

THE MANAGEMENT OF THE LEARNER SUPPORT SYSTEM FOR GRADE 12

LEARNERS IN THE MANKWENG AREA, LIMPOPO PROVINCE

by

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DECLARATION

“I declare that: The management of the Learner Support System for Grade 12 learners in the Mankweng area, Limpopo Province is my own work and that all sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.”

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SUMMARY

This research has as its objective to discover the extent to which Grade 12 learners receive the appropriate support required in conducting their studies efficiently and effectively. The main aim of the study is to help to improve the quality of the results and the pass rate of Grade 12 learners in the Mankweng Area, Limpopo Province. The aim of the investigation is to gather information about the learner support structures in use in sampled schools.

There is a need for a Learner Support System to assist learners to perform well at schools. A literature study is conducted to explore and to identify gaps in the literature. The study will assist the researcher to emerge with ways and means of improving the quality of effective use of Learner Support Systems in schools. It is anticipated that the findings and recommendations of the study will enhance the plans of the Limpopo Department of Education strategies of improving the quality of teaching and learning support in the province.

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CHAPTER ONE

1.1 Introduction and Background

The quality of public education in South Africa has become increasingly under the spotlight over the past decade due to political, social, economic and technological developments that have taken place. Despite the increased financial resources in education in the Limpopo Province, the expected improvement in learner performance in Grade 12 level has been problematic in terms of quality (Chinsamy 2001: 1). The quest to find an answer to sustaining school improvement in terms of the quality of Grade 12 pass rate in South African schools has recently focused on the province, district, school and individual Grade 12 learners. The Area Office is considered to be an intermediary between the Provincial Education Department and schools.

Extremely poor matriculation examination results over the past decade highlight the critical need for learning and teaching support systems that will assist Grade 12 learners and educators in improving their performance (Shrand, Jacobson and Christensen 1999: 3). The Senior Certificate examination at the end of Grade 12 is the first significant external check on the performance of our school system and the poor results require some action from all stakeholders and interested parties, namely, the National Education Department, Provincial Education Department, Area offices, School Principals, Senior Management Team (SMT), Learner Representative Council (LRC), School Governing Body (SGB) and parents.

School leavers become job seekers or enter higher education with serious gaps in basic knowledge, reasoning skills, and methods of study (Asmal 1999: 3). Poor learning is associated with poverty, bad or absent facilities, under prepared teachers, lack of learning resources, lack of a clearly defined learner support system, a serious lack of purpose and discipline in many schools or what is called a culture of learning and teaching (Asmal 1999: 3; Van der Westhuizen, Mentz, Mosoge, Nieuwoudt, Steyn, Legotlo, Maaga and Sebegu 2002: 114).

In his reply to the debate on his State of The Nation address to parliament, President Mbeki remarked that: “Teachers must teach. Learners must learn. Managers must manage” (Asmal 1999: 4). In this remark, the President was entrenching principles of the Culture of Learning, Teaching and Service (COLTS) campaign.

The University of the Western Cape document on higher education presented by Cranfield (2002: 153) states that “strategies are needed to increase the quality of university’s first-time entering students against the background of a national and institutional decline of the pool of students with matriculation exemption, particularly in the Natural Sciences” (Cranfield 2002: 153). Despite student number growth in most universities, the spread of students across faculties still show a low intake in the Natural Sciences. The situation is more prevalent in historically black institutions.

The University of Natal has embarked on a long-term intervention endeavour aimed at addressing the imbalance of access into higher education by identifying learners from disadvantaged groups in Grade 10 and is providing them with structured opportunities to improve their chances of university entrance and success. The programme is called Upward Bound University-Wide Enrichment Programme (UPB) (Maqutu 2002: 125).

A group of intervention programmes used for bridging, remediation, upgrading and preparation of students for tertiary education were introduced in South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland. These included the Students and Youth into Science Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (SYSTEM). These intervention programmes targeted students who had completed Grade 12 examinations but before they entered university or other tertiary institutions. These programmes addressed problems relating to the critical shortage of students in natural sciences. It is alleged that the success of transitional academic development courses (ADP) are questionable (Maqutu 2002: 125). Such programmes do not contribute to improving students’ achievement. Many students continue not to be attracted into such sciences or they do not necessarily meet university entrance requirements. In short, traditional interventions could have the limitation of coming too late in the students schooling lives (Maqutu 2002: 125). An alternative approach of assisting such students could be designing a Learner Support System at an earlier level that is for Grade 10 –12 learners.

An investigation into causes of poor performance in Grade 12 in the North West Province (Van der Westhuizen, Mentz, Mosoge, Nieuwoudt, Steyn, Legotlo, Maaga and Sebegu 2002: 114) revealed the major causes of poor student performance as being lack of resources, lack of discipline, poor morale, problems concerning implementation of policies and inadequate parental involvement. To these causes, one may safely add lack of a learner support system.

Students enrolled with the Universities of Potchefstroom and Pretoria are supported by e-learning systems. Teachers enrolled for the National Professional Diploma in Education with the University of North-West are supported as follows:

- Students receive all their study material – no additional textbooks have to be bought.
- The University Library is available for personal visits.
- Internet via the University Library: the Internet can be visited to find research data/information (www.puk.ac.za).
- Vacation schools are held twice yearly countrywide by means of interactive television broadcasts, and presented by lecturers from the university. These sessions assist students to improve on their marks dramatically and are able to share learning experiences with fellow students. ([Http://www.edutel.co.za/olg.teacher.html](http://www.edutel.co.za/olg.teacher.html))

A similar situation is with an E-education programme under the leadership of the University of Pretoria. Learners at 69 (sixty nine) schools in Gauteng, Limpopo Province, North West and Mpumalanga benefit from a Tele-Tuks Schools' Project where satellite broadcasts are made to schools or individuals who have access to DSTV. The weekly lessons are supplemented with additional classes at a Winter or Spring school during the July and October holidays.

The project's effectiveness is determined by the extent to which it improves the quality of learners' education and learning experience. The project gives learners a chance to obtain better marks in their final matriculation examination and makes it possible for more learners to gain admission to University study. Educators also benefit from education support offered by these programmes, which translates into better support for a larger number of learners. School subjects such as Mathematics, English, Accounting and Physics receive priority attention. Those schools without DSTV seem not to reap the benefits of the support system.

(<http://www.up.ac.za/beta/about/eng/education.html>)

In the Western Cape, an NGO called the Association for Educational Transformation (ASSET) in Cape Town has a Learner Development Programme (LDP) whose aim is to support young learners from township schools in their struggle to pass matric examination. The reasons advanced for the support programme's existence are that most township schools are under-resourced, overcrowded and the teachers working in them are over-burdened and often under-trained. (<http://www.asset.ac.za/learner.htm>).

A research report to investigate teacher morale in South Africa indicates the following as major reasons contributing to the status quo:

- Inadequate salary packages
- Number of learners per class (educator: learner ratio)
- Indiscipline of learners
- Poorly resourced schools
- Overload of paperwork and administrative tasks
- Manner of outcomes-based education implementation
- Continuous change in education policy
- Leadership management styles of the Provincial Department of Education
- Quality of in-service training
- Image of the teaching profession in the wider society (Hayward 2002: 7)

On the 2nd of May 2003, the Member of the Executive Council (MEC) of the Limpopo Province responsible for Education, Mrs. Joyce Mashamba launched 13 Education Multipurpose Centres (EMPC's) in Nkowankowa, Tzaneen. In her address she indicated that an "EMPC will provide among other duties, school support programmes for the enhancement of learning and teaching"(Mashamba 2003: 5). She also emphasized that the provision of quality public education is the Limpopo Department of Education 's core business, thus for educators to teach effectively and for the enhancement of learning programmes for learners. There is therefore a need for programme design geared towards the realization of the goal of quality public education.

The report of the Review Committee on Curriculum 2005 has revealed that there is still overwhelming teacher support for the principles of Outcomes-based Education (OBE) and Curriculum 2005 (C2005) but implementation in the schools has been constrained by a range of factors: a skewed curriculum structure and design; lack of alignment between curriculum and assessment policy; insufficient quality and availability of learning support materials and limited transfer of learning into classrooms. (Review Committee on Curriculum for the 21st Century) (Foulds 2002: 2).

From the literature cited above and conclusions of studies (Hayward 2002: 7; Asmal 1999: 3; Van der Westhuizen, Mentz, Mosoge, Nieuwoudt, Steyn, Legotlo, Maaga, and Sebego 2002: 114;

Cranfield 2002: 153; Maqutu 2002: 125; Foulds 2002: 2; Lethoko, Heystek and Maree 2002: 28; Mashamba 2003: 5), a conclusion can be drawn that learner related causes also play a dominant role in causing low teacher morale and poor pass rate at Grade 12 level. It is for this and other reasons that learner support for learners at Grade 12 level is being investigated in the Mankweng Area, Limpopo Province. The study is aimed at evolving an integrated learner support system for Grade 12 learners.

1.2 Statement of the problem

A major challenge facing secondary schools in the Limpopo province is producing quality Grade 12 results every year. There are qualitative declines in Grade 12 National Examination results. To reverse this trend will require bold strategic interventions, institutional reforms, learner support systems and parental involvement. Educators will then be able to put more effort in their teaching and parents be actively involved. Learners will be able to use the opportunity to study. According to Everard and Morris (1996: 5) in the years that lie ahead, the rate of technological and social change will accelerate and the ability of our learners to succeed or to survive in a changing environment will depend on our ability to adapt to the content, study, teaching method and ethos of education to meet or address the new needs.

Leaders in education are also concerned about the poor quality of learning in large parts of the Limpopo Province. The number of Grade 12 learners who study and succeed in Mathematics, Science and Technology with any degree of understanding and proficiency has declined when it should have increased, given the quantitative growth in enrolment at Grade 12 level.

The research problem for this investigation is: There seems to be lack of sufficient Learner Support Systems available to Grade 12 learners in the Limpopo Province to enable them to obtain good results or succeed in their studies.

1.3 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to establish the extent to which Grade 12 learners receive support required in conducting their studies effectively and efficiently.

1.3.1 Aims and objectives of the study

- To emerge with a Learner Support System to improve the quality of Grade 12 results in Mankweng area, Limpopo Province.
- To contribute to knowledge about Learner Support Systems.
- To describe and analyse the management of learner support systems in schools in Mankweng area, Limpopo Province.
- To make contribution to research through a critical review of Learner Support Services in other provinces.
- To provide information on the current status of the Learner Support Systems in the Mankweng Area, Limpopo Province.

1.4 Hypothesis:

It is hypothesized that an integrated Learner Support System should improve the pass rate of Grade 12 learners in Mankweng area, Limpopo Province.

1.5 Research methodology

The literature study will be conducted and supplemented by an empirical study. The aim of the literature study is to establish gaps in the success rate of Grade 12 learners. Another purpose of the literature review is to determine the kind of questions to be asked during the empirical investigation. Books, Journals, Newspapers and Internet sources will be reviewed.

A questionnaire and interview schedules (see Appendices A, B, C and D) will be designed to gather data from Principals, School Management Teams, Educators and Grade 12 learners. Due to the large target population in the Mankweng Area, stratified sampling techniques will be employed to emerge with a representative sample. The research instrument will be pilot tested to eliminate errors and minimize bias and unclarity.

Collected data will be interpreted, categorized, analysed and tabulated.

1.6 Contributions of the research

It is anticipated that the study will benefit Grade 12 learners, learners who are in the lower grades, educators, School Management Teams, School Governing Bodies, Principals, the Limpopo Education Department and the public at large.

Higher Education Institutions are also interested in good quality passes at Grade 12 level. It is envisaged that the study will throw some light on a support system that can also benefit learners at tertiary levels.

1.7 Definition of concepts:

- Learner support system: the range of activities, which complements the mass product learning materials such as the electronic support subsystem, published material and contact or face-to-face support mechanisms (Tait 1995: 232).
- Management: the process of planning, leading and controlling the work of organizational resources to reach stated goals (Kroontz & Weinrich 1988: 5).
- Mankweng Area: one of the education area offices responsible for the education of learners in the Limpopo Province. It is situated about 28 kilometers east of Polokwane.
- Limpopo Province: One of the nine provinces constituting the Republic of South Africa. It is the most northern located province of the country and the third largest.

1.8 Demarcation / Delimitation of chapters

In chapter one an introduction and background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, hypothesis, research methodology, contributions of the research and definition of concepts are given.

Chapter two is devoted to a literature review on the management of the learner support system for Grade 12 learners.

Chapter three presents the research methodology.

Chapter four is devoted to the results and discussion of results.

Chapter five presents the summary of findings, recommendations and conclusions.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

South Africa needs fully functional, effective schools in historically disadvantaged communities. The process and types of interventions needed to develop schools into effective learning organization communities, need to be intensely piloted, coherently documented and made available to other schools and support agencies. There is also a dire shortage of learner support systems to promote the culture of learning, teaching and service (COLTS) in schools. This research is devoted to investigating Grade 12 learning support mechanisms aimed at creating functional, effective schools in Mankweng, a selected area of the Limpopo Province. The current chapter examines / reviews literature in this regard.

2.2 Background

There is a high failure rate among Grade 12 learners in the Limpopo Province. This can be attributed mainly to lack of learner support services. Most schools do not have the necessary resources, for example, libraries and laboratories, to help both learners and educators in executing their duties effectively. Morris and Mona (1997: 4) indicate that the conditions required for effective teaching and learning to take place have virtually disappeared at some areas in South Africa.

In his speech Mushwana, the then Member of the Executive Council (MEC) for Education in Limpopo Province (Mushwana 1999: 7) said that it is no secret that Limpopo Province's most serious competitive disadvantage is its poor skills base and correspondingly low level of education. The government in general and the Provincial Department of Education in particular simply do not have resources to build a productive culture in schools, to create a new system of further education and training and to provide basic education to learners including pre-scholars. He was speaking about the challenges facing the System of Education and Training in the Limpopo Province.

2.3 Learner Support

Learner support is the range of activities, which complements the mass product learning materials such as the electronic support subsystem, published material and contact or face-to-face support mechanisms (Tait 1995: 232).

Simpson (2000: 6) suggests that learner support falls into two broad areas: academic (or tutorial) support and non-academic (or counseling) support. Some forms of learner support are from informal study groups. This constitutes a key area of learner support.

The importance of learner support programmes is to encourage learners not to drop out of school because of limited English proficiency, poverty, geographic location, or economic disadvantage. These learners face a great risk of low educational achievement or reduced academic expectations (Eiselen and Geyser 2003: 118).

Factors reported to relate to attrition of Grade 12 and other learners are:

- Poor academic results at Grade 12 level
- Financial and family problems
- Not having clear career goals
- Inefficient study skills
- Institutional variables such as instructor behaviour, number of learners enrolled and learner support services
- Poor social integration (Johnson 1996: 78, McGarth and Braunstein 1997: 398).

According to NEPI (1993: 143) a rigorous, well-managed Learner Support System can help to give learners important information that is relevant to future work and learning choices.

2.4 Learner support strategies and discipline

Learner support strategies are strategies which can be used to reduce isolation of learners, facilitating effective learning, reducing attrition rates, increasing the success rates and generally improving the quality of education (Nonyongo and Ngengebule 1998: 6).

According to Dill and Associates (1990: 46), good teaching should include teaching learners how to learn, how to remember and how to control their own learning. Most recent attention to the teaching of learning strategies has involved helping learners to learn more about how they learn and to control that process more directly. Learners can be supported to learn at school through the exercise of proper discipline.

A booklet distributed to schools by the Department of Education (2000:9) states that discipline relies on constructive, corrective, rights-based, positive educative practices and not punishment or specific actions, which are perceived as punitive, destructive and negative.

The educator can utilize the factors below to support Grade 12 learners in the classroom in order for them to work proactively to avoid disciplinary measures (Schulze and Dzivhani 2002: 125):

- Exercising self-discipline
- Having extra work available
- Involving learners in the initial establishment of classroom rules
- Being consistent in the application of the rules
- Building positive relationships with learners
- Ensuring that learners are stimulated.

Positive educators are powerful role models. Other mentors and role models play a cardinal role in advising, counseling and coaching successful individuals.

Some aspects required to support learners at school are:

- School policy: A code of conduct for the whole school must be drawn up.
- Parents, learners and educators must be involved in the development of the code of conduct.
- Learner Representative Council (LRC): The Learner Representative Council appears to be effective in maintaining discipline, possibly as a result of the fact that the learners are elected by learners to represent the learners.
- Standard or grade tutor (Class educator): A standard or grade tutor is an educator who is in charge of all the affairs of a certain grade, including disciplinary problems. If the problems are beyond the scope of the tutor, then the matter could be referred to the disciplinary committee (Schulze and Dzivhani 2002: 118).

2.5 Parental support and involvement

A parent is defined as the biological parent or legal guardian, the person legally entitled to custody of a learner, or any other person who fulfils the obligation towards the learner's schooling. Parents must ensure school attendance of every learner for whom he or she is responsible.

(Lemmer and van Wyk 2004: 261).

Parental involvement is becoming one of the most essential measures of encouraging and supporting children and also Grade 12 learners within and out of school. Parents spend much of the time with their children and they have the unique opportunities to observe their children in various situations. They are in a better situation to report their observations to the educator.

(Du Toit 1997: 145).

Parent volunteers are a cost-effective way to expand the range of activities at school, but involving parents on the school premises is difficult. Many parents have little time for volunteering and those who do are either not reached or considered unsuitable as they are often the elderly or unemployed (Lemmer and van Wyk 2004: 271).

Mwamwenda (1995: 312) indicate that often parents are unable to control their children, who transfer their way of relating at home to the school situation. There are also parents who have little regard for education. Their children are unlikely to see any reason to obey school rules. Hence the tendency of playing truant and being absent from school.

According to Mphahlele (1989: 13) black parents are often notorious for not taking interest in their children's work at school. Some parents do not know in what class or grade their children are. Others do not know what subjects their children are taking. These attitudes must change if effective learning and teaching is to take place in schools. Parental support is crucial for a policy to work. It is important for those who are privileged enough to have the knowledge and expertise to be proactive in disseminating information among parents.

The school can enlist the help of parents who are not working, by asking them to join in classroom activities as assistants especially in subjects such as Arts and Culture. They can assist the educator and learners in making projects for the school and help to generate money for the school.

Language is perhaps the least threatening area of the curriculum for parents. By encouraging their children to talk, by talking to them, and listening to them and by discussing their progress in the language with them, parents can provide strong support for the development of all the language skills. Some parents when invited show enormous interest in their children's ability to talk and discuss and can perhaps provide the most significant audience for their children. (Southworth and O'Shea 1992: 54). Ngcobo (1988: 24) avers that if parents did not involve themselves in disciplining their children, any programme related to behaviour change that the school may start will not be effective. He also states that support at home becomes the backbone of school support.

2.6 Principal's leadership and management training

Today's principal is expected to be instructional leaders and be able to organize the school for productive learning. He / she must ensure that learners receive quality instruction both inside and outside the classroom. He /she can do so by organizing an appropriate Learner Support System to enhance the teaching-learning situation.

Karpicke and Murphy (1996: 26) indicate that while principals cannot improve student growth or achievement alone, they do provide leadership and support that translate into an environment that result in increased productivity.

Effective instructional leadership requires the application of an educational model appropriate to the current teaching and learning. It is envisaged that learners learn in a variety of ways that go beyond the learner as a passive recipient of knowledge. Listening to the educator, reading from a text, and answering worksheets or questions is no longer an appropriate or effective way to reach all learners. Many learners need hands-on experiences in which they can engage, discuss, manipulate and question the content being studied (Lemahieu, Roy and Foss 1997: 594).

Smith and Andrews (Whitaker 1997: 151) identified the following four areas of strategic interaction of instructional leaders that lead to higher levels of learner achievement:

- Being a resource provider. Since the educators are the schools' greatest source, they must be acknowledged for exemplary teaching and encouraged to share with others.
- Being an instructional resource. The principal identifies good teaching and provides feedback that promotes professional growth.
- Being a communicator. The principal must communicate to the staff the essential beliefs that (1) all children can learn and experience success; that (2) success builds upon success; that (3)

schools can enhance learner success; and that (4) learner outcomes must be clearly defined to guide instructional programmes and decisions.

- Being a visible presence. To create a visible presence in day-to-day activities, principals must model behaviour consistent with the school's vision; live and breathe their beliefs in education; organize resources to accomplish school's goals; informally drop in on classes; make staff development activities a priority; and most of all, help people do the right things and reinforce those activities.

It is therefore the duty of the principal to see to it that a proper learning support system is introduced and used in the school (Lemahieu, Roy and Foss 1997: 594).

The principal should be able to encourage educators to give feedback to learners as it is of key importance for learning. It will encourage sharing of ideas and mutual support. Learners tend to place most faith in feedback from their educators, but the time available for educators to give feedback to individual learners is increasingly scarce (Wisker and Brown 1996: 164).

According to Steyn (2002: 256) principals should:

- Lead rather than instruct. Effective principals are able to create an ethos that generates motivated and successful educators and stimulated and inspired learners in an effective setting.
- Emphasize effectiveness of schools and not simply efficiency. The emphasis should be on a commitment and constant, continuous improvement, which involves everybody in the school.
- Create a culture of learning. The principal must ensure that agreed-on outputs are achieved by entrusting educators and learners to work towards these without constant supervision.

2.7 Intervention strategies

According to Maqutu (2002: 125), a stratified intervention strategy is used to establish strategies that can be used to identify a learning support system for learners. A study done on the feasibility of the learner support system helped to identify the needs of learners especially learners from disadvantaged background by providing them with academic support.

According to Dill and Associates (1990: 46), the concept of lifelong learning becomes increasingly vital as learners complete their education and enter the workforce that changes rapidly. Learners also need to develop effective ways to deal with the increasing knowledge base that society produces as well as to understand their own thinking processes. Organizing knowledge in a meaningful, integrated way becomes a more important task as information continues to explode in this society. Knowing facts is no longer the key skill but knowing what information one needs, where to obtain it, and how to use that information is profoundly more important.

Maqutu (2002: 126) further maintains that leadership, governance, management and support are vital in transforming the school system and environment into a fully functioning learning organization structure. Educator development programmes, support methods and resources will assist educators in delivering high quality learning support systems. The end result being increased learner competence and preparedness for learning, living and work for the 21st Century.

2.8 Learning support

2.8.1 Learning management system

The so-called Learning Management System (LMS) is a new trend in learning and ways to support learners using information technology. It also assists learners to develop and follow a particular learning plan to satisfy their objectives. The educator can mix classroom and online learning.

The learning plan as suggested by Hawryzkiewicz (2004: 351) is made up of a number of learning activities, including the start and end dates, together with supporting materials relevant to each learning activity. The Learning Management System contains context information and allows students feedback through frequently asked questions, which relate to the subject content.

Learning Management System emphasizes self-directed learning where learners define specific learning needs that will help them achieve their desired goals. Learners are able to build on their existing knowledge through a continuous and guided process of identifying learning goals, discussing and trying ideas by themselves through participation in groups and recording outcomes in their learning outputs (Hawryzkiewicz 2004: 349).

2.8.2 Group learning support

Working with others in teams both increases the breadth of knowledge acquired, its relevance, as well as evaluations of the application of new knowledge in a problem area. Group learning support provide ways to overcome problems such as making joint decisions, reluctance to deal with conflict and guidance on learning steps (Hawryszkiewicz 2004: 350).

The so-called Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) is another form of group learning support. It provides content, support material, communications, online exercises, student assessments and evaluation of progress and achievements across a group of learners (Barret and Douglas 2004: 98).

2.8.3 E-learning

Learning management support also includes e-learning where learners are supported through the aid of computers. E-learning is a method of learning that focuses on accessing content through an online computer convection, submitting assignments or other work electronically and receiving remote support from educators or tutors through telephone or e-mail contact (Barret and Douglas 2004: 98).

E-learning is essential for managing the wide range of content and tracking learner activities. It complements traditional methods of teaching and learning and serves to identify learners in need of additional support at an early stage (Barret and Douglas 2004: 99). In some instances this category of support system will not be feasible, as some schools do not have computers. Other schools do have computers but no access to the Internet.

2.8.4 Supplementary Tuition

2.8.4.1 Saturday classes

Tuition is offered on Saturdays. During these classes individual and general learners' problems are solved. They also serve the function of allowing learners to meet one another to discuss common problems (Nonyongo and Ngengebule 1998: 79).

2.8.4.2 Winter school

Tuition is offered during Winter holidays. Learners' needs for support are met. Classes are bigger and divided into districts. The classes provide study skills, particularly for Grade 12 learners and offer additional language help where necessary.

Saturday classes and Winter school as support services help to ensure that learning is effective and the intended learning outcomes are achieved. Guidance and learner support play an important part in upholding academic standards. They also help to ensure that learners choose subjects appropriate to their requirements, with the attendant likelihood of greater academic success.

(Wisker and Brown 1996: 12).

Saturday classes and Winter school are the support systems offered in the Mankweng Area, Limpopo Province. The classes presented at such occasions help learners with extra tuition and are offered free of charge. The aim is to provide supplementary tuition in key subjects, like Mathematics, Physical Science, Biology and Accounting. Most of the learners come from historically disadvantaged communities. These learners lack educational opportunities and learning resources. Their needs include study space, venues for peer-group learning and tutorials (Van der Westhuizen, Mentz, Mosoge, Nieuwoudt, Steyn, Legotlo, Maaga and Sebegu 2002:114).

The supplementary tuition strives to help learners:

- Achieve good results
- Achieve Matric endorsement (university entrance)
- Develop skills, which will make for success at the tertiary level of study
- Choose appropriate career paths and courses for further study
- Develop appropriate life skills (Legotlo, Maaga and Sebegu 2002: 18)

Major problems and constraints:

- Some centers where such tuition is provided are far from learners' homes.
- Classes are not monitored, there is no follow-up on the lessons previously offered, and as such tutors may not be able to get to know individual learners and their problems.
- In some cases tutors are not paid timeously and they become demoralized. The Limpopo Department of Education should fund these projects and make the attendance by learners compulsory (Nonyongo and Ngengebule 1998: 22).

2.8.5 School library

The school library provides learning services, books and resources that enable all members of the school community to become critical thinkers and effective users of information in all formats and media.

The school library empowers learning. It gives access to real and virtual environments where learners can discover resources that inspire and develop them. These learners may be students, educators, their families or the wider community. Through using the library as a learning resource center they all share knowledge and information (Barret and Douglas 2004: 1).

Library facilities occupy a prominent place in the learners' learning process and form an essential part of support services. Most schools in the Mankweng area do not have Library facilities. Learners depend on the Library services of the University of Limpopo. Due to a large number of learners, only a limited number is catered for.

Libraries as part of the learner support system play a lead role in developing a whole-school reading culture, promoting literacy, reading for pleasure and establishing lifelong learning. (Barret and Douglas 2004: 47).

At the present time, the universities and many technical colleges and schools are used for only a small part of the day. Most universities remain unused for many months during the year. These resources are being underutilized and provided there is an adequate transport system, could be used more often on a daily basis (McGregor and McGregor 1992: 126). A coherent system of library and information provision is necessary to ensure quality formal education and to support the process of education transformation. In addition to the specific role played by some types of library services in the education sphere, their combination can support the broad education enterprise, particularly through non-formal and continuing education (NEPI 1993: 191).

Qualitative improvements in education are reliant on the integration of Library services with the education system, which means that the Library comes to play a central role in the education process. Increased provision of school libraries can help to improve educational performance (NEPI 1993: 191). Existing institutions need to think of collaborating on a regional or national basis to be able to provide particular services, which are needed urgently.

According to NEPI (1993: 193) the findings from surveys such as The Third Alternative, which focused on the state of black education, show that learners, parents and educators ranked the provision of school library facilities highly. The overcrowded reading rooms and pressure on educational material of major urban public libraries, which attract vast numbers of learners from townships, also attest to this great need.

Summary

This chapter reviewed some of the recent and current literature on the management of the learner support system. From the literature it became clear that learners have needs and desires to learn in order to improve their performance as learners. Their needs and desires can be met by making the learner support systems available.

It is important to understand the management of the learner support systems so that the support systems can be properly monitored. The Department of Education should be committed to the provision of positive support for learners and access to the learner support systems and information-rich environment.

Strategies outlined above represent a package containing elements, which address the need for an infrastructure capable of supporting current and future changes in learning and teaching. This emphasizes the importance of a shared understanding of the need for change, addressing both material and human resource issues.

The successful implementation of various support systems outlined above depends on the involvement of the Limpopo Department of Education, Area Managers and educators.

The next chapter will deal with the research methodology.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 2 reviewed literature on the Learner Support Systems for Grade 12 learners. This chapter describes the qualitative and quantitative research design and methods used to collect data. The data obtained through the use of interviews and questionnaires (see Appendices A, B, C and D) will give scientific support to the main problem and findings derived from the review of the literature. The information gathered will help to validate the findings.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design is a detailed description of the procedures that the researcher uses to investigate the topic or the problem. It includes justification for the hypotheses or exploration of posed research questions and a detailed presentation of the research steps to be followed in collecting, choosing and analyzing data (Gay and Airasian 2003: 78).

In a qualitative study, a research design refers to all the decisions the researcher makes to plan the study. Decisions are not only about what overall type or design to use, but also about sampling sources and procedures for collecting data, measurement issues and data analysis plans.

(De Vos 1998: 77). Designing a study involves specifying exactly who or what is to be studied, when, how and for what purpose (Babbie 2001: 90).

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2001: 166) a research design refers to a plan for selecting subjects, research sites and data collection procedures to answer the research question .It shows which individuals will be studied, when and under which circumstances they will be studied.

Mrazek (1993: 42) also defines research design as a plan to use one or more techniques to collect desired observations or data in an organized manner. In short, a research design is the researcher's plan of how to proceed with the investigation (Bogdan and Biklen 1992: 58).

3.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology refers to a process whereby the researcher collects and analyzes data. Procedures are not haphazard activities. They are systematic and purposeful and planned to yield data on a particular research problem. Data collection may include extensive interviews (see Appendices A and B) and observations for qualitative research and questionnaires (see Appendices C and D) for quantitative research (Schumacher and McMillan 1993: 9).

According to Leedy (1993: 139) research methodology depends on the nature of data to be collected and the nature of the problem for research (see 1: 1.2). For this investigation, the researcher will use a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches. According to Johnson and Christensen (2004: 410) mixed methods research is the category of research studies in which a researcher mixes or combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques into a single research study. Mixed methods research helps to improve the overall quality of research, hence the use of triangulation.

3.4 TRIANGULATION

Triangulation is the process of using multiple data-collection methods and sources to check the validity of case study findings. It helps to eliminate biases that might result from relying exclusively on any one data-collection method, source or theory. The key to triangulation is to vary in some way the approach used to generate the findings that the researcher is seeking to corroborate. If findings are generated by a qualitative method, the researcher can check it by using a quantitative data collection method. For example, if the finding emanated from a statement in a group interview by a particular interviewer, its validity can be checked by having another interviewer to conduct the same interviews (Gall, Borg and Gall 1996: 574 – 575).

According to Schumacher and McMillan (1993: 498) researchers use triangulation, which is a cross-validation among data sources, data collection strategies, time periods and theoretical schemes to find regularities in the data. The researcher then compares different sources, situations and methods to see if the same pattern keeps recurring.

To ensure internal validity and reliability, triangulation is used, that is, the use of different strategies to approach the same topic of investigation, data is collected through multiple sources that include interviews and questionnaires (McRoy 1995: 2013). Triangulation is simply a form of replication

that contributes greatly to the researcher's confidence in the research findings regardless of whether qualitative or quantitative methodology has been employed (Borg and Gall 1989: 393).

3.5 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH APPROACH

Qualitative research approach is designed to build knowledge. It stems from the anti-positivistic, interpretive approach. It is idiographic and holistic in nature, and the main aim is to understand social life and the meaning that people attach to everyday life (Schurink 1998: 240).

Qualitative research involves fieldwork. The researcher goes to the people, setting, site or institution to observe or record behaviour in its natural setting. Qualitative research is interested in the research process, meaning and understanding gained through words or pictures. The process of research is inductive in that the researcher builds abstractions, concepts, hypothesis and theories from details (Creswell 1994: 145).

According to Best and Kahn (1993: 81) qualitative research describes events without the use of numerical data. It is planned carefully and leaves open the possibility of change, to ask different questions and to go in the direction that the observations may lead the researcher. It is more open and responsive to its subjects compared to quantitative research.

Qualitative inquiry seeks to understand human and social behaviour from the "insider's perspective", that is, as it is lived by participants in a particular social setting, for example, a culture, school, community, group or an institution (Ary, Jacobs and Razavieh 1990: 445).

Tuckman (1994: 367) is also of the opinion that the researcher is able to have direct contact with and gets close to the people, situation and phenomenon under study. The researcher's personal experiences and insights are an important part of the inquiry and critical to understanding the phenomenon.

Borg and Gall (1989: 386-387) provide the following features of qualitative research:

- Research involves holistic inquiry carried out in a natural setting: the researcher tries to study all elements present in the setting in which the inquiry takes place.

- Humans are the primary data-gathering instruments: the researcher relies on human powers of observation rather than on measurement instruments such as paper and pencil tests.
- Inductive data analysis: instead of deductive analysis, which focuses on testing preconceived hypotheses, the qualitative researcher studies the data inductively in order to reveal unanticipated outcomes. In other words, the researcher first gathers the data and then tries to develop understanding and draw generalizations.

Subjects play a role in interpreting outcomes because the researcher usually attempts to reconstruct reality from the frame of reference of the subjects. It follows logically that the respondents may in some cases be better able to understand the complex interactions that have been observed and account for the influence of local values on these interactions (Borg and Gall 1989: 386).

Qualitative researchers are concerned primarily with process rather than the outcomes or products of research. Qualitative researchers are interested in how people make sense of their lives, experiences, the researcher himself/herself as the primary instrument for data collection and data analysis. The biases, values and judgements of the researcher become stated explicitly in the research report (Bogdan and Biklen 1992: 128).

3.5.1 QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTION

Interview schedules were designed for Principals and Members of the School Management Teams (see Appendices A and B). The aim of the instrument was to determine their experience of the Learner Support for Grade 12 learners.

Interview schedules enable the respondents to answer questions in the personal presence of the interviewer (Vockell 1983: 86-87). The questions are put forward to the respondent who in turn gives answers.

An interviewer can follow up ideas, probe responses and investigate motives and feelings that any other instrument cannot do. The way a response is made can provide information that a written word would conceal, and if conducted by a skilful interviewer it can be most rewarding. (Borg and Gall 1989: 415).

3.5.2 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Validity refers to the degree to which an instrument is doing what is intended to do (De Vos 1998: 84). Babbie (1992: 33) also refers to validity as to the extent to which an empirical measure adequately reflects the real meaning of the concept under consideration.

According to Babbie (1992: 132) reliability is a matter of whether a particular technique, applied repeatedly to the same object, would yield the same result each time.

Validity and reliability in qualitative research are applied to establish trustworthiness. Four aspects that are relevant to ensure trustworthiness are: truth-value, applicability, consistency and neutrality (De Vos 1998: 331).

- Truth-value asks whether the researcher has established confidence in the truth of the findings for the subjects and the context in which the research was undertaken.
- Applicability refers to the degree to which the findings can be applied to other contexts and settings with other groups. It is the ability to generalize from the findings to larger populations.
- Consistency considers whether the findings would be consistent if the enquiry was replicated with the same subjects or in similar context.
- Neutrality refers to the degree to which the findings are a function of the informants and conditions of the research (De Vos 1998: 331).

Techniques to ensure trustworthiness of the qualitative research of this study, were:

- Prolonged fieldwork: This study was conducted over a long enough period so that participants could be observed in their natural setting.
- Multi-method strategies: interviews were phrased in a manner that interviewees could understand. This was done after a pilot study was conducted.
- Multiple researchers: An external person checked on the findings of the interview data. (De Vos 1998:331).

3.6 QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH APPROACH

Quantitative research describes current conditions, investigate relationships and study cause-effect phenomena. According to Schumacher and McMillan (1993: 14) quantitative research presents

statistical results presented with numbers. The research involves choosing subjects, data collection techniques particularly questionnaires and procedures for analyzing data.

Quantitative researchers attempt to keep themselves from influencing the collection of data. The researchers try to maintain positive interpersonal relations with others whom they study and they strive to be personally detached so that their observations are as objective as possible.

(Borg and Gall 1989: 23).

One of the first steps in designing quantitative research is to choose the subjects. Subjects are the individuals who participate in the study. It is from them that data are collected. As a group, subjects are usually referred to as the sample. The sample consists of individuals selected from a larger group of persons called the population (McMillan and Schumacher 2001: 169) According to Best and Kahn (1993: 82) quantitative research is based more directly on its original plans and its results are more readily analyzed and interpreted.

Ary, Jacobs and Razavieh (1990: 446) are of the opinion that quantitative inquirers' values play a role in deciding what topic or problem to investigate, but the actual investigation itself must be value-free, that is, the researcher must follow procedures specifically designed to isolate and remove all subjective elements like values, from the inquiry situation, so that what remains are just the objective facts. These procedures are used to ensure that the researcher's values and beliefs will not influence or contaminate the observations that they make. By following these procedures for observations, the quantitative researcher provides strong assurance that the inquiry is value-free.

3.6.1 QUANTITATIVE DATA COLLECTION

A questionnaire for Grade 12 educators and learners was constructed (see Appendices C and D). The aim of the educators' questionnaire was to find out the extent of their assistance in learner support programmes for Grade 12 learners. The aim of the learners' questionnaire was to establish whether the Learner Support System help in improving the pass rate in Grade 12.

Of the research strategies available for data collection, the researcher has decided to combine aspects of both the quantitative and qualitative designs in this study, because of the nature of data collected (Leedy 1993: 139 and De Vos 1998: 31).

The advantages of the research strategies selected are their helpfulness and flexibility with respect to the organization, presentation, interpretation and analysis of data. Therefore the focus of the study is the management of the learner support system for Grade 12 learners, for purposes of improving teaching and learning in schools.

3.7 METHODS USED TO COLLECT DATA

Data on the Management of the Learner Support System for Grade 12 was collected by studying the relevant literature from primary and secondary sources. This is reflected in the sources listed in the bibliography.

The purpose of studying the literature was to help the researcher to clarify and define concepts of the study. According to Ary, Jacobs and Razavieh (1990: 68) a literature survey helps the researcher to avoid unintentional replication of previous studies and to help the researcher to be able to be in a better position to interpret the significance of the results of the investigation.

3.7.1 RESPONDENTS

According to Tuckman (1994: 309) respondents indicate the number who participated in the study, how they were selected and their characteristics. Providing this kind of information makes it possible for another researcher to select a virtually identical sample if another researcher chooses to replicate the study. The participants for this research consist of principals, school management teams, educators and Grade 12 learners.

3.7.2 CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

3.7.2.1 Population of study

The population is the group of interest to the researcher, the group to which the results of the study will be ideally generalized (Gay and Airasian 2003: 102). According to Tuckman (1994: 238) the population used in a questionnaire or interview study is that group about which the researcher is interested in gaining information and drawing conclusions.

3.7.2.2 Sample size

Sample size refers to the “number of subjects in a study”. The sample can be selected from a larger group of subjects from whom data is collected (McMillan and Schumacher 2001: 169). According to Borg and Gall (1989: 216) sampling means selecting a given number of subjects from a defined population as representative of that population. If the sampling is done properly, the researcher can reach conclusions about an entire target population that are likely to be correct within a small margin of error by studying a relatively small sample.

A sample of principals and school management team members were interviewed and a questionnaire survey conducted with educators and learners (see Table 3.1).

TABLE 3.1
INTERVIEW AND QUESTIONNAIRE SAMPLE

DESIGNATION	TARGETED	ACTUAL	RESEARCH TOOL
Principals	10	10	Interview Schedule
School Management Team	10	10	Interview Schedule
Educators	40	34	Questionnaire
Learners	100	70	Questionnaire
TOTAL	160	124	

3.7.3 PURPOSIVE SAMPLING

Purposive sampling was used to identify information rich informants. The advantage of purposive sampling (especially in qualitative research) lies in that few cases are studied in depth to provide many insights about the case or issue being reviewed or investigated. According to Gay and Airasian (2003: 115) in purposive sampling, the researcher selects a sample based on his experience and knowledge of the group to be sampled. McMillan and Schumacher (2001: 175) are of the opinion that, on the basis of the researcher’s knowledge of the population, a judgment can be made about

which subjects should be selected to provide the best information to address the purpose of the research.

3.7.4 SAMPLING PROCEDURE USED TO SELECT RESPONDENTS

Sampling in quantitative research refers to the process of selecting a number of individuals for a study in such a way that the individuals represent the larger group from which they were selected (Gay 1992: 123). The aim of a sample survey is to reach conclusions concerning the population as a whole at a lower cost and in a short period of time and be able to reach valid conclusions.

(Stocker 1989: 101).

3.7.4.1 PRINCIPALS

The total number of secondary schools in the Mankweng Area is sixty-four (64) The Mankweng Area is divided into five circuits namely: Mankweng, Lebopo, Dimamo, Kgakatlou and Mamabolo. The researcher sampled two (2) secondary schools from each circuit. The total number of ten (10) secondary schools was selected. Ten secondary school principals from sampled schools were interviewed (see Appendix A).

3.7.4.2 SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAMS

One member of the School Management Team from each sampled school was interviewed. A total number of ten members of School Management Teams were therefore interviewed.

(see Appendix B).

3.7.4.3 EDUCATORS

Four secondary school educators were selected from each sampled school. The total number of sampled educators was 40 and was given questionnaires (see Appendix C). 34 educators returned the completed questionnaires and only 6 questionnaires were not returned. Despite this, the researcher had enough educators to represent the population of the Mankweng Area.

3.7.4.3 LEARNERS

Ten Grade 12 learners were selected from each sampled school. Thus 100 learners were asked to complete the questionnaires (see Appendix D). Seventy learners returned the completed questionnaires and 30 were not returned.

The total number of secondary schools in the Mankweng Area and its circuits is as follows:

TABLE 3.2

NUMBER OF SCHOOLS AND SAMPLES IN THE MANKWENG AREA ACCORDING TO INSPECTION AREA

INSPECTION AREA ACCORDING TO CIRCUITS	SECONDARY SCHOOLS	
	NUMBER	SAMPLE
Mankweng	11	2
Lebopo	17	2
Dimamo	14	2
Kgakatlou	13	2
Mamabolo	9	2
TOTALS	64	10

TABLE 3.3

TOTAL SAMPLES OF PRINCIPALS AND SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAM

Number of Principals		Number of sampled Principals		Number of school Management Team Members		Number of sampled School Management Teams	
TOTAL	%	TOTAL	%	TOTAL	%	TOTAL	%
10	100 %	10	100 %	24	100 %	10	100 %

TABLE 3.4

TOTAL SAMPLES OF EDUCATORS AND GRADE 12 LEARNERS

Number of Educators		Number of sampled Educators		Number of school Grade 12 Learners		Number of sampled Grade 12 Learners	
TOTAL	%	TOTAL	%	TOTAL	%	TOTAL	%
147	100 %	40	27,3 %	423	100 %	100	24 %

3.8 RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

3.8.1 STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS (SEE APPENDICES A AND B)

An interview is a purposeful interaction between two or more people focused on one person trying to get information from the other person. Interviews permit researchers to obtain important data they cannot acquire from observation. They also explore and probe participants' responses to gather more in-depth data about their experiences and feelings (Gay and Airasian 2003: 209)

Interview schedules (as highlighted in paragraph 1.5) were designed to enable the respondents to answer questions in the presence of the interviewer (Vockell 1983: 86-87). The interviewer was able to follow up ideas, probe responses and investigate motives and feelings that any other instrument cannot do.

The researcher compiled one interview schedule for both the principals and the School Management Teams (SMT) and these consisted of nine questions (see Appendices A and B) The scheduled interviews were conducted in order to determine the following aspects: availability of a Learner Support System, the need for a Learner Support System, the funding of Learner Support System and problems encountered with past and present Learner Support System provision. The two groups of respondents play an important role in the management of the learner support system for grade 12 learners.

The principals were chosen because they perform class visits and other supervisory roles in the school. They also form a link between the educators, inspectors and learners. The School Management Teams (SMT) were included because they serve as mentors to educators. They are also

able to observe the culture of teaching and learning in schools as they also teach the Grade 12 learners. The interview schedule was carefully structured to obtain relevant information.

3.8.2 QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY (SEE APPENDICES C AND D)

The questionnaire is a data-gathering instrument through which respondents answer questions or respond to statements in writing. Questionnaires were administered personally by the researcher to educators and learners. The researcher had the opportunity to establish rapport, explain the purpose of the study and the meaning of items that may not be clear (Best and Kahn 1993: 230-231).

Guidelines for the drawing of an acceptable questionnaire as suggested by Leedy (1993: 188-189) were used, namely:

- Courtesy (using appealing language).
- Simplicity (questions should be simple to read and respond to).
- Focusing on general issues (rather than addressing specific or personal issues).
- Brevity (questionnaire to be brief and should solicit only data essential to the research project).

Two different questionnaires were compiled (see Appendices C and D) and used from a sample of learners and educators in 10 Secondary schools in the Mankweng Area, Limpopo Province. Both questionnaires have eight questions. This was done because learners are the ones who experience difficulties in learning and educators in teaching.

3.9 PILOT STUDY

Gay (1992: 229) maintains that pre-testing the questionnaire and interview schedules yields data concerning instrument deficiencies as well as suggestions for improvement. The pilot study was tried out on a small group of the population to determine whether each item is clear and precise in meaning and intent (Leedy 1989: 143).

Questionnaires were tested with a sample of four educators and three learners in a school not included in the final sample, in order to rectify errors and to check the response times. Errors detected regarding the formulation of some questions were rectified. Learners had difficulties in understanding some of the educational concepts used in the questionnaire. For example, Learner Support System (question 2) and Learner Support Strategies (question 4). The questions, which were found to be misleading, were rephrased or discarded. The interview schedule was also refined.

Remarks obtained from the interview enabled the researcher to eliminate some items and also to rephrase some of the questions.

3.10 LOCALIZATION

Principals and School Management Teams were interviewed in their offices and schools. The questionnaires were delivered to schools by the researcher, handed to the School Management Team who assisted by distributing them among educators and learners. The completed questionnaires were then collected by the researcher.

3.11 PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED DURING COLLECTION OF DATA

Some principals and members of the School Management Team were difficult to locate. In a few cases, the researcher arrived after making appointments but the principals had been invited to attend to emergency meetings. Other problems were time constraints.

3.12 SUMMARY

Chapter three presented the research approach, reasons for selecting specific designs used, research instruments and problems encountered during the research process.

Chapter four will present the data gathered from the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents data gathered from the study. Data was collected through interviews with School Principals and School Management Teams and through questionnaires with educators and learners.

4.2 DATA OBTAINED THROUGH INTERVIEWS WITH PRINCIPALS

Question 1: Existence of a policy on learner support system.

Of the ten school principals sampled in the Mankweng Area, two responded by YES and eight by NO.

Number of sampled school principals	YES	%	NO	%
10	2	20%	8	80%

Question 2:

On the question of what respondents think the purpose of a learner support system is, the responses were as follows:

- Advising learners on effective study methods and encouraging independent studies.
- Advising learners about career choices and on the choice of subjects according to potential.
- To maximize the potential of learners in order to succeed in their studies so that they eventually become functional in their communities.

Learner support system if applied correctly can help to improve educational achievement of learners (see 2:2.3).

Question 3:

On the question of components that form a learner support system, the responses were as follows: -

- Learners themselves.
- Learning aids and Study Guides.
- Audio-visual aids (television programmes).
- Well established vocational and career guidance programmes.
- Well co-coordinated activities of the year (year plan).

The components of Learner Support System should also include published material; contact or face-to-face support mechanisms (see 2: 2.3)

Question 4:

On the question of what the major success factors of grade 12 learners in the past three years were, the responses were as follows:

- Regular address by the principal about the school's expectations.
- Continuous attendance by learners.
- Improved discussion groups by learners.
- Below average learners who were not expected to pass but nevertheless were successful at the end of the year.

Question 5:

On the key factors contributing to a high failure rate at Grade 12 level, the responses were as follows:

- Lack of motivation among learners and educators.
- Lack of resources at school.
- Lack of commitment on the part of learners and educators.
- High rate of absenteeism on the part of learners.
- Poor parental involvement.

Learners should be encouraged to study on their own through self-discipline. Extra work should also be given and it stimulates learning (see 2: 2.4).

Question 6:

Current strengths of the school learner support system identified by respondents were:

- Operation catch-ups during holidays.
- Willingness to work harder by educators and learners.
- Moral support for educators and parents.
- Effective teaching and learning.
- Revision of previous question papers.

Question 7:

On the question about the main weaknesses of the school's Learner Support System, the responses were as follows:

- Poor infrastructure (lack of electricity).
- There are no clear outlines on how to support the learners.
- Poor attendance by learners.
- Unwillingness of educators to go an extra mile and not willing to offer extra lessons (morning and afternoon lessons).
- Lack of discipline.

The weaknesses of the Learner Support System can be enhanced, if appropriate learner support strategies can be used to facilitate effective teaching and learning (see 2: 2.4).

Question 8:

On the question of how the Learner Support System can be planned, led and coordinated in order to improve teaching and learning, the responses were as follows:

- There is a need for funds, earmarked for well-structured and coordinated programmes.
- The Department of Education should employ people who have the expertise of managing all Learner Support Systems in schools.

Question 9:

Under general comments, the responses were:

- Implementation of Learner Support System in schools should be compulsory.
- There must be constant monitoring from the Department of Education in the form of inspection and class visits.
- Learners should be provided with learning materials all the time.

Schools should improvise and use the Learner Support Systems available at their disposal and not wait for the Department of Education to intervene (see 2: 2.4).

4.3 DATA OBTAINED THROUGH INTERVIEWS WITH SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAMS (SMT)

Question 1:

On the question of whether the school has a policy on learner support system, the responses were:

Of the ten sampled School Management Teams, two responded by YES and eight by NO.

Number of sampled School Management Teams	YES	%	NO	%
10	2	20%	8	80%

Question 2:

On the purpose of the Learner Support System, the School Management Teams responded as follows:

- Advising learners on choice of learning areas according to potential.
- To instill self- reliance in studying throughout the academic year and to help learners not to loose focus when they study.
- Prepare the learners for the final examination.

Question 3:

On the question of components forming a Learner Support System, the responses were:

- The formation of subject committees within and outside the school.
- Teamwork among educators.
- Enough and quality learner support materials, that is, learning aids and study guides.
- Morning and afternoon lessons.
- Compilation of previous examination question papers.
- Enough written work.

Question 4:

On the question of what the major success factors of grade 12 learners in the past three years were, the responses were as follows:

- Regular address by the School Management Teams about the school's expectations.
- Educators using past examination papers.
- Regular attendance of classes by learners and educators.
- Giving learners enough written work.
- Study time, which is monitored.
- Career guidance.

Question 5:

About key factors contributing to a high failure rate at grade 12 level, the responses were:

- Laziness on the side of learners.
- Little or no revision of work done.
- Insufficient written work.
- Lack of independent self-study.
- Lack of exam-focused study methods.
- Lack of discipline.

Question 6:

Current strengths of the school learner support system identified by respondents were:

- Team-teaching on the part of educators.
- Learners formed study groups.
- Completion of syllabi.

Question 7:

Main weaknesses of the school learner support system, were identified as follows:

- Lack of dedication and commitment by educators and learners.
- Little or no teamwork in learner discipline.
- Poor liaison between subject committees, mostly those in surrounding areas.
- Lack of resources.

Question 8:

Suggestions on ways of improving the Grade 12 pass rate were as follows:

- Intensified teamwork by educators.
- Encourage learners to attend school regularly and to study throughout the year.
- The need for parental and community support.
- Strong disciplinary measures for educators and learners.
- Employment of enough educators.
- Learners with special needs to be identified and helped.

The school should be able to utilize the resources available to accomplish the school's goals by encouraging learners to study, giving them extra work and providing feedback (see 2: 2.6).

Question 9:

Under general comments, the responses were:

- Discipline in school, a cause for concern.
- Capacity building of principals on how to manage the Learner Support Systems in schools.
- Factors leading to failure rate: late coming and absenteeism (learners and educators).

- There is a need for career and vocational guidance.
- The number of holidays must be reduced.
- Preparatory examinations should be written in September.

4.4 DATA OBTAINED FROM EDUCATORS' RESPONSES TO A QUESTIONNAIRE

Question 1:

EDUCATORS ACCORDING TO GENDER

GENDER	NUMBER	%
MALE	14	41%
FEMALE	20	59%
TOTAL SAMPLE	34	100%

Question 2:

How long have you been teaching Grade 12?

Of the thirty-four educators who returned the questionnaire, the responses were as follows:

YEARS TEACHING EXPERIENCE	NUMBER OF EDUCATORS	%
1 - 5	6	18 %
6 - 10	15	44%
11 or more	8	23%
NONE	5	15%
TOTAL	34	100%

Question 3:

On the question of what a Learner Support System is, the response was:

- Winter school and Saturday classes

- School library and laboratory
- Learning aids such as computers, television programmes
- Career guidance

Question 4:

On the importance of using the Learner Support Systems in lesson presentation, the responses were:

- Learning aids such as computers and television programmes help learners to be actively involved in the lesson.
- Laboratories help learners to have hands-on experience.
- Charts and prepared slides help learners to have a broader picture of what is discussed in the lesson.

Question 5:

On how often do educators use Learner Support Systems in their lesson presentations, the responses were as follows:

- 5.1 All of the 34 educators responded by indicating that they use Learner Support Systems in their lesson presentations.
- 5.2 On the type of Learner Support Systems used, they cited the following examples:
- Charts and prepared slides
 - Textbooks.

Question 6:

- 6.1 On the question of whether lack of Learner Support Systems in schools is a contributing factor to the high failure rate in Grade 12, 30 educators indicated YES and 4 by NO.
- 6.2 Explanations were as follows:
- Learners not attending classes and failing to do their work.

- Lack of independent study.
- Inadequate preparation by educators.
- Late supply of support material by the Department of Education.
- Government policy changes that do not involve educators.
- Poverty, because most parents are unemployed and are unable to buy books and study guides for their children.
- Abuse of drugs and alcohol by learners.

The school, parents and the Department of Education should work together to curb the problem of high failure rate in Grade 12 (see 2: 2.5).

Question 7:

On the question of other Learner Support Systems that can help to increase the pass rate in Grade 12, the response were:

- Well-equipped libraries and laboratories.
- Educational excursions.
- Using previous examination question papers for revision.
- Support from parents.
- Punctuality by both learners and educators.
- Educational excursions.

Question 8:

On the question of whether the circuit office help in equipping schools with Learner Support Material, the responses were:

8.1 Of the 34 responses received, 25 educators responded with NO and 9 with YES.

8.2 On the question of what the educators think the circuit office should do to help learners, the responses were:

- Learner material be delivered on time.
- Enough learner material for each learner.

- The circuit should closely monitor teaching and learning in schools by regularly visiting the schools.
- Meetings should be held with parents to encourage them to be actively involved in school activities (see 2: 2.5).

Question 9:

On the question of aspects of importance, which can help to improve the management of the Learner Support Systems for Grade 12 in schools, the responses were:

- Computers and well-equipped laboratories should be a prerequisite for improving effective teaching and learning.
- Thorough workshops for educators should be held regularly.
- There should be constant assessment of all the work done (see 2:2.7).

4.5 DATA OBTAINED FROM LEARNERS' RESPONSE TO QUESTIONNAIRE

Question 1:

LEARNERS ACCORDING TO GENDER:

GENDER	NUMBER	%
MALE	33	47%
FEMALE	37	53%
TOTAL SAMPLE	70	100%

Question 2:

2.1 On the question of whether there is a Learner Support System at their schools, 50 responded with a YES and 20 with a NO.

2.2 Types of Learner Support Systems at schools were indicated as follows:

- Laboratories, which did not have relevant equipment.
- Libraries with old books, which do not comply with the curriculum.
- Charts, which are old and not visible enough.

Question 3:

On the question of Learner Support Systems needed in order to be successful, the responses were:

LEARNER SUPPORT SYSTEMS	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	%
Winter School	05	7,2%
Saturday Classes	09	12,9%
School Library	04	5,7%
Learning Aids	13	18,5%
All of the above	39	55,7%
TOTAL	70	100%

Question 4:

On the question of Learner Support Strategies that can help learners to pass at the end of the year, the response were as follows:

- Effective study groups.
- Using library facilities and computers.
- Enough revision before examinations.
- Motivation and self-confidence.

Question 5:

On the question of what should be done to make learners pass in the final Grade 12 examinations, the responses were:

5.1 The principal should:

- Know every learner's needs.
- Advice learners on how to be successful.
- Give support and motivation.
- Give regular quarterly addresses.

- Encourage learners and educators to come to school early.
- Provide learners with newspapers.
- Make extra lessons to be compulsory.

5.2 Educators should:

- Offer extra lessons.
- Be friendly and encourage learners to study.
- Remain with learners during morning and afternoon studies.
- Give learners enough work to read and revise for the exam.
- Finish syllabi and provide learners with previous question papers.
- Make sure that learners attend classes regularly.
- Good communication between learners and educators.
- Must take time to teach and not rush to finish syllabi.

5.3 Fellow learners should:

- Form study groups even during weekends.
- Attend school regularly.
- Remind each other about set goals.
- Cooperate with each other.

5.4 Parents should:

- Check learners' written workbooks and sign them to show concern.
- Encourage learners to study and ensure that they come to school everyday.
- Buy books and other study material.
- Visit the school to monitor learners' progress.
- Be supportive and avoid stressing learners at home.
- Pay school fees so that learners can go to career exhibitions and other educational excursions.

5.5 The School Governing Body should:

- Motivate and encourage learners to study.
- Make sure that the school property is looked after.
- Monitor the attendance of both educators and learners.

- Ensure that learners are safe.
- Talk to parents to pay school fees.
- Help the principal to keep discipline.

Question 6:

About comments on Learner Support Systems or Mechanisms, the responses were:

- There must be compulsory extra lessons during weekends.
- The government must provide learners with food like in primary schools.
- All schools must conduct their own Winter school to help learners.
- The Department of Education must send informed people to come and motivate both educators and learners at schools (see 2: 2.7).

4.6 SUMMARY

In this chapter the responses of the four groups who responded to the questionnaires and interviews were presented. The respondents included the School Principals, members of the School Management Teams, Grade 12 educators and learners.

Chapter five will present an overview of the study, findings, conclusions and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER 5

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY, FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This research examined the problem of lack of a coherent Learner Support System for Grade 12 learners in schools in the Mankweng Area. The reasons for the absence of a sustainable learner support system were identified and possible ways of improving pass rates for Grade 12 learners were suggested.

5.2 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the research was to investigate the extent to which Grade 12 learners receive appropriate support to enable them to conduct their studies well. The statement of the problem (see 1: 1.2) that necessitated this research has been outlined. The aim and objective of the research (see 1: 1.3) were formulated and discussed.

Chapter 1 of this study served as the orientation of the research and background to the study. The statement of the problem is outlined (see 1:1.2). The methods (see 1: 1.5) and the aims (see1: 1.3) of the research and the definition of concepts were presented with the resulting data recorded in demarcated chapters (see 1: 1.8).

In chapter 2, a literature survey was conducted in order to establish the basic principles to be considered in planning, organizing and implementing a credible learner support system for Grade 12 learners. The concepts which had a bearing on learner support (see 2: 2.3) were highlighted and the learning support components (see 2: 2.8) were also outlined.

Chapter 3 focused on the research design and methodology. A questionnaire was designed and administered to a sample of Grade 12 educators and learners (see Appendices C and D) to establish strategies that may contribute to improve the pass rate at Grade 12 levels. Principals and members of the School Management Teams were interviewed to add their voice (see Appendices A and B). The researcher's experience as an educator for over fifteen years made her a participant observer.

In chapter 4 results and discussion of results were presented. The discussion of results were tabled as follows:

- Data obtained through interviews with principals.
- Data obtained through interviews with school management teams.
- Data obtained from educators' response to a questionnaire.
- Data obtained from learners' response to a questionnaire.

Chapter 5 provides a record of findings, conclusions and recommendations.

5.3 FINDINGS

The findings contained herein relate to the literature study conducted (see 2: 2.3). Interviews with principals and the School Management Team members were conducted. Grade12 educators and learners completed the questionnaires. These findings have been traced in the study of the management of the learner support for Grade 12 learners.

5.3.1 GENERAL FINDINGS REGARDING THE MANAGEMENT OF THE LEARNER SUPPORT SYSTEM FOR GRADE 12 LEARNERS.

The following aspects were found to form part of an effective learner support system:

5.3.1.1 Learner support strategies and discipline.

Learner support strategies (see 2: 2.4) are strategies, which can be used to reduce the isolation of learners, facilitating effective learning and generally improving the quality of education. Learner support programmes if introduced can encourage learners not to drop out of school due to limited English proficiency, lack of study skills, geographic location or economic disadvantage.

5.3.1.2 Lifelong learning opportunities to support learners.

According to NEPI (1993: 143) a rigorous, well managed learner support system can help to give learners important information that is relevant to the future work and learning choices

(see 2: 2.3). The need for learner support services is crucial, as this will provide the total development of learners and for the fulfillment of the country's workforce needs.

5.3.1.3 Parental support and involvement in learners' work.

Parental support is one of the most essential measures of encouraging and supporting children and also Grade 12 learners within and out of school (see 2:2.5). Ngcobo (1988: 24) is also of the opinion that support at home becomes the backbone of school support. Schools should involve parents in the education of their children to promote positive development of learners and school success.

5.3.1.4 Principal's leadership and management

The principal should ensure that learners receive instruction and support both inside and outside the classroom (see 2: 2.6). He/She can do so by organizing an appropriate learner support system to enhance the teaching-learning situation. According to Lemahieu, Roy and Foss (1997: 594), it is the duty of the principal to see to it that a proper learning support system is introduced and used in the school.

5.3.1.5 Supplementary tuition

Saturday classes and Winter School were found to serve the function of allowing learners to meet one another and discuss common problems (see 2: 2.8.4). The supplementary tuition provide learners with study skills, ensuring that learners choose subjects appropriate to their requirements (Wisker and Brown 1996: 12).

5.3.1.6 Library facilities

The school library (see 2: 2.8.5) serves as part of the learner support system in developing a whole-school reading culture, promoting literacy, reading for pleasure and establishing lifelong learning (Barret and Douglas 2004: 470). Schools should have library facilities as learners could thus receive services without leaving their schools.

5.3.1.6 Intervention strategies

A stratified intervention strategy (see 2: 2.7) is used to establish strategies that can be used to identify a learning support system for learners. The strategies can help to identify the needs of learners especially learners from a disadvantaged background by providing them with academic support. Maqutu (2002: 126) is of the opinion that educators should undergo development programmes and support methods that can assist in delivering high quality learning support systems for learners.

5.3.2 FINDINGS PERTAINING TO PRINCIPALS

Principals are of the opinion that there should be policies regarding the learner support systems in schools. They also agree that the purpose of the learner support system is to advise learners on effective study methods and about career choices (see 2: 2). Lack of resources (see 2: 2) such as laboratories and libraries in schools are key factors that contribute to a high failure rate at Grade 12 level. Thus for implementation of the learner support systems, schools should be provided with learning material all the time (see 2: 4). Principals also feel that the Department of Education should employ people who have the expertise of managing the Learner Support Systems in schools. The district officials will then be able to offer classroom-based support in schools.

5.3.3 FINDINGS PERTAINING TO SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAMS

The School Management Teams indicated that Learner Support Systems help learners not to lose focus when they study and prepare them for the final examinations (see 4: 4.3). They further suggested that intensified teamwork by educators and regular attendance of classes by learners could help to improve the Grade 12 pass rate. Lack of independent self-study and exam-focused study methods (see 4: 4.3) were some of the factors cited as contributing to a high failure rate at Grade 12 level. Teamwork among educators and the formation of subject committees within and outside the school should be strengthened.

5.3.4 FINDINGS PERTAINING TO GRADE 12 EDUCATORS

Educators agree that lack of learner support systems in schools contribute to the high failure rate in Grade 12.

They also indicated the following issues:

- Lack of independent study on the part of learners.
- Lack of support from the District and Provincial Education Department.
- Late supply of support material by the Department of Education.

Poverty was cited as a contributing factor as most parents in the Mankweng area are unemployed and are unable to buy books and study guides for their children. They also do not have money for school fees, as such learners are unable to go to career exhibitions and educational excursions. The use of charts and prepared slides can help learners to have a broader picture of what is discussed in the lesson. Educators also had a concern of not receiving support from the District and the Provincial Department of Education.

5.3.5 FINDINGS PERTAINING TO GRADE 12 LEARNERS

Grade 12 learners indicated that effective study groups and usage of library facilities form part of the learner support system (see 4: 4.5). Compulsory extra lessons during weekends should be introduced. They also indicated that if their parents could pay school fees, they could have the opportunity of going to career exhibitions and educational excursions. The Department of Education should send informed people to schools to motivate both educators and learners.

Learners also indicated the need for the following Learner Support Systems:

- Winter School
- Saturday Classes
- School libraries and laboratories
- Learning Aids.

5.4 CONCLUSIONS

From the findings of the research, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- In-service Training Programmes to guide Principals and School Management Teams on how to design and manage the Learner Support Systems are required.

- Appropriate facilities such as laboratories and school libraries should be provided as part of the Learner Support system.
- Learners with special needs should be identified.
- Subject specific learner support programmes should be introduced in schools.
- Learning Aids such as computers, radio and television programmes should form part of the school curriculum as they can help learners to be actively involved in the lesson.
- The circuit office should closely monitor teaching and learning in schools by regularly visiting the schools.
- The Department of Education should design an in-depth, practical skills programme so that educators and principals are taught the proper basics of using the Learner Support Systems in schools.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE RESEARCH

In as far as the Management of the Learner Support System for Grade 12 learners is concerned, there are areas of concern that need to be addressed. Based on the report from interviews and questionnaires, there is a need for a well managed Learner Support System. It is therefore recommended that:

- Learner support material should be delivered to all schools in time, before the beginning of the academic programme.
- Capacity building programmes for principals should be planned and monitored to enable them to implement and monitor the Learner Support Systems in schools.
- A policy on the Management of the Learner Support System should be drawn up and be made compulsory in all schools.

- Recent changes in the curriculum warrant proper use of Learner Support Material. Principals and educators lack an in-depth knowledge of integrating the Learner Support System with the new curriculum. Therefore an intervention strategy is urgently needed.
- Principals, School Management Teams, educators and parents constitute a necessary foundation upon which the management of the Learner Support System should be built.
- The Department of Education should deploy informed people to implement, monitor and evaluate the Learner Support System in schools.

5.6 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The purpose of this study was to establish whether schools with Grade 12 learners have a Learner Support System to assist learners in their studies and if it is in place, how is it managed. Detailed suggestions from Principals, School Management Teams, educators and learners were presented in the previous chapters and a summary thereof in this chapter. Although the study was limited to the Mankweng Area only, the problems and suggestions might be representative of other areas.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR PRINCIPALS

1. Do you have a policy for Learner Support in Grade 12? YES / NO
2. What would be the main purpose of Learner Support System for Grade 12 learners?
3. Suggest components that form part of the Learner Support System?
4. What have been the major success factors of Grade 12 learners in the past three years?
5. What, in your experience, are the key factors contributing to a high failure rate at Grade 12 level ?
6. What are the current strengths of your school in terms of Learner Support System for Grade 12?
7. What are the main weaknesses of your school in terms of Learner Support System?
8. Suggest ways of improving Grade 12 pass rate.
9. General comments.

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAMS

1. Do you have a policy for Learner Support in Grade 12? YES / NO
2. What would be the main purpose of Learner Support System for Grade 12 learners?
3. Suggest components that form part of the Learner Support System?
4. What have been the major success factors of Grade 12 learners in the past three years?
5. What, in your experience, are the key factors contributing to a high failure rate at Grade 12 level?
6. What are the current strengths of your school in terms of Learner Support System for Grade 12?
7. What are the main weaknesses of your school in terms of Learner Support System?
8. Suggest ways of improving Grade 12 pass rate.
9. General comments.

APPENDIX C

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR GRADE 12 EDUCATORS

Kindly assist the researcher by completing and returning this questionnaire. You do not need to write your name, and your answers will be treated as confidential.

Name of School _____

1. Please indicate your gender?

MALE	<input type="checkbox"/>
------	--------------------------

FEMALE	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------	--------------------------

2. For how long have you been teaching Grade 12 ?

1- 5 YEARS	<input type="checkbox"/>
6-10 YEARS	<input type="checkbox"/>
11 OR MORE	<input type="checkbox"/>
NONE	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. In your opinion what is a Learner Support System?

4. What is the importance of using the Learner Support Systems in class?

5. Do you often use Learner Support Systems in your lesson presentation ?

YES	<input type="checkbox"/>
-----	--------------------------

NO	<input type="checkbox"/>
----	--------------------------

6. If yes, indicate the type of learner support system you use.

7. Do you regard the lack of Learner Support Systems in schools as a contributory factor to high failure rate in Grade 12 ?

YES	
-----	--

NO	
----	--

8. If YES, explain why?

8. List other Learner Support Systems you think can help to increase the pass rate in Grade 12.

9. Do the circuit office help in equipping schools with learner support material?

YES	
-----	--

NO	
----	--

10. If the answer is NO, what do you think the circuit office should do to help the learners?

11. Mention other aspects of importance to you, which can help to improve the management of the Learner Support Systems for Grade 12 in schools.

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THE QUESTIONNAIRE

APPENDIX D

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR GRADE 12 LEARNERS

Kindly assist the researcher by completing this questionnaire. You do not need to write your name, and your answers will be treated as confidential.

Name of School _____

1. Please indicate your gender?

MALE	<input type="checkbox"/>
------	--------------------------

FEMALE	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------	--------------------------

2. Do you have Learner Support System at your school?

YES	<input type="checkbox"/>
-----	--------------------------

NO	<input type="checkbox"/>
----	--------------------------

If YES indicate the type of Learner Support System you have at your school?

3. Which of the following Learner Support Systems do you need to help you to be successful in your studies?

Winter School	<input type="checkbox"/>
Saturday Classes	<input type="checkbox"/>
School Library	<input type="checkbox"/>
Learning Aids	<input type="checkbox"/>
All of the above	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. List other Learner Support Systems/ strategies that can help you to pass at the end of the year?

5. What must each of the following do for you to help you pass in your final Grade 12 examinations?

5.1 The Principal

5.2 Educators

5.3 Your fellow learners

5.4 Your parents

5.5 The School Governing Body

6. Any other comments on the Learner Support Systems or Mechanisms?

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Enquiries: T M Ramahuta
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: 082 690 8631

P O Box 66
Sovenga
0727
05 January 2006

The Superintendent General
Department of Education
Private bag x 9489
Polokwane
0700

Dear Sir

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

I hereby request for permission to conduct research for masters studies in education.

The title of my dissertation is “The management of the Learner Support System for Grade 12 in the Mankweng Area ,Limpopo Province”.

I am registered with the University of South Africa.

My proposed fieldwork plan is as follows:

1. A questionnaire survey will be conducted with a sample of secondary school learners.
2. A sample of educators and principals of schools will be interviewed.

The research will be conducted during the first two weeks of March 2006.

Yours sincerely
Tracey Maphuti Ramahuta