values such as transparency and research ethics are promoted in order to gain trust from participants. Building trust among participants can be achieved through respecting the rights of individual participants and establishing a good relationship with participants. Although research findings in a case study design cannot be generalised to other situations, the findings are transferable to other populations through the thick description process (Rule & John, 2011:107). McMillan and Schumacher (2010:334) state that transferability enables human beings to understand similar situations by applying research findings to similar situations.

In order to enhance trustworthiness and transferability with this study on improving learner performance in township schools, procedures, methods and techniques were carefully and thoroughly followed throughout the research process. Participants were purposefully selected and all ethics and procedures were followed to recruit participants. Multiple
sources of data were used to generate data for the study. Debriefing and field logs as research strategies were explored to enhance the transferability and trustworthiness of the research findings. Advanced technological instruments were used to record and transcribe data to enhance accuracy and avoid misrepresentation of participants’ views. Transcribed data was coded and no real names of participants were used in this study so that the highest level of confidentiality was achieved. Transcripts were given to participants to validate whether the transcribed data was correct and accurate.

3.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

As stated in paragraph 1.6.6, research ethics are fundamentally concerned with what is socially and morally justifiable with regard to conducting a research study. Research ethics are concerned with what is wrong or right with regard to participants’ well-being when collecting, analysing and interpreting data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:117). The integrity of the research depends on how the research process adhered to ethical standards stipulated by the research ethics committees such as the UNISA committee for research ethics. Rensburg et al. (2011:108) state that research ethics represent research standards agreed upon by a research body to regulate the behaviour of researchers so that the well-being of participants is protected.

With this study using focus group interviews as data collecting methods, the welfare of participants was a top priority. To achieve this, the principles of do no harm, obtaining consent and ensuring privacy were adhered to with this research on learner performance. The principle of do no harm requires the researcher to make sure that the participants are not emotionally stressed, humiliated and embarrassed by taking part in the study. In other words nothing should be done that might cause potential harm or stress to participants during the research process. Obtaining consent is seeking permission from individuals who are going to take part in the study (McMillan and Schumacher, 2010:338). Consent must be voluntary and no one should be forced to take part in the study. To obtain informed consent, the researcher must reveal in detail to participants what the research entails, including procedures to be followed, research demands and any anticipated risks. When obtaining information from human beings there is a possibility of infringing one’s right to privacy. In order to avoid invading into participants' privacy the researcher must be sensitive to the type of information to be collected, the place where the interviews are to
take place and how to publish the findings. Confidentiality and anonymity are taken into consideration when reporting findings.

In order to adhere to research ethics, the researcher sought ethics clearance from the UNISA research committee for ethics. Permission letters were written to the Gauteng Department of Education and the school principal of the research site asking for permission to conduct the research (Appendices A, B, C). Invitational and consent letters were sent to participants asking for their consent to participate in this project. Participants signed consent forms to confirm their voluntary participation. To ensure participants’ privacy, focus group interviews were conducted separately at a venue agreed upon by participants and at a time convenient to participants. During data analysis information was coded to avoid using real names of participants and anonymous verbatim quotations were used with permission from participants.

3.11 SUMMARY

In order to have positioned the researcher’s choice of research paradigm and research approach sufficiently, three main research paradigms were discussed in this chapter, namely positivism, interpretivism and critical realism. Along the same lines, the nature of quantitative, qualitative and mixed-methods research approaches were discussed that are informed by the three types of research paradigms. With this study on learner performance in township schools, it was clear from the discussion of different research paradigms and research approaches that an interpretive paradigm and a qualitative research approach were the best selections to be adopted. It was further clear that the qualitative research design was applied by means of a case study approach using focus group interviewing as a data collection method with data analysis carried out by means of coding and decoding of transcribed data to determine emerging categories and related themes.
CHAPTER FOUR
DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The focus of this study is on how Grade 12 learners in township schools can be assisted to perform optimally in the final school examination. In order to answer this research question effectively, focus group interviews were conducted with the aim of identifying factors which assist learners to perform adequately in township schools. The research also focuses on identifying factors inhibiting learners to perform optimally in the Grade 12 final examination. The empirical investigation was conducted to collect data to answer the above questions with the support from data collected during the literature review. Therefore, with regard to the above, this chapter presents how data collected through focus group interviews were qualitatively analysed and interpreted. Data from focus group interviews were recorded, transcribed and analysed according to themes and categories which emerged from the qualitative data analysis. The discussion of the research findings will follow after a discussion of the profile of the research site which follows next.

4.2 PROFILE OF THE RESEARCH SITE

The selected school is situated in Tshwane South District in Gauteng Province and was established in 1980. The school served as a vocational training centre until 2003 when it was changed to a secondary school. The selected school serves learners from Mamelodi Township, a township which was created during the apartheid era to serve the black community. Many of the learners come from the informal settlement and from the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) houses built for the poor by the government.

The school has an enrolment of 1200 learners, 29 educators, six HoDs, two deputy principals and the school principal. The school principal joined the school in 2010. The educator-learner ratio is 1:33. The school's pass rate for the Grade 12 final examination increased over the years from 54% in 2011 to 100% in 2015. The school principal attributed the improvement of the school to educator dedication, close monitoring of the teaching and learning process and planned parental involvement. The school was officially
rated as one of the poor township schools and it is still in the realms of severe poverty. The school buildings represent a solid infra-structure of bricks and the premises are in good condition. The school has a functional library, computer laboratory, a science laboratory and a large school hall. To provide security to the school, a security wall was built around the school in 2009. There are no sports fields on the school premises and the school uses the nearby council sports facilities.

The conditions in the informal settlements where many of the learners come from bear testimony that many of the parents are struggling. There is no proper sanitation and in some areas there is no electricity. Many of the parents survive on informal trading and part-time jobs. Very few parents from the older part of the township area and the ones living in RDP houses are living an affluent life. Many of the parents survive on a pension and child grants.

4.3 REPORTING ON THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

Data that were audio-taped during focus group interviewing were analysed according to a qualitative data analysis approach identified by McMillian and Schumacher (2010:369). Following this approach, data were firstly transcribed, coded, categorised and patterns were developed. A word processor was used to transcribe the audio recordings into Word format to facilitate the coding of data into segments. The responses from participants were coded and labelled as follows: school principal: SP, deputy school principal: DSP, HoD: H 1-3, Grade 12 educators: GR12E I-6, learner leaders: LL 1-2, top achievers: TAL 1-3 and slow learners: SL 1-3. Codes with the same ideas were combined to form categories. Categories were used to represent major and similar ideas emerging from coded data. Relationships among categories were identified to develop patterns which determined links among participants’ responses. The linked patterns formed major themes which determined learner performance in the Grade 12 final examination.

As data from transcribed interviews were analysed, four major categories emerged, namely leadership factors, educator factors, learner factors and policy implementation factors. The four categories represent the major factors that influence learner performance in the Grade 12 final examination at the research site. These four categories serve as a response to the aims of the research, namely to investigate how Grade 12 learners can be
assisted to pass the final school examination satisfactorily, to identify factors inhibiting learners to perform optimally in the Grade 12 final examination and to identify ways of utilising positive factors to assist Grade 12 learners to perform adequately in their final school examination. It was clear from an analysis of the data that there are conditions at the research site that feature as negative factors in the influence on Grade 12 learners’ academic performance. The negative factors include aspects such as the home conditions of learners, the conditions prevailing in townships, conditions at school, the Secondary School Improvement Programme (SSIP), school-based assessments, the lack of a feeding scheme and political interference.

The findings from the empirical investigation are supported by anonymous verbatim excerpts from the focus group interviews to ensure authenticity and validity of the research findings. No names are used in the reporting on the research findings to guarantee anonymity and confidentiality. Participants are, therefore, referred to as SP for school principal, DSP for deputy school principal, H 1, 2 and 3 for the three heads of department, GR12E 1 to 6 for the six Grade 12 educators, LL 1 and 2 for the two learner leaders, TAL 1, 2 and 3 for the three top achiever learners, and SL1, 2 and 3 for the learners who struggle with their schoolwork.

4.4 RESEARCH FINDINGS

The categories that emerged from data that were collected during the empirical investigation are discussed next. These discussions relate to leadership factors, educator factors, learner factors and policy implementation factors. The negative factors which emerged from an analysis of the empirical data as influencing learner performance in the Grade 12 final examination will follow after the discussion of the leadership, educator, learner and policy implementation factors.

4.4.1 Leadership factors

It emerged from data collected during interviewing that instructional leadership is acknowledged as an important aspect of school functioning which is practised according to general consensus of acceptability at the selected school. When asked about their function as instructional managers at school, the school management team mentioned the
following as their core functions: monitoring teaching and learning, chairing meetings, conducting class visits, conducting book inspection, reporting to parents on learners’ progress, formulating school vision and plans, setting school targets, coordinating staff development programmes and supervising and motivating staff members. In this regard the school principal participant explained as follows: “Monitoring teaching and learning, chairing school management meetings, conducting class visits and monitoring assessments given to learners by teachers make up the major leaderships functions and they are all important in the improvement of Grade 12 results” (SP). The school management team participants confirmed that the main function of instructional leadership is coordinating, supervising, controlling and developing the curriculum instruction.

4.4.1.1 Monitoring the teaching and learning process

It was clear from the focus group interviews with the school management team and teacher participants that the school has a special monitoring team comprising of the school principal, the deputy principal and HoDs. The purpose of the monitoring team is to closely check and supervise curriculum implementation to determine whether the school’s vision, goals and policies are adhered to. With reference to monitoring and supervising the teaching and learning process as dimensions of instructional leadership the school principal participant confirmed that, “class visits are helping learners to improve and teachers to improve on their lessons delivery as they are teaching” (SP). The school principal, deputy school principal and HoDs carry out class visits for each educator once per term to ensure that the work schedule is adhered to and to check syllabus coverage.

Educators at the selected school submit their learners’ exercise books to the school management team once every term to be checked. Through book inspection, the school management team determines the amount of work and the level of subject content given to learners because, “the book inspections are put in to monitor and verify if concepts which are being taught are tested, so that it consolidates the facts later” (SP). All files selected for provincial, district and cluster moderation pass through the school assessment team before they are dispatched to relevant people to check if everything is in order. Feedback on class visits, book inspection and file inspection is given to educators timeously and follow-up dates are set and agreed upon by both the respective educator and supervisor. If serious curriculum issues are identified during monitoring and
supervision, “they are programmed to be discussed in the staff development programme” (H2). Apart from monitoring and supervision by the school management team, the visitors’ logbook and assessment reports show that District subject advisors visit the school at least once a term to carry out class observations, moderation and inspect files for both educators and learners. It is evident from the number of assessment reports that monitoring and supervision is done frequently and thoroughly at the school.

The learners’ representative council plays a major role in monitoring and supervising the teaching and learning process at the selected school. During the focus group interview with learner leaders, it emerged that school prefects help maintain discipline during school occasions. They sometimes conduct assemblies, they ensure that all learners are in proper school uniform, and they see that all learners are in class on time in the morning and after break. Learner leaders also assist with motivation amongst their schoolmates because “when we are among our peers we need to tell other learners to keep quiet, to do their work” (LL1). School prefects also assist with the supervising of learners during discipline sessions such as detention and time out. This was emphasised by a teacher participant when he said that,” if we look at prefects, the class prefect is the one who controls the class situation” (GR12E3).

4.4.1.2 Meetings

Meetings were identified as a positive factor which influences learner performance in the Grade 12 final examination. It emerged from minutes of meetings that informative, focused and vigilant meetings are frequently held to discuss learner performance. Parents meetings are held four times per year during the first week of each term. This was confirmed by an educator participant when he said, “normally, especially with the Grade 12 learners after every term the school usually holds a meeting with the Grade 12 parents and normally they have one-on-one sessions with educators” (GR12E3). During these meetings parents and educators discuss the result analysis of the previous term and formulate strategies to improve the results. After meetings parents collect their children’s reports from class teachers and then they further consult specific subject educators about their children’s performance in the specific subjects. Parents are well informed about their children’s performance through meetings and this develops good rapport between the parents and the school. In this regard the school principal participant emphasised the
school’s dedicated efforts to ensure that the Grade 12 learners, with the assistance of their parents, remained focused. The school principal explained as follows: “Whenever the school finds that Grade 12 learners are losing focus and track, we make sure that we call for emergency meetings with parents so that we keep parents updated on what their children are doing at school” (SP).

It was observed through staff meeting minutes that educators and the school management team discuss and formulate year plans, timetables and assessment plans. The school’s vision is emphasised, and goals and targets for the year are set during staff meetings. Termly results are analysed and intervention programmes are set. Three staff meetings are held each term during the first week of opening, midterm and the last week of the term. In addition to staff meetings, two morning briefing sessions are held twice a week to discuss the immediate concerns of the day-to-day running of the school. Areas of concern in the implementation of the curriculum and orientation of novice educators are addressed during staff development meetings. New developments and curriculum change are also discussed during staff development sessions. Two staff development meetings are held each term.

The termly results are critically analysed grade by grade, class by class and per individual learner by the school assessment team to identify areas of weakness and strength in each section. Among other things, the school assessment team discusses moderation of learners’ work, setting of examination and invigilation of examination during their meetings. It was identified during the focus group interview with the school management team that meetings are a way of monitoring the teaching and learning process. The school principal participant confirmed that, “if a learner does not attend any session we phone the parent and if the parent does not respond we write a letter inviting the parent to come to school and discuss the performance of the learner” (SP). It was clear that meetings are important in keeping educators abreast of educational developments and they help educators develop positive attitude towards their work.

The Grade 12 parents’ special meeting is specifically for all parents of Grade 12 learners, Grade 12 learners themselves, Grade 12 educators and the school management team. “We make sure that parents are involved in the education of their children particularly the parents of Grade 12 learners” (DSP). The first meeting is held during the first week of term
one and the rest are done during school holidays. The sole purpose of these meetings is to map out strategies to improve learner performance in the Grade 12 final examination. All stakeholders agree on the intervention programme to be followed during the course of the year. During the first meeting, parents and learners sign commitment pledges to commit themselves to the agreed intervention programme and to pledge that they will support the school in its endeavour to provide quality education to the learners. The deputy school principal participant confirmed that, “in this pledge, we sign, document it and make sure we follow the listed items” (DSP).

With the holiday meetings, the focus is on a results analysis of the previous term as these results apply individually and collectively so as to come up with a collaborative intervention programme to address the shortfalls of the previous term. Stakeholders also do introspection of what they agreed on with the first meeting to check whether they still abide by the agreement. “We do reviewing and then we make plans on the following terms as part of continuous consultation” (DSP). These meetings also create good rapport among all stakeholders. The school has an open door policy whereby parents are allowed to come to school any time to check the progress of their children. The healthy teacher-parent relationships prevailing at the research site are then attributed to the fact that the school “is always open to consultation throughout the year” (DSP).

4.4.1.3 Management structures

It emerged from the focus group interview with the school management team that the school has different management structures. These structures that contribute to a well-functioning school include the school governing body, the school management team, the learner representative council, the school assessment team, the examination committee, the school assessment irregularity committee, the health and safety committee, the employee and learner welfare committee, the disciplinary committee and the sports committee. Each committee in its own special way contributes to effective functioning because “we have got the school assessment team responsible for assessments, we have a team of HoDs that monitors educators, we have the parents giving their moral support with learner discipline” (SP). One of the heads of department participants explained the shared responsibility for effective functioning of the school as a whole by emphasising that the school has different committees being responsible for various tasks such as “the
disciplinary committee for disciplinary issues, support teams that are branches of the school assessment team and other logistical teams like the timetable committee and the procurement committee" (H2). These structures form the boundaries within which educators and learners carry out their functions. Clear structures of authority are established where learners report to educators, educators report to HoDs, and HoDs report to the deputy principal and school principal. This decentralised governance approach is explained as “a descending order from the principal to head of departments, educators and learners… it is decentralised because we have people on the ground, learners and educators ascending up the protocol” (DSP).

It was clear from the focus group interview with the school management team that both bureaucratic and professional structures applied at the selected school. The school principal applies bureaucratic structures when it comes to motivating punctuality, absenteeism, disciplining learners, submission of marks and budgeting. Rules and procedures are constructively applied to guide behaviour of both educators and learners which results in a condition of “monitoring [which] is very close and is done from all angles so there is no time where educators and learners can relax” (H1). Professional structures are applied when educators execute their lessons, when learners make subject choices in Grade 10 and when school events are organised. Professional structures enable collaboration and team work among stakeholders which result in improved learner performance in the Grade 12 examination because “we are a team, parents, teachers, learners and school management” (SP).

With regard to management structures promoting a specific school culture, it was emphasised that at the research site learners and staff members are welcoming which is evident in the fact that the moment you enter the school you are warmly greeted by learners who will be ready to render their help. In the reception office visitors are served with tea and coffee while they are waiting to be attended. An educator participant pointed to the fact that on the wall in the reception area, there is a statement which reads, “every worthwhile endeavour begins with a prayer” (GR12E2) which emphasises the school’s convictions and beliefs and which ensures “that quality teaching and learning take place in each class every day” (GR12E2). The school vision, namely that “every learner will tap their God given talents and equip themselves with the knowledge and skills that will pave way to success in the adult life” (DSP) is communicated constantly as a focused
endeavour to set a good foundation for improving curriculum implementation and learner success. The selected school has a focused school vision that sets a good foundation for improving curriculum implementation. The school articulates its focused vision by displaying it in every classroom in the school which is reflected in a welcoming reception office and polite educators and learners which shows that effective teaching and learning is taking place at the selected school.

4.4.1.4 Motivation

Motivation is one of the positive management factors which contribute to improved learner performance at the research site. The focus group interview with Grade 12 educators showed that educators and learners are highly motivated by the school management team. One educator participant asserts that, “if the school principal is someone who cannot motivate educators, they will in turn not motivate learners resulting in learners failing to achieve required passes” (GR12E3). Motivating and rewarding educators and learners is a key area of instructional leadership which is a determinant factor in improving learner performance in the Grade 12 final examination. The Grade 12 educator participant further said that, “a motivated worker produces good quality but a demotivated worker will produce poor results” (GR12E3). All staff members are provided with tea at tea breaks and cold water during summer as an incentive to motivate them to remain at the school.

To show a good gesture to outstanding performance by learners, the school organises an award ceremony each year to honour the top achievers. During such ceremonies top achievers in different disciplines are awarded certificates of competence and teaching and learning materials such as tablets and calculators as a token of appreciation. Apart from motivating learners to sustained hard work, the tokens of appreciation also serve a load lessening purpose because “learners are given tablets to avoid the burden of carrying heavy loads” (H1). All educators and learners are expected to attend these award ceremonies and all parents of learners who are receiving awards are invited to attend the ceremony.

It was pointed out during the focus group interview with the school management team that Grade 12 educators, who produced a 100% pass rate in 2015 were treated to a banquet to honour and celebrate their achievement. Apart from the social event for these educators,
they were also presented with certificates and trophies as a gesture of appreciation, and “all the teachers who got 100% got on top of their salaries a token of appreciation” (H1). Another gesture of appreciation and serving as a team building event, the school also organises an end-of-year party in December to thank all staff members for working hard during the year, to bid them farewell, “and wish them a prosperous holiday and a happy new year” (H1).

4.4.1.5 Grade 12 intervention programme

Information from the focus group interviews indicated that learner performance at the research site has been steadily increasing over the past five years because “it has been escalating, it’s going up and up and up” (H3). The improvement in learner performance is remarkable in that “it has been increased substantially from the 70s up to a grand 100%, which is quite significant” (SP). When asked about what contributed to improved learner performance over the past years, both educators and school management team participants mentioned the Grade 12 school intervention programme as one of the positive factors which contributed greatly towards improved learner performance at the selected school. The intervention programme represents “before morning classes, writing of Friday tests and SSIP classes” (H1). The other head of department participant pointed out, however, that “above everything the camping, which was the pioneer project, was effective” (H2). The camping project entailed arranging an environment in which Grade 12 learners can study and prepare themselves optimally for the final examination. Comprehensively explained, the intervention programme for Grade 12 learners includes among other things, extra classes before and after school and during holidays, Grade 12 camping, school based tests, teaching strategies, the Grade 12 reporting policy and the Grade 12 examination policy. All of these components of the intervention programme for Grade 12s are discussed further on in this chapter.

Extra lessons as an intervention programme are yielding positive results for the selected school. Every school holiday, Grade 12 learners have holiday lessons which are timetabled to guide educators and learners. These lessons are closely monitored by the school management team to ensure 100% attendance by both educators and learners. The school principal participant emphasised that, “we have attendance registers in place, we keep records of written exercises, we mark and record for every Grade 12 learner who
Grade 12 learners also attend Saturday lessons every weekend during the school term from January until they write the final examination. It was evident from the Saturday class attendance registers that these Saturday lessons are compulsory and are closely monitored. A timetable is also put in place to enable the smooth running of the Saturday lessons.

Apart from holiday lessons and Saturday classes, learners also attend afternoon lessons during the normal school week. These lessons are conducted from 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm after the normal school hours. A learner leader participant confirmed that the Grade 12s “have afternoon lessons, starting from 14:30 to 16:00 every day” (LL1). The main focus with the afternoon lessons is to provide extra support with the challenging subjects such as mathematics, physical sciences, accounting and economics.

It emerged from the focus group interviews with learners that they experience much value in attending before-school morning lessons as part of the intervention programme. The one learner leader participant emphasised that with the before-school morning lessons they still “have energy” (LL2) after a night’s good rest. These lessons are organised by individual educators who need more time with learners. They are conducted between 06:45 and 7:30 before the commencement of the normal school lessons. The principal participant acknowledged the conscientiousness of Grade 12 educators in that, “in the morning the school begins at 06:45 and educators begin to teach their lessons although our school policy states that school starts at 07:30, but the teachers are so dedicated that they sacrifice their time for the benefit of learners” (SP).

The Grade 12 school camping project was mentioned during the focus group interviews as the intervention programme that contributed most positively towards improving learner performance in the Grade 12 final examination. One of the top learner achiever participants affirmed as follows: “We also have the camping coming as well, which I hope will last longer than 2 weeks because we get so much learning done during this camping” (TAL2). The camping event commences on the opening day of term 4 until learners start writing the Grade 12 examination. The one learner leader participant explained the value of the camping project which “they [school] also organise for us just before we write the first paper so that we can study with focus” (LL1). The Grade 12 school camping event takes place at the school and the school hall is turned into a hostel for learners. One
educator participant explained the rationale with arranging the Grade 12 camping event, namely that the staff “are organising the school camping for learners so that they can study without being disturbed and we hope it’s going to work since it helped us the previous year” (GR12E2). Learners bring their own bedding for the camping. Parents and the school fundraising committee organises fundraising activities to raise money to buy food for learners and educators during the camping period. The food is prepared by the catering staff at school and no learner is allowed to leave the school premises during the camping period.

It was explained in the focus group interviews that during the Grade 12 camping period learners do revision according to a camping revision timetable. Revision lessons starts at 7:30 in the morning and continues until 9:30 in the evening. From 9:30 pm to 11:00 pm, learners are engaged in supervised individual studies. The school management team is responsible for monitoring the teaching and learning process during the camping period because “it helps us to keep in touch with learners during the two weeks so that they cannot be lost or find the direction that is not right” (H1). Educators are paid extra money according to the number of lessons conducted during the camping period. This motivates educators to demand more lessons on the timetable, so that there are no free periods on the timetable. The main purpose of camping is to optimally prepare the Grade 12 learners for the final examination so that they can pass convincingly in order for them to enter into universities or better their chances of viable job opportunities in the labour market. The school principal participant confirmed that, “this [camping project] assisted this particular school to get good results in the Grade 12 final examination” (SP). The camping is compulsory for all Grade 12 learners because no camping fee is paid by learners and it is done at school. The timetable is drawn up in such a way that all Grade 12 educators have an opportunity to attend to their learners.

Data collected from the focus group interview with the school management team elicited the different teaching strategies applied at the selected school. One of the teaching strategies applied is the group teaching strategy whereby all educators in a specific subject department teach the Grade 12 class together as a group. “Learners are organised into groups and each group is taught the same content by different educators” (SP). It was explained that if learners are taught the same topic by different educators there is a better chance that they will comprehend because educators use different teaching methods and
strategies. Learners are also given an opportunity to teach fellow learners on topics in which they are competent. One of the learner leader participants confirmed that, “we cannot be good in every topic in the subject, so if someone comes with a certain topic and I come with another, we can help each other so that we can pass at the end of the year” (LL2). The more the learners teach each other the more they internalise the concepts of the topic. Another teaching strategy applied by the school is one on one teaching. Educators identify learners at risk and teach them one-by-one concentrating on areas of weaknesses. The identification of learners at risk takes place “after tests and examination when I normally have one on one interaction with individual learners” (GR12E4).

It emerged from the focus group interviews with all participants that learners frequently write one hour revision tests every Friday using past examination papers so that educators can measure learner performance and to make learners familiar with examination questioning techniques. One educator participant confirmed that, “in preparing Grade 12 learners we are using the past examination papers” (GR12E1) of which the results of these Friday tests are announced at the assembly on Monday mornings where the top achievers in each subject are paraded in front of all the learners. This is done to motivate learners and to encourage them to strive for the first positions in the different subjects all for the sake of a thorough mastering of important subject content and to be prepared for the final examination. It was confirmed by an educator participant that the acknowledging of good results on Friday tests “creates motivation and encouragement because learners find pride when standing at assembly, some of them make it a point that they study hard so that every week their names are called and that encourages them to keep on studying until the final examination” (GR12E4). Friday tests have timetables to enable the smooth running of the tests and to make educators accountable if they fail to administer the tests. The school principal pointed out that they “have an attendance register in place” (SP) and learners are made to sign the attendance register to monitor their attendance. The results of the tests are critically analysed by the school assessment team and the subject educators so that the revision of the tests is planned based on the areas of weaknesses of individual learners.

Another intervention strategy which improved learner performance in the Grade 12 final examination at the research site was the introduction of Computer Application Technology as an additional subject. Grade 12 learners at the research site are doing 8 subjects which
enhances their chances of passing even if they fail two subjects in the final examination. The school was able to build and equip the computer laboratory through fundraising activities which are organised by the fundraising committee. In this regard information from the focused group interviews with educators and the school management team indicates that the school has a fundraising committee which organises fundraising activities for the school. The school has managed to build a computer laboratory and a library which is well-equipped with books and electronic sources. Thanks to fundraising initiatives, the school is able to fund the school camp and cater for other minor financial needs of the school. It was evident that the fundraising initiatives have gone a long way in improving learner performance at the selected school.

Another major contribution of fundraising endeavours towards improved learner performance at the research site is sponsoring of educational tours to places like Eskom, the Sci-bono physical science museum, the botanical gardens and many other educational places, to consolidate what learners learn in the classroom and to extend their horizons of understanding. It was stressed by educator participants that educational tours “help learners in township schools to connect what they learn in the classroom and what they experience beyond their normal day-to-day learning” (GR12E6). During educational tours learners are afforded an opportunity to do their tasks and experiments at the state of the art science laboratory of a world class university such as, for example, the University of Pretoria. The exposure to such world class technology serves to motivate learners to aspire for high ideals which they understand are, in the first place, only possible through hard and consistent work.

### 4.4.2 Educator factors

Educator factors play a major role in improving Grade 12 results in township schools. Most of the educators interviewed have been teaching Grade 12 for more than five years and they are well-versed in the demands of Grade 12 work. Information from the log book shows that most of the educators are dedicated and committed because they are always punctual for work and their rate of absenteeism is very low. Educators are always punctual for their lessons and learners, especially the top achieving ones, get the impression that “they [educators] all want to have us… it’s like they are fighting over us” (TAL3). Educators go an extra mile by coming early in the morning to conduct morning lessons and they also
attend weekend classes, afternoon classes and holiday classes. Lesson plans indicate that educators thoroughly prepare their work and this results in improved learner performance. The virtue of a teacher with a calling for the profession was explained as follows: “On top of that, a teacher may plan, a teacher may have resources but most of the time teachers who are patient, teachers who are dedicated, polite and teachers who do thorough preparations always get good results” (H3). All educators are eager to make learners pass and they arrange the Grade 12 intervention timetable as a team, sharing the lessons equally. The school principal participant emphasised that, “educators are goal oriented and they are focused on achieving 100% in their subjects” (SP) which confirmed that the educators at the school under study consider teaching as a calling because they are passionate about their profession resulting in positive learner performance.

Although educators at the selected school play a pivotal role in improving the performance of all learners, they do tend to concentrate on the top achievers and neglect slow learners. This was pointed out by one of the top achieving learners who stated that “there is a part where teachers tend to focus more on learners with potential… I don’t like that” (TAL3). When asked what the main reason was for not liking the favouring of high achievers, it was clear that it related to not adhering to the demand of treating all learners equally. It further relates to exposing high achievers and making them feel uncomfortable and guilty for receiving top class treatment at the expense of their peers. For that reason, it was important to the learner participant that “they [educators] should be focusing on the whole class to avoid favouritism [that] does play a big role, I am sorry but it’s the truth” (TAL3).

4.4.3 Learner factors

During the focus group interviews with learners, it emerged that learners play a central role in determining learner performance in the Grade 12 final examination. In this regard one of the top achieving learner participants explained the proportion of own input to that of educators by stating that “educators are adding up to 25% ... you have to work on your own ... you have to go an extra mile ... it’s about them planting a seed and you just have to water it” (TAL2). It was clear from interviews with learners that many learners are aware that, for them to produce good results they have to be committed to their schoolwork. Dedicated educators and supportive parents without commitment from learners will not produce desired results. It has been noted that many learners at the school under study
are disciplined because they are presentable, polite and they warmly welcome visitors. The daily attendance register and the intervention programme attendance register indicated that learners’ attendance is very high. It was indeed clear that many learners at the school under study are committed and dedicated to their work because they are always punctual for their lessons and they attend morning lessons.

However, although the majority of learners are conscientious workers it emerged from the focus group interviews with learner participants that some of the learners are not serious about their schoolwork. One of the learner participants confirmed some learners’ motivation for their schoolwork as relating to the fact that “some of us come to school because parents want us to be at school” (TAL1). Many participant learners complained that educators are putting a lot of pressure on them because they want the learners to pass their subjects convincingly. The one top achieving learner participant commented as follows: “Well, all I was saying is that they are putting too much pressure on us, it’s like this one [educator] is working towards obtaining a 100% for her subject and the same thing is happening with other teachers” (TAL3). The impression from many of the learner participants’ responses is that learners do not have the self-drive to pass, but they are passing because educators are piling pressure on them to pass. This impression was confirmed by educator participants who indicated that learners are not serious about their schoolwork. The one educator participant explained Grade 12 educators’ predicament as relating to fact that “the challenges we face as educators is the lack of seriousness in learners, especially learners from townships” (GR12E3). There is no serious commitment and dedication from some of the learners and as a result they do not perform optimally in their final examination.

4.4.4 Factors of policy implementation

An analysis of relevant documents at the research site showed that the selected school has examination-based policies which focus on improving learner performance in the Grade 12 final examination. The Grade 12 final school examination policy aims at preparing Grade 12 learners for the final examination. It is stated in the policy on the Grade 12 final school examination that, “the Grade 12 final school examination policy is an internal control system which ensures that all matriculants are fully prepared for the final examination” (Grade 12 final school examination policy). The policy assesses individual
performances of learners and their readiness to write the matric examination by setting conditions which learners should meet before they write the final examination. One of the conditions is that subjects for which learners achieve 30% and less in the Grade 11 final examination must be replaced with appropriate options. Parents of affected learners are called during the first week of term one to discuss this development.

The second condition of the policy is that, learners should pass the pre-registration examination written by the end of February, the first term examination, the mid-year examination and the preparatory examination for them to write all the subjects in the final examination. Learners who fail throughout the year will be asked to write only those subjects they are doing well in. This means that these learners will write their matric examination over two years because, as stated in the relevant policy, “if learners continuously fails March, June and preparatory examination, the school reserves the right to extend their matric course with one year” (Grade 12 final school examination policy). It was clear from an analysis of relevant documents that the research site’s policy on final school examination was in line with the Department of Basic Education’s Progression Policy which allows slow progressing learners to write fewer subjects in the final examination. The Council of Education Ministers (CEM) resolved that learners who are not coping with their schoolwork be given a chance to write three or four subjects first and write the remaining subjects the following year.

Another school based policy put in place to improve learner performance is the school reporting policy. The policy aims at furthering the aspirations of the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) on attainment of quality results by learners. The policy states that learners from Grade 10 to 12 should obtain 50% and above in five subjects for them to pass in term 1, 2 and 3. In the Senior Phase learners should obtain 50% or above in six of the nine subjects offered in the phase. Learners have to meet the above minimum requirements for their reports to indicate that they have passed terms 1, 2 and 3. In term 4 the GDE’s Promotion and Progression Policy will take precedence so that the school will not be in breach of the GDE’s promotion and progression requirements. The GDE’S Promotion and Progression Policy requires learners in the Senior Phase to obtain 50% in Home Language, 40% in the First Additional Language and Mathematics, 40% in any other three subjects and 30% in any other two of the remaining subjects. In this regard, the school uses the GDE policy to promote and progress learners in term 4.
It has been noted in the research site’s reporting policy document that learners tend to aim to meet the minimum promotion requirements in order to be promoted or progressed to the next grade. As stated in the school reporting policy document, “this is a perilous approach that has led to learners failing or achieving mediocre passes that will render them unemployable or failing to qualify for tertiary education after finishing matric” (school reporting policy). The promotion requirement of 30% sets low standards and expectations among learners, as a result of which many township learners fail to meet university entry requirements or basic employment requirements in the labour market. Many learners in township schools do not aim at achieving bachelor passes in the Grade 12 final examination and as a result they are ill-prepared for basic employment in the labour market. The selected school strongly believes that the pass requirement of 50% in terms 1, 2 and 3 contributed to the improved pass rate at the end of the year as “learners are used to the culture of aiming high” (SP).

School documents at the research site showed that many of the Senior Phase learners (Grades 8-9) are promoted to high school without being fully prepared for high school resulting in high failure rates in the Grade 12 final examination. An analysis of applicable educational documents indicates that this scenario is caused by the National Policy Pertaining to the Programme and Promotion Requirements as stated in the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) which sets the pass mark for senior phase at 40% and 30% depending on the subject. For Home Language learners need 50%, 40% in five learning areas including Mathematics and First Additional Language and 30% in two of the remaining subjects for learners to pass successfully. Many learners at this phase do not put more effort into examination because they pass through completing assessment tasks which constitute 40% of the final mark. An educator participant confirmed that “learners are not serious with their work, they come to school only to fulfil their daily routines” (GR12E1) because learners know they do not have to make an effort to pass and even if they fail they are propelled to the next grade by certain educational policies. The school principal participant pointed out that one of the educational policies which pushed learners to the next grade despite the learners failing is the National Assessment Circular 3 of 2015 which states that, “the Council of Education Ministers (CEM) approved a dispensation for mark adjustment in three subjects per learner in 2015. The mark adjustment will apply to learners who obtain a mark which is within a 7% range of the pass requirement in three subjects” (The National Circular 3 of 2015). The school principal participant confirmed that
this arrangement also applies to the 2016 school year “where learners will get a mark adjustment of 6% and 5% in 2017 meaning that learners are given a bonus of 7% of the total pass mark to help them pass” (SP). In addition to these adjustments, the National Curriculum Statement on progression requirements states that, “learners may be progressed once in the senior phase to prevent learners being retained in the phase for more than four years” (National Curriculum Statement). This means that learners are progressed to the next grade despite failing in order to avoid multiple repetitions and being over aged in the grade.

With regard to progressing learners to next grades, one of the heads of department participants pointed to the District Memorandum 563 of 2015 of Gauteng Province on standardisation of Grade 10 and 11 Physical Sciences and Mathematics which instructs schools to “add 30 marks to all learners who obtained below 180 marks in the final examination out of the total mark of 300” (District Memo 563 of 2015). This instruction, together with the National Policy pertaining to Programme and Promotion Requirements of the National Curriculum Statement which states that learners may be retained only once in the phase, resulted in a number of learners reaching Grade 12 without being fully prepared for Grade 12. This raised many concerns and criticism of the policy from school leaders because the progressed learners were not coping despite remedial attention given to them.

The Department of Basic Education’s progression policy has been heavily criticised by school principals and teacher’s country wide and also by the school management team and staff of the research site. The progression policy resulted in the Council of Education Ministers taking a decision to allow the progressed learners to modulate their matric by spreading it over two years. Educators and school management team participants explained that the implications of the progressed learner policy also applied to their school in the sense that learners who progressed to Grade 12 are to write only those subjects in which they are doing well in that year and the rest of the subjects only in the following year. Although many school principals welcomed the decision of a two-year matric enrolment because it was affecting the pass rate in the Grade 12 final examination positively which would otherwise have been very poor, it was stressed by the deputy school principal that the policy on a two-year-matric enrolment “is impacting negatively on township schools’ provision of quality education” (DSP). Grade 12 learners know that a
two-year-matric involvement is possible and, considering the fact that employment possibilities are few for potential labour force applicants who are poorly skilled, remaining in school is a good option. This situation impacts negatively on many Grade 12 learners’ diligence and influences school staff’s attempts to sustain a positive culture of teaching and learning negatively.

4.4.5 Negative factors influencing the academic performance of grade 12 learners

Although the selected school has made some great strides in improving the Grade 12 pass rate to 100%, the pass rate for bachelor passes is still very low, namely only 13% for 2011, 18% for 2012, 23% for 2013, 19% for 2014 and 23% for 2015. The factors that were identified as major factors hampering effective teaching and learning at the school under investigation included aspects such as the conditions prevailing in the townships, the home conditions of learners, conditions at school, the Secondary Schools Improvement Programme (SSIP), the feeding scheme, the school based assessments, and political interferences.

4.4.5.1 Conditions prevailing in townships

Conditions prevailing in townships make some learners develop negative attitudes towards school work. Township learners lack role models to inspire them to work hard at schools. In this regard one learner participant affirmed that, “there are tsotsis, gangsters, and these are role models for learners” (LL2). Role models in township schools are gangsters who drive fancy cars and wear expensive labels. This creates a wrong perception among township learners who think that the only route to a better living is through crime. An educator participant explained the predicament of township compilation, namely that, “although there are people who are affluent, they do not want to stay in townships, so at the end of the day learners do not have role models” (GR12E3). Due to a lack of motivation because of a lack of role models living in the township environment, many learners do not optimally prepare for the Grade 12 final examination because they do not understand the value of a proper education. The result is that these learners fail to obtain bachelor passes as a gateway for further study or getting reasonable post-matric employment in the labour market.
Another condition in townships which hampers learner performance is the noise in township homes emanating from the constant and numerous parties taking place in the township environment. A learner leader participant stated that, “it is difficult for us to study in townships because of parties, beers, girls and peers roaming in the streets” (LL2). During these parties constantly taking place with loud beating music and shrill screaming, learners are exposed to noise, drugs, sexual abuse and beer which affect their study routines to such an extent that, “you sometimes wish that at the beginning of the year in January I could go somewhere, away from township where I could study” (LL2). With these constant party conditions in townships, learners are exposed to health risks and the readily availability of all kinds of drug abuse vices. In this regard a learner leader participant confirmed the readily availability of substances because “at every street corner they sell weed, drugs, alcohol, whatever” (LL2).

Although candle light has assisted many successful business people in the past with their education, a lack of electricity was cited as a negative factor inhibiting proper study habits and therefore contributing towards poor performance by learners in township schools. Some of the learners come from informal settlements which do not have any electricity, while other learners’ parents cannot afford to pay electricity bills, and load shedding also inhibits a proper study timetable. Added to limited electricity provisioning is the challenge for township schools to photocopy learning materials adequately when electricity provision is not stable.

4.4.5.2 Home conditions of learners

Home conditions of learners in many townships are not conducive for effective studying such as preparing for the final school examination. Due to financial constraints, some families live in a rented one room. Many parents of township learners live in devastating poverty and unemployment which makes them unable to find decent accommodation for their families. An educator participant emphasised how difficult it is to describe these poor conditions in which many learners are living by saying, “let everyone come down to the ground and see for themselves the socio-economic issues which are affecting townships” (GR12E3). The single room serves multi-purposes of being the kitchen, sitting room as well as the bedroom for more than ten people. One learner complained that, “it’s difficult for us to study at home because of disturbances from cell phones and television channels”
This difficulty to study relates to a conflict of interest between the learner and members of the family in that the learner wants to study while the family members want to go on with their normal lives of cooking and watching television. A learner leader participant confirmed that “television has a lot of influence in disturbing our education.” This disturbance by the television relates to family members who do not value education and who constantly watch television due to not having any form of pastime other than compulsive television watching. Such conditions make it difficult for learners to optimally prepare for the Grade 12 final examination. Furthermore, the television watching parents find it difficult to meaningfully help their children with homework due to limiting personal circumstances and lower education levels. When asked whether their parents help them with their homework, the one learner participant said “my parents only help me where and when they can which is almost never.” It was clear from the interviews with all participants that the socio-economic status of many parents of learners in township schools hinders learners’ effective preparation for the Grade 12 final examination.

4.4.5.3 Conditions at school

The socio-economic status of the school is a determinant factor influencing the successes of learners with the Grade 12 final examination. It has been observed that the school buildings are well maintained and broken window panes are replaced on time because the entire classrooms have window panes. However, a lack of adequate resources was cited by learner participants as hampering their optimal performance in the Grade 12 final examination. The one learner participant pointed out that they “do not have enough chemicals in the science laboratory to carry out experiments” (SL3). These experiments are important to perform in order to understand the theory better. Although the selected school had made a remarkable effort of building the science laboratory, some of the chemicals are in short supply which results in learners not performing well in their tasks. It emerged from the focus group interviews with learners that there is also a shortage of teaching and learning materials such as calculators, pencils and pens.

One way of countering the shortage of stationery is to rely on peers for assistance because, as stated by one of the learner leader participants, “I believe that everyone has a spare calculator or pen, we do assist each other as learners” (LL2). In the same way the deputy school principal participant explained that the school “sourced resources like...”
tablets, furniture and all kinds of teaching and learning materials” (DSP) to be used as and when necessary. It was pointed out by educator participants that in general and by default many learners in township schools share basic resources such as pens, pencils and rulers. Educators also cited that they sometimes do not get their tasks on time from the typing pool due to a sudden breakdown of typing and photocopying machines. The delays in fixing the broken equipment result in educators failing to meet deadlines which impact negatively on learner performance in the Grade 12 final examination.

4.4.5.4 Secondary School Improvement Programme (SSIP)

Apart from attending the research site’s organised intervention programme, learners attend the Secondary School Improvement Programme (SSIP) organised by the Gauteng Department of Education. The SSIP programme is offered at selected schools and learners from other selected schools have to attend the programme offered at the selected schools. This creates overcrowding and high teacher-pupil ratios of one teacher for a class of over 60 learners. A learner participant complained that “there is over 60 learners in a SSIP classes, it is difficult for educators to control the class and attend to individual learners” (TAL1). Although participants acknowledged the SSIP initiative as a noble move by the Gauteng Department of Education in trying to improve the quality of education delivery to learners, they were of the opinion that high teacher-pupil ratios might defeat the whole purpose of the programme. Another concern about the SSIP initiative and about teaching in general that was raised by one of the learner participants was the need for teaching methods that are focused on providing individual and differentiated support. Although educator participants mentioned one-on-one teaching as an intervention strategy, not all educators are effectively implementing it whereas learners “really want teachers to do one on one teaching so that we [they] can understand better” (LL2). It was clear from the honest opinions of learner participants that not all learners are exposed to individual support which they consider to be vital for improving learner performance in the Grade 12 final examination.

4.4.5.5 The feeding scheme

Bloch (2009:77) stresses that apart from the fact that many township learners do not receive the necessary emotional support within their home environments that is crucial for
progress at school, these learners are also nutritionally challenged resulting in them not being prepared at all for effective teaching and learning. As was clear from the focus group interviews with all participants, the same kind of conditions are experienced at the selected school insofar as many learners come to school hungry. This condition is exacerbated by the fact that the school is not catered for by the feeding scheme provided by the government. The result is that learners either buy food from the school tuck-shop or bring their lunch packs from home to eat during lunch break. However, many learners do not have food to bring from home or have money to buy food at the tuck-shop resulting in a situation in which “many learners spend the whole day on empty stomachs” (GR12E2). Learners cannot focus on empty stomachs and this, results in learners not performing well in the Grade 12 final examination. As stated by an educator participant, “poverty causes learners to stay away from school because they lack the basic requirements of school uniform and food to be able to attend lessons” (GR12E5).

4.4.5.6 The school-based assessments

The magnitude of school-based assessment and the time spent on carrying out these assessments was cited as a negative factor affecting learner performance in the Grade 12 final examination. Educator participants complained that they spend much of their time preparing assessment tasks and learners’ files for internal and external moderation to the expense of valuable time that should have been used for teaching and learning. One of the educator participants explained as follows: “We spend much time on examination, running up and down doing moderation … we spend little time on the actual teaching in the classroom” (GR12E4). Educator participants explained that at least three moderations have to be done per task, namely pre-moderation, actual moderation and post moderation. Learners have to do three to four tasks per term depending on the subjects. Educators complained that they spend most of their instructional time on assessment tasks which constitutes 25% of the final mark, compromising the time needed to thoroughly prepare the learners for the final examination which constitutes 75% of the total mark. For one of the educator participants the problem relates to the curriculum per se because “a lot has to be done to the curriculum itself and how it is structured … the structures of school terms make us spend less time on teaching and learning” (GR12E3). It was clear from interviews with educator participants that a contributing factor for many learners not performing
optimally in the final examination is the little time available for effective teaching and learning resulting in learners not being adequately prepared for the final examination.

4.4.5.7 Political interference

From the focus group interview with the school management team it was revealed that there is a lot of political interference in the provision of education in township schools which contributes substantially to the poor performance of learners in the Grade 12 final examination. During the focus group interview with the school management team the school principal pointed out that there are a lot of disturbances from political parties and student movements which affect the implementation of decisions and policies of the school. The school principal participant emphasised that “there must be minimum political figure(s) interfering with school issues” (SP) in order for the realising of proper and genuine teaching and learning to benefit learners and ensuring that they have a future. It was pointed out that student movements such as the Congress of South African Students have the power to order learners in schools to partake in a strike even if the learners of that school are not affected by the problem they are demonstrating for. Schools are becoming the battle fields for political parties to gain political mileage at the expense of providing good quality education, because “learners have to leave the classrooms even if they are writing examination!” (SP).

4.5 SUMMARY

It was clear from the focus group interviews with participants that the school camping initiative is the major contributing factor towards improved Grade 12 learner performance at the school under study. In the very same year the school introduced the school camping event the school managed to obtain a 100% pass rate in the Grade 12 final examination. In addition to school camping, the school leadership functions and school based policies have played a pivotal role in improving the performance of Grade 12 learners at the research site. Teacher quality also played a significant role in improving the performance of Grade 12 learners because educators at the school under investigation are self-determined to produce 100% pass rates for Grade 12 learners in their subjects.
Although the school has managed a 100% matric pass rate, the school needs to address some of the identified negative factors in order for learners to obtain bachelor passes in the final examination. The school has to intensify its one-on-one teaching because many of the interviewed learners believed that it is one of the intervention methods which might improve their performance in the Grade 12 final examination. Lack of teaching and learning resources especially in the science laboratory has been identified as a negative factor which affects learner performance in the Grade 12 final examination due to the lack of consolidating knowledge through practical application. Learner attitudes towards schoolwork and adverse living conditions in townships impact negatively on learner performance in the Grade 12 final examination.

The national policy pertaining to the Programme and Promotion Requirements of the National Curriculum statement is progressing learners to Grade 12 who are not academically prepared for engagement with Grade 12 schoolwork and the writing of the final school examination. This results in many progressed learners failing to cope with the Grade 12 curriculum despite receiving remedial work. The rippling effect of progressed learners who are not coping with the Grade 12 curriculum, and who are then allowed to write their matric in two years encourage these learners to have a relaxed approach towards their schoolwork. This relaxed approach eventually contributes to limited employment possibilities for these learners, thus hampering societal improvement.
CHAPTER FIVE
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study was to investigate how Grade 12 learners from township schools can be assisted to pass the final school examination satisfactorily (par 1.5). Related aims included (par 1.5).

- To identify factors assisting learners to perform adequately in the Grade 12 final examination.
- To identify factors inhibiting learners to perform optimally in the Grade 12 final examination.
- To identify ways of utilising positive factors to assist Grade 12 learners to perform optimally in their final school examination.

The focus of this study was to find solutions to problems relating to the fact that many learners in township schools do not pass the Grade 12 final examination with bachelor passes resulting in them having limited chances of enrolling for further studies or entry into the labour market. In order to achieve the aims of the study satisfactorily, data was collected by both a literature study and an empirical investigation (par 1.6). Data from the empirical investigation were collected through interviewing 18 participants from one selected school in the Tshwane South District of Gauteng Province (par 1.6.2; par 4.2). Empirical data were recorded, transcribed, and analysed and the findings of this empirical investigation together with the literature study findings are summarised next.

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

This study is divided into five chapters and the summary is presented as an integrated whole of literature study findings and empirical study findings. Instructional leadership as the theoretical framework underlying this study relates to all the actions educational managers on all levels of school management carry out to improve learner performance (par 2.2). Instructional leadership is acknowledged in this study as an important aspect of school functioning which is practised according to general consensus of acceptability by
school managers (par 4.4.1). Although the role played by school principals is an important element of effective management in successful schools, the role played by educators as classroom managers is equally crucial for effective teaching and learning (par 2.2).

In order to collect empirical data to support literature review findings an interpretivist research paradigm was adopted (par 3.3; par 3.3.2). A qualitative research approach was used in this study with a case study as the research design (par 3.4; par 3.4.3; par 3.5). An empirical investigation was conducted at one purposefully selected township school. A total of five focus group interviews were conducted with school leaders, educators and learners (par 3.6; par 3.7.1). Empirical data were recorded, coded, analysed and categorised into major themes representing factors influencing learner performance in the Grade 12 final examination (par 3.8).

Literature study findings and empirical study findings revealed that effective leadership, dedicated educators, learner commitment and effective policy implementation assist learners to perform optimally in the Grade 12 final examination (par 4.4.1; par 4.4.2; par 4.4.3; par 4.4.4). Factors inhibiting learners to be optimally prepared for the Grade 12 final examination relate to a lack of sufficient subject content knowledge by educators in order to facilitate curriculum content effectively, negative attitudes by learners relating to a lack of motivation and low achievement expectations emanating from stereotyping and learner differences such as race, class, gender and sexual orientation. Non-progressive policies in the sense of allowing learners to be progressed to Grade 12 without being fully prepared for the demands of Grade 12 schoolwork, and the grim conditions prevailing in township environments in general and in the homes of learners and in the majority of township schools in particular were also determined as negative factors inhibiting learners to perform optimally (par 2.8; par 4.4.5.1; par 4.4.5.2; par 4.4.5.3; par 4.4.5.4).

Leadership factors influencing the performance of learners in the Grade 12 final examination relate to instructional leadership functions as these functions are carried out by the school principal, the teachers as classroom managers and the learner leaders as junior school managers at all levels of school management (par 2.3). Instructional leadership encompasses planning relating to vision, mission and school objective formulation, the supervision of the teaching and learning process, shared leadership as this shared leadership involves the whole staff taking responsibility for successful teaching
and learning, creating a conducive school climate for optimal learning, the professional
development of educators that is continuously pursued, and shared leadership as this
shared leadership pertains to joint decision making (par 2.3; par 2.4; 2.4.1; par 2.4.2; par
2.4.3; par 2.4.4). Corroborating with the literature review findings the empirical
investigation confirmed that instructional leadership functions include monitoring the
teaching and learning process by means of class visits, book inspection and file control,
and coordinating meetings to ensure concerted focus on teaching and learning of
applicable curriculum content. Instructional leadership also pertains to creating enabling
school structures that relate to a well-defined hierarchy of authority and channels of
communication, formulating the intervention programme that pertains to extra lessons, the
school camping project and Friday tests, motivating staff members and learners by means
of rewards for well-deserved performances and a continual presence in the teaching and
learning environment (par 4.4.1.1; par 4.4.1.2; par 4.4.1.3; par 4.4.1.4).

The cornerstone for improving learner performance is thorough planning. This planning
entails defining the school’s vision, formulating the school’s mission and developing goals
that realistically reflect the school’s vision (par 2.3). It further includes articulating and
disseminating the purpose of the school vision, mission and goals to all stakeholders. In
line with literature study findings the empirical study findings confirmed that instructional
leadership is a crucial aspect of school functioning which includes formulating the school’s
vision and developing fair and constructive assessment plans (par 4.4.1). Planning is an
important dimension of school leadership that encompasses all the functions carried out by
school managers at all levels of school management to ensure that effective teaching and
learning is taking place at school on a daily basis (par 2.6.1; par 4.4.1).

Managing the instructional programme is the major function of the instructional leader (par
2.6.2). The specific job functions of managing the instructional programme include
supervising, monitoring and evaluating educators’ and learners’ work. When further
delineated the functions encompass class visits, book inspection, moderation, file
inspection, results analysis and monitoring attendance (par 4.4.1.1). In order to ensure that
Grade 12 learners perform satisfactorily, managing the instructional programme is the first
and core function of the instructional leader and, to ensure that effective teaching and
successful learning are realised, this constructive management of the instructional
programme cannot be over-emphasised. Although the role of the school principal as the
Coordinating staff development creates a consistent and a supportive school environment in which all members work together as a team resulting in improved learner performance which also applies to learner performance in the Grade 12 final examination (par 2.6.2). School leadership’s visibility, developing positive relationships among staff members and rewarding educators and learners for outcomes well achieved, results in improved teaching and learning which engenders improved learner performance (par 4.4.1.4). An important aspect of effective teaching for successful learning is staff development meetings that are held frequently to discuss curriculum changes and challenges faced during curriculum implementation (par 4.4.1.2).

Two contrasting management structures exist, namely professional and bureaucratic structures which when applied constructively result in improved performance of learners including learners in Grade 12 writing their final school examination (par 2.7). On a micro level and with regard to each school’s own governance context, schools have different management structures which include structures such as the school governing body, the school management team, the school assessment team, the school assessment irregularity committee, the disciplinary committee, the examination committee, the sports committee and the learner representative council (par 4.4.1.3). These management-related arrangements provide a structured environment which gives staff members and learners a sense of belonging and security and which assist with sustained focus on teaching and learning. The contribution of school managers at all levels of school functioning to effectively coordinate the realisation of different school structures engender improved learner performance in the Grade 12 final examination.

Related to the functioning of different school management structures to ensure successful learning is the practising of shared leadership by means of which school goals are achieved through an indirect path of delegating management functions to members of
school management teams, senior teachers and learner leaders (par 2.3). Although the school principal plays an important role in improving learner performance, this role is shared with educators, parents and learners who all work together as a collaborative team to improve learner performance in the Grade 12 final examination (par 4.4.1.5).

With reference to meetings as an instructional leadership function, focused, informative, vigilant and frequent meetings with an underlying theme and the arrangement of conditions for optimal learning results in improved learner performance in the Grade 12 final examination (par 4.4.1.2). The types of meetings which are important in improving the performance of learners in the Grade 12 final examination are the Grade 12 special parents’ meetings, the general parents’ meetings, staff meetings, staff development meetings and morning briefings (par 4.4.1.2). Of all these meetings, the Grade 12 special parents’ meetings are the most crucial because they specifically focus on improving the performance of learners in the Grade 12 final examination by providing parents with valuable information on a constructive routine which their children must follow at home in order to ensure enough time for study. Apart from empowering parents on how they can contribute to improving the performance of their children in the final examination, these parent meetings create a healthy teacher-parent rapport which is crucial for learner achievement specifically and for the effective functioning of the school in general (par 4.4.1.2).

A well-coordinated school intervention programme results in improved learner performance in the Grade 12 final examination. The school intervention programme includes aspects such as early morning classes, after school classes, weekend classes, holiday classes, Friday tests and the school camping project (par 4.4.1.5). These intervention programmes are closely monitored by the school management team through attendance registers and timetables. In addition to different extra-classes for the Grade 12 learners, the school camping project that relates to learners being housed at the school for a specified period of time for intensive teaching and learning contributes significantly towards improving the performance of learners in the Grade 12 final examination (par 4.4.1.5). The introduction of the Computer Application Technology as an additional subject increases the number of subjects learners write in the final examination from seven to eight, enhancing learners' chances of passing the Grade 12 final examination (par 4.4.4). Apart from the intervention programme relating to additional opportunities, fundraising
initiatives contribute to improved learner performance through sponsoring educational
tours and the building and equipping of the science and computer laboratories and the
school library which all expose learners to gaining a deeper insight into the facilitated
content (par 4.4.1.5).

Rewarding outstanding achievement motivates learners and educators to work hard
towards achieving their goals (par 2.3; par 4.4.1.4). Learners and educators are motivated
by motivational factors such as having social events which include banquets, award
ceremonies and end-of-year parties. Apart from serving as a gesture of appreciation, these
social events serve as team building events. During these social gatherings, outstanding
educators receive trophies, certificates of competency and salary adjustments while
learners receive certificates of competency, trophies and teaching and learning materials
such as tablets and calculators (par 4.4.1.4). Provision of incentives such as cold water
during summer and tea to members of staff and visitors reduces staff turnover in schools.
With reference to motivation as a key area of instructional leadership, motivation is a
determinant factor in improving the performance of learners in the Grade 12 final
examination (par 4.4.1.4).

Dedicated educators who are determined to improve the performance of learners are
those who are always punctual for their lessons, whose rate of absenteeism is low, who
walk the extra mile to offer extra classes and who are well-versed with the demands and
subject content of Grade 12 schoolwork (par 4.4.2). Competent and dedicated teachers
are characterised as producing high standards of work. This is possible because these
teachers have mastered the appropriate subject content, have knowledge and skills
regarding facilitating this subject matter to learners, understand the art of managing their
classrooms in such a way that optimal learning is possible, have adequate competencies
in the language of instruction, and have passion to put the well-being of learners always
first (par 2.11.1; par 4.4.2). Teacher quality is a factor which helps to improve the provision
of quality education to many township schools (par 2.9; par 2.11.1). However, many
educators in South African schools lack appropriate subject content due to endless
curriculum changes relating to the introduction of new topics and changes in the depth of
subject content with these changes not in line with what educators did during their training
(par 2.9). In-service training provision with regard to the changed curriculum narrates
curriculum changes without clarity on practical application resulting in educators
experiencing knowledge gaps with curriculum implementation due to the lack of a proper professional development programme (par 2.9; par 4.4.2). Because of the fact that it poses less of a challenge to facilitate curriculum content to high achievers, some educators tend to favour top achievers at the expense of slow learners which results in unequally attending to the learning needs of learners. The consequences of this unprofessional conduct by some teachers are that not all learners perform optimally in the Grade 12 final examination.

Apart from an effective school management team, dedicated educators and supportive parents, learners play a significant role in determining learner performance in the Grade 12 final examination through their dedication and commitment to take ownership for their own progress by being serious about their schoolwork (par 2.8; par 4.4.3). Learners who are always punctual, who are disciplined, who attend extra-classes, and who are presentable and polite produce bachelor passes in the Grade 12 final examination (par 4.4.3). Dedicated educators and supportive parents cannot warrant learners passing convincingly in the Grade 12 final examination without learners taking ownership for their own learning (par 4.4.3). Many learners residing in townships lack self-drive to pass and those who are passing are doing so due to piling pressure from educators and not because they are motivated by a vision of a quality future based on having an education (par 4.4.3). This lack of motivation and dedication from many township learners results in them being not fully prepared for the Grade 12 final examination.

A number of educational policies have been introduced within the South African context since the dawn of democracy in 1994 (par 2.10). The policy of decentralisation of power to school governing bodies resulted in parents also taking ownership for the well-being of their children’s schools and taking part in decision matters concerning their children’s schools and the teaching and learning process (par 2.10). This was a positive move because parents became actively involved and accountable for the learning of their children, resulting in improved performance of learners in the Grade 12 final examination. Although the policy of decentralisation was a noble initiative, its implementation is not effective at schools due to the fact that some members of school governing bodies lack the required knowledge and skills to effectively assist with the governing of their children’s schools (par 2.10). This results in learner performance being affected in many township
schools due to a lack of minimum resources needed for the viable teaching and learning with these minimum resources dependent on effective school governance.

The policy of Outcomes Based Education (OBE) was noble in the sense of developing a single and unified curriculum to reduce inequalities in the provision of education to all learners (par 2.10). The policy of no-fee schools enables many learners in townships to receive an education by bringing education to the doorsteps of South African learners from poverty-stricken communities who were previously deprived of their right to education (par 2.10). In conjunction with the education that has become accessible to all South African children, the Grade 12 final school examination policy that relates to closely assessing individual performance and readiness to write the final examination results in improved performances of learners in the Grade 12 final examination (par 4.4.4). The reason for this improvement relates to subject changes in Grade 12, passing all the school-based assessments convincingly and allowing progressed learners who failed to cope with the demands of the Grade 12 schoolwork to modulate their matric which results in learners being motivated to prepare themselves optimally for the Grade 12 final examination (par 4.4.4). School reporting policies which relates to attainment of high quality results by setting higher pass rates make learners have high aspirations of attaining quality results because the policy sets high standards of performance for learners (par 4.4.4).

The National Curriculum Statement (NCS) relating to the post-1994 curriculum for South African learners sets low standards and expectations for learners resulting in many learners failing to obtain bachelor passes in the Grade 12 final examination (par 2.10). These low standards and expectations relate to propelling failing learners to next grades by adding bonus marks for these learners resulting in them not being prepared for the demand of Grade 12 schoolwork (par 4.4.4). This bonus mark arrangement, the fact that learners are not allowed to repeat more than once in a specific school phase, and the eventual outcome that many progressed learners are not coping with the demands of Grade 12 schoolwork results in the Department of Basic Education allowing progressed learners to modulate their matric (par 4.4.4). This two-year-matric arrangement is seen by learners as a good option considering the fact that employment opportunities are few for a poorly skilled labour force (4.4.4).
Conditions that are not conducive to successful learning prevail in townships such as long distances from home to school, destructive extended family environments, exposure to drugs in the external environments and low language proficiency in the language of teaching and learning (par 2.11.2; par 4.4.5.1) These grim conditions are intensified by conditions prevailing in learners’ homes which include lack of emotional support from their parents, incomplete school uniforms, lack of food, and an acute lack of basic learning resources (par 2.11.2; par 4.4.5.2). Many learners live in overcrowded single-room-houses which hamper a proper studying routine within a silent environment as television watching by family members, cooking and sleeping are all carried out in a single room thus impacting negatively on Grade 12 final examination performance (par 4.4.5.2).

Internal factors inhibiting progress in township schools and acceptable performance in the Grade 12 final examination include acute shortages of teaching and learning materials such as chemicals, calculators, pens and pencils and huge teacher-learner ratios in the Secondary Schools Improvement Programme (SSIP) classes that hamper effective teaching and learning (par 4.4.5.4). The fact that not all schools are catered for by the national feeding scheme provided by the government results in many learners attending lessons on empty stomachs because not all learners are able to bring food from home or buy food from the school tuck-shop (par 4.4.5.5). With regard to actual teaching and learning, educators and learners spend too much time on school-based assessments due to assessment requirements that pertain to submitting many tasks per term, the moderation of those tasks and the preparation of files which decreases the time available for the actual teaching and learning process (par 4.4.5.6). Politically inspired demonstrations and protests by learners impact negatively on learner performance resulting in learners not being adequately prepared for the Grade 12 final examination (par 4.4.5.7).

5.3 CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY

Conclusions drawn from literature and empirical study findings are presented as answers to the research question on how Grade 12 learners can be assisted to perform optimally in their final school examination. The research question includes a focus on what the factors are that assist learners to perform optimally in the Grade 12 final examination and what the factors are, that inhibit this optimal performance.
The answers to the research questions are presented as conclusions of the study. In light of the above research questions it can be concluded that there are factors which assist learners to perform optimally in the Grade 12 final examination and there are factors inhibiting learner performance. Conclusions pertaining to these factors are presented next.

- **The importance of instructional leadership.** Determining a focused school vision, mission and goals, successfully articulating the school vision, formulating sustainable assessment plans, determining realistic year plans and developing detailed lesson plans improve learner performance in the Grade 12 final examination (par 2.3; par 2.6.1; par 4.4.1). The school leadership functions of managing the instructional programme relate to class visits, book inspection, file inspection, moderation of tasks, result analysis, monitoring attendance and reporting to parents (par 2.3; par 2.6.2; par 4.4.1.1). Well-coordinated and continuous staff development programmes which are relevant to current issues affecting curriculum implementation in the school result in improved learner performance in the Grade 12 final examination (par 2.3; par 2.11.3; par 4.4.1.2).

- **Supporting school structures in a context of shared instructional leadership.** The school governing body, the school management team, the school assessment team, the school assessment irregularity committee, the disciplinary committee, the examination committee, the sports committee and the learner representative council are all vital arrangements for creating a structured school environment which gives staff members and learners a sense of belonging and security (par 2.7; par 4.4.1.3). If school leadership functions are shared at all levels of school management, learners’ performance in the Grade 12 final examination is enhanced (par 2.3; par 2.4.4; par 4.4.1.1).

- **Constructive meetings to enhance teaching and learning.** Well-managed, informative, vigilant and frequent staff meetings, parents meetings, staff development meetings and morning briefings result in improved performance of learners (par 4.4.1.2).
• **A school intervention programme for improved learning.** The school intervention programme that improves Grade 12 performance includes crucial aspects such as the school camping project, extra-classes which include arrangements for before morning lessons, after school lessons, holiday lessons, weekend lessons and Friday tests (par 4.4.1.5).

• **Teacher and learner motivation.** Teachers and learners who are motivated are crucial for successful learner performance. Initiatives that inspire educators to perform their duties diligently encompass social events, salary increases and the awarding of trophies and certificates of competency (par 4.4.1.5). Learners are motivated by receiving trophies, certificates of competency and teaching and learning materials such as tablets and calculators (par 4.4.1.4).

• **Teacher professionalism.** Educators who improve learner performance in township schools have a passion for teaching, they put learners first, they have appropriate subject knowledge, they are competent in the language of teaching and learning, they are always punctual for lessons, they are always willing to walk the extra mile for their learners and their rate of absenteeism is very low (par 2.11.1; par 2.11.3; par 4.4.2). Educator-related factors which inhibit learners to perform optimally in the Grade 12 final examination include educators having a lack of subject content knowledge that is exacerbated by endless curriculum changes, in-service training events that do not address subject content deficiencies, the lack of a proper professional development programme for teachers and the favouring of top achievers by some educators at the expense of struggling learners (par 2.9; 4.4.2).

• **Learner performance.** Factors which assist learners to perform optimally in township schools include a positive learner attitude towards ownership-taking for their own academic well-being, well-disciplined conduct at all times, dedicated and goal orientated learners having perseverance for the learning process, presentable and polite learners, and learners who are always punctual and present at school (par 4.4.3). One learner factor inhibiting optimal preparation for the Grade 12 final examination relates to learners lacking self-drive and who are, therefore, not motivated and dedicated towards their schoolwork (par 2.8; par 4.4.3).
• **Policies influencing learner performance.** National policies that contribute to learners being adequately prepared for the Grade 12 final examination include the national feeding scheme that ensures that learners have a warm meal every school day, Outcomes Based Education that unifies the South African education system, the decentralisation of powers to school governing bodies to ensure optimal provisioning within context and the policy of no-fee schools to confirm the right to a basic education for all learners (par 2.10). School-based policies such as the school reporting policy and the Grade 12 final school examination policy play a crucial role in improving the performance of learners in the Grade 12 final examination (par 4.4.4). The National Policy Programme and Promotion Requirements that stipulates that learners are not allowed to repeat a phase more than once influence learner performance negatively in the sense that learners are not able to cope with Grade 12 schoolwork (par 4.4.4). The demands of school-based assessment such as the number of tasks that learners must complete, the moderation of these tasks and the tediousness of file preparations result in less time for the actual teaching and learning process (par 4.4.5.6).

• **Township and home environments.** Conditions prevailing in townships which affect learner performance in the Grade 12 final examination include constantly excessive noisy environments due to continuous parties, a lack of a basic supportive environment due to a total lack of appropriate role models, disintegrated family environments, and a constant exposure to drugs. A low level of achievement expectation among township inhabitants also influences learner performance negatively. These factors are exacerbated by a low language proficiency in the language of teaching and learning among township inhabitants and township learners (par 2.8; par 2.11.2; par 4.4.5.1). Grim home conditions within township environments that affect learner performance in the Grade 12 final examination negatively include a total lack of parental support for the emotional well-being and for the physical well-being of their children, the latter relating to ensuring a proper school uniform, sufficient food, and sufficient learning resources. The long distances learners travel from home to school, a lack of electricity and large families living in a single room with disturbances from this single-room-living such as family members watching television, influence learner’s ability negatively to perform optimally with their schoolwork (par 2.11.2; par 4.4.5.2).
The township school environment. Conditions at township schools which affect learner performance in the Grade 12 final examination negatively relate to insufficient teaching and learning materials such as a lack of chemicals in science laboratories, delays in fixing photocopying machines and a lack of basic learning equipment such as pens and pencils. (par 4.4.5.3). High teacher-learner ratios at the Secondary Schools Improvement Programme (SSIP) classes impact negatively on learner performance in the Grade 12 final examination (par 4.4.5.4). The lack of feeding schemes at all schools where these feeding schemes are needed results in learners attending school on empty stomachs which affects their performance in the Grade 12 final examination (par 4.4.5.5). Demonstrations and protests by learners typical of township schools affect the performance of these learners negatively in the Grade 12 final examination (par 4.4.5.7).

Factors which improve learner performance in the Grade 12 final examinations include focused school leadership, supporting school structures, constructive meetings, a well-managed school intervention programme, positive learners’ attitude and motivated educators. In contrast to the above, what affects learner performance negatively are factors such as grim conditions in township homes and schools, lack of feeding schemes in all schools and some of the school policies who actually hampers development.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations from this study on Grade 12 learner performance in township schools are drawn from the conclusions and are focused on improving the performance of Grade 12 learners in township schools.

RECOMMENDATION 1: Empower school leaders and educators through appropriate training

Relevant and proper professional development programmes for the teachers and school principals are vital in achieving meaningful learner performance transformation in schools. Curriculum changes must be accompanied by relevant and extended in-service training opportunities to enable educators to implement curriculum changes successfully (par 2.9;
par 4.4.4). The in-service training should be organised during school holidays to allow enough time for the workshops, so as to keep educators and school leaders abreast of the curriculum changes. The government should provide funding for leadership and management programmes at Universities in order to improve leadership skills especially for school leaders at township schools.

RECOMMENDATION 2: Improve the culture of teaching and learning in township schools through environments that are conducive for learning

The monitoring and supervision of educators and learners must be done frequently and vigilantly at all levels of school management throughout the year so that learners are adequately prepared for the Grade 12 final examination (par 4.4.1.2). Educators must plan their work strategically to distribute learners’ tasks evenly throughout the term or the year to avoid piling too much pressure on learners at the end of the term or the year (par 4.4.2). Educators must give sufficient attention to slow achievers to ensure they learn successfully. The length of the school camping project must be extended because meaningful teaching and learning takes place during school camping for which period learners are not exposed to grim conditions at their homes and the surrounding township environment (par 4.4.1.5). The school’s intervention programme should be extended to other grades so that by the time learners reach Grade 12 they are adequately prepared for the demands of Grade 12 schoolwork. The number of Grade 12 school-based assessments must be reduced insofar as that the June and the preparatory examination should constitute the school’s assessment mark so that educators and learners have more time for actual teaching and learning (par 4.4.5.6). More Secondary Schools Improvement Programme (SSIP) sites must be opened so that teacher-learner ratios are reduced for effective teaching and learning to take place. The ratios for SSIP classes must be less than the ratios in schools for these SSIP classes to be effective (par 4.4.5.4).

RECOMMENDATION 3: Set up policy review teams to make recommendations on policy implementation

Policy review teams must be set up at school level, district level, provincial level and at national level to review and make recommendations on the success of policies to achieve the envisioned goals they were set to achieve. The recommendations for reviewing
policies relevant to this study on Grade 12 learner achievement is a review in favour of demanding that learners must pass each phase in order for them to be promoted. In this regard learners may be progressed within the phase but for learners to go to the next phase they must pass regardless of the number of years learners take to pass (par 2.10; par 4.4.4). The introduction of a national or at least a provincial examination at the end of each phase is crucial so that learners are used to the culture of writing examination. Since Grade 12 is the only exit point from school, government must build more vocational colleges to cater for learners who pass with certificate and diploma endorsement.

RECOMMENDATION 4: Improve the living conditions of the poor in township environments

In order to move away from the concept of poverty alleviation to the concept of poverty eradication with accompanying decent housing, proper sanitation facilities and electricity, good quality education for the poor is important because a proper education can lead to social mobility. In this regard government must ensure enough schools in township areas where good quality education must be made accessible to the poor with a reduction of the distance between the school and the home (par 4.4.5.3). The policy of no-fee schools must be of such magnitude that learners also get all their teaching and learning materials at school including school uniforms, calculators, pens, pencils and rulers. Feeding schemes must apply to all township schools to ensure all learners are nourished in order to gain optimally from teaching and learning (par 4.4.5.5).

5.5 SUGGESTION FOR FURTHER STUDY

This study focused on the role of instructional leaders in improving the performance of learners in the Grade 12 final examination in township schools. In this regard the study focused on one selected school which was studied intensively by means of gathering data from the school management team and Grade 12 educators and learners. It is suggested that the study be extended for a broader perspective on learner performance in township schools by including parents as participants, and more township schools from different geographical areas. Such an extended study could provide a more comprehensive understanding of conditions prevailing in township schools and more ways of improving learner performance in the Grade 12 final examination. An extended study which includes
parents as participants can provide meaningful information on how parents can assist their Grade 12 children to perform optimally in the final examination.

5.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study focused on one selected school only which makes generalisation of the research findings to other schools difficult. The research sample did not include district or provincial officials who could have shed more light on matters of policy implementation. Neither did the study accommodate the inputs of parents on their children’s performance in Grade 12. The study focused on Grade 12 learners only not the whole school which, if it had done, might have given a holistic picture of learner performance in secondary schools from Grade 8 to 12. Regardless of the assurance that their anonymity was protected and that the collected data were used for study purposes only some of the participants were reluctant to answer some of the questions because they thought that by doing so they would be selling out their superiors.

5.7 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The aim of this study was to identify ways of assisting Grade 12 learners from township schools to perform optimally in their final school examination. It can be concluded that this study succeeded in identifying factors to assist learners from high-poverty schools to perform adequately in the Grade 12 final examination. These empowering factors were elicited in conjunction with factors inhibiting learners to perform optimally in the Grade 12 final examination. The researcher believes that the findings from this study contribute to the discourse on ways to improve learner performance in South African township schools.
REFERENCES


Hallinger, P. & Heck, R.H. 2002. “What do you call people with vision? The role of vision, mission and goals in school leadership and improvement”. In K. Leithwood, P. Hallinger and colleagues (Eds.). *The handbook of educational leadership and administration, (2nd Ed.).* Dordrecht:Kluner.


Spaull, N. 2013. *It’s the teacher’s lack of subject knowledge, stupid*. Sunday times 18 August (pp. 6).


APPENDIX A

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE
13 July 2016

Dear Mr M Mbuisa

Decision: Ethics Approval

Researcher: Mr M Mbuisa
Tel: +2771 080 4464
Email: 48291609@mylife.unisa.ac.za

Supervisor: Prof. HM van der Merwe
College of Education
Department of Educational Leadership and Management
Tel: +2712 993 4370
Email: vdmerhm@unisa.ac.za

Proposal: Assisting Gr 12 learners in a township school to perform optimally: A case study in Tshwane South District of Gauteng province

Qualification: M Ed in Educational Leadership and Management

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the College of Education Research Ethics Review Committee for the above mentioned research. Final approval is granted for the duration of the research.

The application was reviewed in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics by the College of Education Research Ethics Review Committee on 13 July 2016.

The proposed research may now commence with the proviso that:

1) The researcher/s will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.

2) Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study, as well as changes in the methodology, should be communicated in writing to the College of Education Ethics Review Committee. An amended application could be requested if there are substantial changes from the existing proposal, especially if those changes affect any of the study-related risks for
the research participants.

3) The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable
   national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and
   scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study.

Note:
The reference number 2016/07/13/48291609/21/MC should be clearly indicated on all
forms of communication [e.g. Webmail, E-mail messages, letters] with the intended
research participants, as well as with the College of Education RERC.

Kind regards,

Dr M Claassens
CHAIRPERSON: CEDU RERC
mcdtc@netactive.co.za

Prof VI McKay
EXECUTIVE DEAN
## Appendix B

For administrative use only:
Reference no: D2017 / 205
enquiries: Diane Bunting 011 843 6503

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**GDE Research Approval Letter**

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<tr>
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<td>1 August 2016 to 30 September 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of Researcher:</td>
<td>Mbuisa M.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address of Researcher:</td>
<td>10935 Ledwaba Street; P.O. Lethabile; Mamelodi East; 0122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone / Fax Number/s:</td>
<td>012 801 1015; 071 080 4464</td>
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<td>District/s/HO:</td>
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</tr>
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**Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research**

This letter serves to indicate that approval is hereby granted to the above-mentioned researcher to proceed with research in respect of the study indicated above. The onus rests with the researcher to negotiate appropriate and relevant time schedules with the school/s and/or offices involved. A separate copy of this letter must be presented to the Principal, SGB and the relevant District/Head Office Senior Manager confirming that permission has been granted for the research to be conducted. However, participation is VOLUNTARY.

The following conditions apply to GDE research. The researcher has agreed to and may proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met. Approval may be withdrawn should any of the conditions listed below be flouted:

**Conditions for Conducting Research in GDE**

1. The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s concerned, the Principal/s and the chairperson/s of the School Governing Body (SGB) must be presented with a copy of this letter.
2. The Researcher will make every effort to obtain the goodwill and co-operation of the GDE District officials, principals, SGBs, teachers, parents and learners involved. Participation is voluntary and additional remuneration will not be paid.

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Office of the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management ER&KM
30 Eloff, 44 Commissioner Street, Johannesburg, 2001
21 April 2016

Dear Mr M M Mbulea,

Thank you for your letter asking for permission to carry out research at our school. The board of Directors has approved your application and will be pleased to help you in any way.

Regards

S Khoza (Academic Director)
APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE 1

Interview instrument for the school principal, deputy school principal and HoDs

1. What are school leadership functions and roles, and which functions and roles are important in improving learner performance in the Grade 12 final examination?

2. How did your Grade 12 learners perform in the last five years?

3. What types of leadership structures exist in your school and how do these structures assist Grade 12 learners to perform optimally in their final examination?

4. How do class visits, book inspections and file control help in improving learner performance in the Grade 12 final examination and how often do you do them?

5. What are some of the factors you think are responsible for learner performance disparities between the former white schools and former black schools, and how do learners’ socio-economic status and the school’s social capital affect their performance in the teaching and learning process?

6. How do school policies, educational laws, circulars and district memorandums enhance or affect learner performance in the Grade 12 final examination?

7. How does teacher quality determine learner performance in the Grade 12 final examination?

8. What do you think could be done to improve the quality of teaching and learning in township schools and what intervention programme did you put in place to assist Grade 12 learners to perform convincingly in their final examination?
9. Parents are important stakeholders in the South African education system and how does your school involve them in assisting Grade 12 learners to perform optimally in their final examination?

10. What leadership qualities do you think can transform township schools to become centres of effective teaching and learning?
APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE 2

Interview instrument for Grade 12 educators

1. What are some of your achievements and challenges you are encountering in the teaching and learning of Grade 12 learners?

2. To what extent do you think leadership functions and leadership structures improve learner performance in the Grade 12 final examination?

3. How does poverty affect the teaching and learning process in the classroom and what do you think can be done to alleviate poverty in township and rural schools?

4. What are some of the school’s socio-economic factors which hamper effective teaching and learning in Grade 12 classes?

5. What could honestly be the reason for the better learner performance in former white schools than in former black schools?

6. What are you doing as a Grade 12 educator to help Grade 12 learners to perform optimally in their final examination?

7. What do you think the school could do to assist Grade 12 learners to perform satisfactorily in their final examination?

8. How are parents involved in helping Grade 12 learners to perform convincingly in the final examination?

9. What leadership qualities are needed to help impoverished schools to develop a culture of effective teaching and learning?

10. What could be done by all stakeholders to provide education of quality to all learners in South Africa?
APPENDIX F

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE 3

Interview instrument for learner leaders

1. How many members constitute the learner representative council and what is the function of the learner representative council?

2. How often do you hold meetings and what do you normally discuss during these meetings?

3. What are some of the challenges you face as learner leaders and what are some of the challenges your fellow learners encounter as Grade 12 learners?

4. In what ways does the learner representative council assist the school leadership in improving learner performance in the Grade 12 final examination?

5. How do you solve challenges you face as learner leaders?

6. What is the school doing to assist Grade 12 learners to perform optimally in the final examination?

7. What do you think could be done to improve learner performance in township schools in the Grade 12 final examination?

8. How are teaching and learning resources a determinant factor in improving learner performance in the Grade 12 final examination?

9. What are some of the home factors that hinder learner performance in the Grade 12 final examination?

10. As a learner representative council how do you help learners who come to school without adequate school stationary?
Interview instrument for top achievers

1. Why is the Grade 12 final examination important to you and why should you pass the Grade 12 final examination convincingly?

2. What are some of the challenges you encounter that can hamper you from performing optimally in the final examination and how best do you think these challenges can be addressed?

3. How effective are your educators in preparing you for the final examination and how do they prepare you?

4. Do you think your educators play a significant role in preparing you for the final examination and why?

5. What do you think school leaders could do so that all Grade 12 learners at your school could be fully prepared for the final examination?

6. What do you think the government can do to assist many learners in township schools to pass the Grade 12 final examination satisfactorily?

7. Which subjects do you think are more challenging and why do you think so?

8. What could be done by educators so that Grade 12 learners could pass all subjects convincingly?

9. How do you help fellow Grade 12 learners to be optimally prepared for the final examination?
10 How do teaching and learning resources help you to be adequately prepared for the Grade 12 final examination?
APPENDIX H

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE 5

Interview instrument for slow achievers

1. What do you enjoy being in Grade 12 and why?

2. What challenges do you encounter as Grade 12 learners that might hamper your progress in the final examination and what do you think could be done to address these challenges?

3. Does your school have enough teaching and learning resources and how do they help you in the teaching and learning process?

4. How are your educators helping you to be fully prepared for the final examination and what is the school leadership doing in order to prepare you adequately for the Grade 12 final examination?

5. How are the district officials supporting you to be optimally prepared for the Grade 12 final examination?

6. What challenges do you encounter at home that can hamper effective teaching and learning in Grade 12?

7. Do you have a feeding scheme at school and how important is it in assisting you to perform optimally in the Grade 12 final examination?

8. What challenges do you face when doing your homework and how do your parents assist you with your homework?

9. How does distance from home to school affect learner performance in the Grade 12 final examination?
10. What do you think could be done by all stakeholders to help Grade 12 learners in township schools to perform optimally in the final examination?