EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND SUSTAINABLE LEARNER ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AT SCHOOLS IN THE LEJWELEPUTSWA EDUCATION DISTRICT

by

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DECLARATION

I declare that ***EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND SUSTAINABLE LEARNER ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AT SCHOOLS IN THE LEJWELEPUTSWA EDUCATION DISTRICT*** is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

13 November 2015

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MOSWEU SAM MOKGOBO   DATE

STUDENT NO: 212414690

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I truly believe we are closer than ever in knowing what must be done to engage all classrooms and schools in continuous reform. Knowing what must be done is not the same as getting it done. Highly effective schools succeed where other schools fail because they ruthlessly organise themselves around one thing: helping learners learn a great deal. Writing this dissertation was inspired by my experiences with the people of Lejweleputswa education district. Quality teaching requires strong leadership. Collegial interchange and not isolation should become the norm for our educators. There are no words to express my sincere gratitude towards my beloved family, friends, colleagues and God.

1. Almighty God

I would like to thank God the Almighty for giving me the inner strength, perseverance and courage to complete this study. The talent to pursue further studies is a blessing - Glory to your Name!

2. My loving wife

I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude towards my loving wife. Thank you for your commitment, being so positive and supporting throughout my period of studies. No words can express my thankful heart towards your patience, unconditional love, encouragement and understanding. Thank you for allowing me to pursue my studies.

3. My three children

Tshegofatso, Itumeleng and Ofentse, I value your unconditional love. Words alone cannot express the appreciation I hold for you as my children.

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Mariette, what a good friend I have in you, the leader of the CIS project. You have been my source of inspiration. I would be elated to thank you from the deepest deep of my heart. The time you spent with me, the assistance, and the sacrifices - they are just

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6. Participants

Finally, and most importantly, I wish to acknowledge the real heroes of this research work: the educators, principals, subject advisors and circuit managers of the Lejweleputswa Education school district who participated in this research and continue to join forces in demonstrating that "learning for all" can be a collective commitment rather than a catch phrase. My sincere appreciation expressed for your cooperation and important contributions to this study.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this research to the heroic educators who persist in their quest to do something, have been able to help all learners learn at high levels.

I have been blessed throughout my life to be surrounded by many models of lifelong learners - parents, friends, kids and of course my wonderful wife, Libuseng Fortune Mokgobo. I dedicate this study, however, to my three children and wife for their unconditional support.

To my dearest friend Mariette van der Merwe, who continues to be my source of inspiration.

ABSTRACT

The study sought how educational leadership can assist in sustaining learner academic performance (LAP) in schools in the Lejweleputswa education district. Some secondary schools in the district have developed a tendency of being perennial underperformers. At the time of the study there were schools that never performed above 80% for at least ten years. These schools rely heavily on external support for them to be able to perform, learners from such schools being taught by teachers from other schools. Every year these schools fail to perform to the expected level despite being supported and assisted by the department through camps and other intervention measures.

To combat this situation, a large amount of money is spent to enhance LAP in general and in particular that of Grade 12 learners, since the Grade 12 results are still the measuring tool to measure performance (Lejweleputswa District: 2012). The pool of applicable and relevant qualified teachers in key subjects, force education districts to be involved in a large number of interventions to uphold and better the performance of learners in general and for Grade 12 in particular to adhere to the goals set by the Action Plan 2014 (DBE, 2012a). The key problem resounds about secondary schools that are unable to sustain or improve LAP when financial support for intervention strategies rolled out from the district offices, is no longer sustainable.

The literature pursued in this study covers leadership in general, educational leadership and various aspects of educational leadership. Important to consider is that instructional leadership, transformational leadership, collaborative leadership, as well as sustainable leadership from both schools and district education offices have a role to play to ensure learner academic performance. The climate within a school and its importance regarding academic performance is another aspect addressed in this study.

The methodology of the study followed a concurrent triangulation approach where quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis took place simultaneously. The quantitative analysis employed descriptive statistics where the sample was described in

terms of educator levels; gender; qualification levels and teaching experience. Various aspects, inclusive of how vertical (upward and downward) educational leadership (EL) are experienced by all educator levels; overall school climate perceived by all educator levels; empowerment to promote effective teaching and learning by all educator levels; present feelings about teaching as a career; and ultimately consideration in term of leaving the teaching profession by all educator levels. The open-ended questionnaire sought to explain the views and opinions of educators on all levels from a qualitative standpoint relating to the acknowledgement of the existence of the relationship between EL and LAP; and the consequences of academic intervention strategies and their successes for LAP in the Lejweleputswa education district.

This study attempted to outline the rationale for improving EL for the successful enhancement of LAP in the Lejweleputswa Education district. The study provided an aggressive approach and action plan towards equipping EL to a level of functionality which will be implemented over the next two years in the Lejweleputswa district where targets will be managed at all levels in the leadership hierarchy.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

LAP	Learner Academic Performance
EL	Educational Leadership
CM	Circuit Manager
SA	Subject Advisor
HOD	Head of Department
LOLT	Language of Learning and Teaching
LTSM	Learning and Teaching Support Material
SMT	School Management Team
SDT	School Development Team
CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement
IQMS	Integrated Quality Management System
PGP	Personal Growth Plan
DBE	Department of Basic Education
FSDBE	Free State Department of Basic Education
EMIS	Educational Management Information System
NCS	National Senior Certificate
HC	Human Capital
SC	Social Capital
PLC	Professional Learning Communities

DAS	Development Appraisal System
ANA	Annual National Assessments
SAPIP	Subject Academic Performance Improvement Plan
APIP	Academic Performance Improvement Plan
SIP	School Improvement Plan
CPTD	Continuous Professional Teacher Development
PAM	Personnel Administrative Measures
DBDM	Data-based Decision Making
DDDM	Data-driven Decision Making
DIDM	Data-informed Decision Making
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation

LIST OF DEFINITIONS

Educator: An educator is a person that educates, especially a teacher, Head of Department or other person involved in planning or directing education. In the context of this study, educator includes Heads of Department (HODs) and level 1 teachers.

Teacher: A teacher is a person who teaches or instructs, especially as a profession. A teacher impart knowledge to or instruct (someone) as to how to do something. In the context of this study, teacher is used when referring to level 1 teachers, excluding the principal and HODs.

Head of Department: A Head of Department is a person leading a specific academic department in a school. Various subject teachers report to such a head of Department. In the context of this study, Head of Department post level 2 educator (excluding the principal and teachers).

Principal: A principal is the leader of the school. He/she is seen as the most senior teacher, leader and manager of a school.

Subject Advisor: Subject Advisors are expected to provide professional support to schools by assisting educators in their work of teaching. The core function of Subject Advisors is to manage curriculum delivery by educators in schools in their jurisdiction. Subject Advisors are subject specialists and their role is to support educators in the subjects in which they have specialised.

Circuit Manager: A Circuit Manager is the head of a Circuit Office. He/she executes prescribed functions using powers delegated by the District Director. The following key performance areas are attached to the Circuit Manager: monitoring curriculum delivery, by bringing all curriculum challenges picked up at the schools to the attention of the curriculum advisors; staff development; office administration; providing administration services to schools; providing management support to schools by resolving all management problems encountered by the school principals and managing all the recovery plans in the circuit.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Leadership is universally acknowledged as an essential feature in the process of realising school effectiveness and evolvement (Bush & Oduro, 2006; Robinson, Hohepa & Lloyd, 2009:65). The diverse transformation in education in South Africa during the last two decades makes the role of leadership in schools more deserving of significant consideration than ever before. According to Lingam and Lingam (2014:63), where principals have undergone no professional training for their leadership role, except years of teaching experience obtained from the classroom, they could be confronted with countless contemporary leadership problems. To manage these challenges, principals need applicable knowledge, skills and abilities to offer appropriate service to the learners, teachers and communities they lead. Not only is strong school leadership necessary to strive for academic successful schools, but also leadership from district offices of the Department of Basic Education (DBE).

In the first quarter of the 2012-2013 financial year, 42.1% of the provincial budgets was allocated to education (South Africa, 2012a) indicating education as the single largest item on provincial budgets. It clearly indicates that tax payers have the right to expect a positive outcome/reward on their investment in human capital (HC). One of the reasons why school results and especially that of Grade 12 learners are scrutinized by all stakeholders is that society is looking for a workforce produced by schools, capable to function within the workplace, i.e. they are looking for a just outcome on their financial input.

In the next table statistics retrieved from the Educational Management Information System (EMIS) of the Free State Department of Basic Education (FSDBE) (FSDBE,

2012) for the final Grade 12 results in the Lejweleputswa district (one of the five educational districts in the Free State) mirror performance in terms of pass rates.

For the purpose of this study results are organized to reflect school performance with pass rates ≥ 60% and pass rates < 40%. The percentage of schools maintaining a 100% pass rate is also indicated.

Table 1: Academic Performance in terms of Pass rate for Grade 12 learners in Lejweleputswa district between 2001 and 2011

Year	Percentage of schools with a pass rate of 60% and higher	Percentage of schools with a pass rate less than 40%	Percentage of schools with a 100 % pass rate
2001	56.6	18.8	8.7
2002	68	3	16
2003	90	0	19
2004	93	1.4	13
2005	83	1.4	14
2006	66	8.4	10
2007	61	10.1	14
2008	75	5.8	13
2009	67	8.7	9
2010	73	1.4	16
2011	84.2	0	14

Based on table 1 it is evident that over the 11 year time span a 60 % plus pass rate was maintained in 56.6% of the schools in the Lejweleputswa district in 2001, whilst performance never dropped under 60% of schools having a pass rate of 60% and higher and range to 93% of the schools in 2004. In 2003 and 2011 none of the schools have a pass percentage lower than 40%. Figures 1.1-1.2 are based on the information gathered in this table.

Figure 1: Percentage of Schools with a pass rate of 60% and higher in the Grade 12 Final Examination from 2001 - 2011 (Lejweleputswa district)
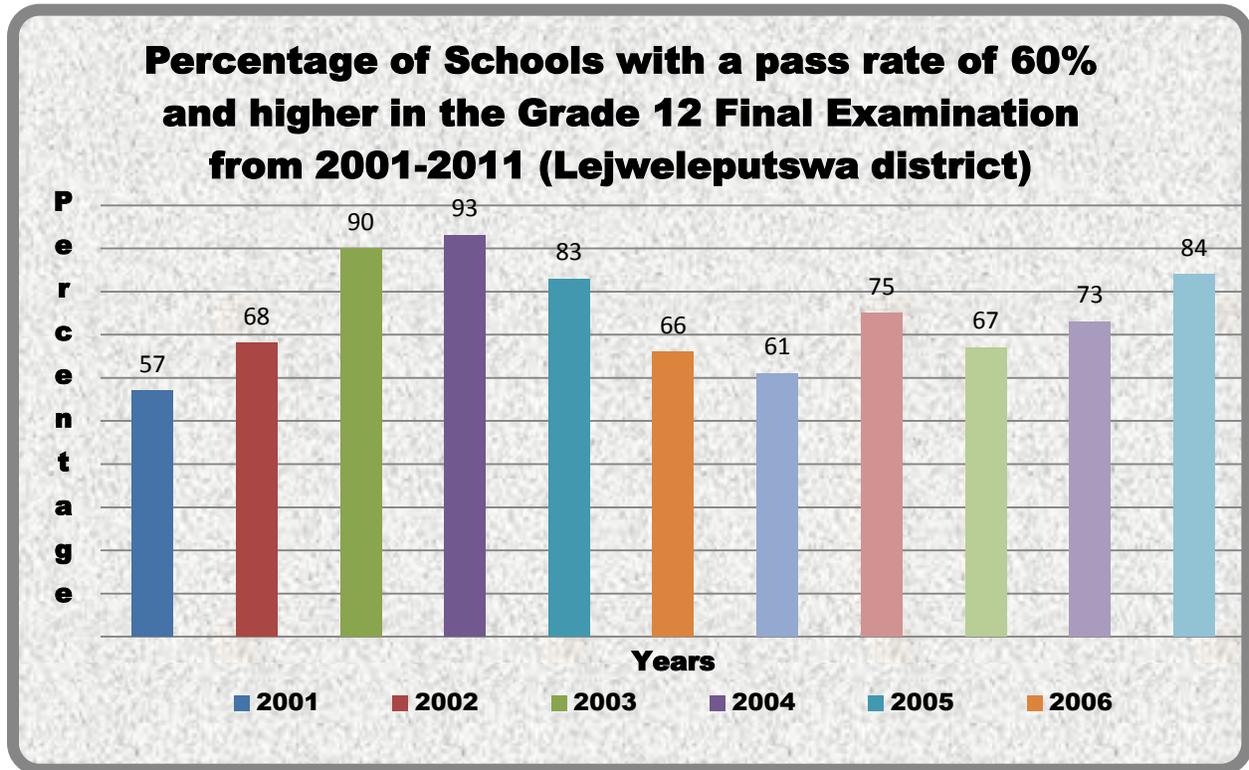
Source: FSDBE (2012:1-3)

Trends based on the information displayed in figure 1 indicates an increase in schools with a pass rate 60% and higher between 2001 and 2004 (93%) and then a downward trend to 60% in 2007 with another high in 2008 and a steady increase from 2009 to 2011.

In figure 2 the relationship between the performance of schools in the final Grade 12 examination performing at a level of 60% and higher, a level lower than 40% and schools with a 100% pass rate are outlined for the Lejweleputswa district from 2001-2011.

Figure 2: Relation between Performance of Schools in terms of Pass rate of 60%+; less than 40%; and the percentage of Schools with a 100% pass rate (Lejweleputswa district: 2001 - 2011)
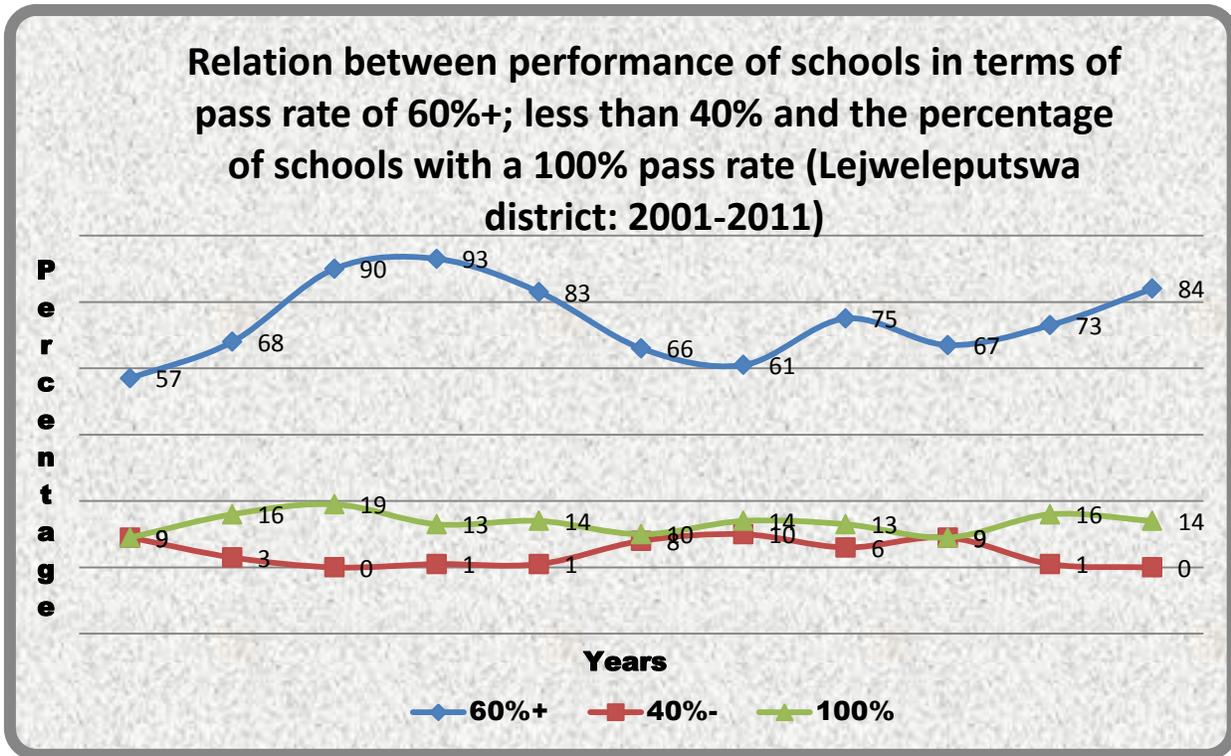
Source: FSDBE (2012:1-3)

It is evident from figure 2 that whenever an increasing trend is identified in terms of the percentage of schools performing on a level of 60% and above in terms of pass rate, an inverse trend is evident indicating less schools performing on the level of a pass rate less than 40%. Interestingly the number of schools obtaining a 100% pass rate varies between 10% and 19% with the exception of 2001 (8.7%) and 2009 (9%) (cf. Table 1).

On national and international level a great deal of research was done on the academic performance of Grade 12 learners. A few examples are:

•   an analysis of factors influencing Grade 12 results (Mutshaeni, 2008).

•   on factors contributing towards poor performance of Grade 12 learners in Limpopo (Rammala, 2010).

•   a case study of school-related factors affecting Nigerian school pupils' academic performance (Bojowoye, 2006).

- on the educators' perception of the impact of poverty on academic performance on Grade 11 & 12 learners (Chili, 2006).

Action plan 2014 (Department of Basic Education (DBE), 2012) consist of 27 goals - with goal 1-13 dealing with outputs in relation with learning and enrolments, whilst goals 14-27 deals with 'what' to do to reach the set outcomes. Goal 14 refers to attract young, motivated and appropriate qualified and trained educators to the profession whilst goal 16 and 17 refers to the attraction of skilled, knowledgeable and professional workers to the teaching profession and the job satisfaction of educators respectively (ibid.). Professional development enables educators to be professionally able, stressing the importance of relevant and applicable in-service training because time to attend relevant training will have an effect on the workload of educators (Fourie, 2012:7).

Goal 27 of Action plan 2014 (DBE, 2012) refers to the frequency of quality monitoring and support offered to schools by district officials. Support given to schools in this regard is for example focused on instructional and managerial functionality. Actions focused on increased instructional and managerial functionality initiated by the District office and currently running in the Lejweleputswa district in partnership with schools (Mokgobo, 2012:1-8) are for example:

- formal compulsory homework and practical tasks set by expert educators and/or district officials;
- common examinations/tests in June and September in all subjects in Grade 12 and in certain other Grades in certain chosen subjects from Grade 1-12;
- an incubation programme where certain schools where performance are not to the expected level in Grade 12 are taken to and assisted by performing schools;
- camps and Saturday classes focusing mainly on Mathematics, Accounting, Physical Sciences, Economics and Life Sciences in Grade 12;
- academies of excellence where Saturday classes are offered especially in key subjects by subject specialists from within education and the communities;
- establishing of Professional Learning Communities (PLC) to enhance involvement of the communities in education;

- Science and Mathematics seminars with the emphasis on closing the gap i.e. managing the transition between Grade 3 & 4; 6 & 7 and 9 &10;
- monitoring of compulsory item and error analysis on formal tasks, analysis of results and error analysis of content;
- information of error analysis to be reflected in individual educators' subject academic improvement plans and eventually in the subject academic performance improvement plan (SAPIP) and eventually in the academic performance Improvement plan (APIP). The latter will be part of the school improvement plan (SIP) of the school.
- focus on the annual national assessment (ANA) written in Grades 3, 6 & 9 in Languages and Mathematics.

To obtain a wider picture and looking abroad, the European Ministers of Education identified educators and school leadership as key factors to maintain and improve the quality of education in Europe, based on high quality standards, professionalism and support. Educator quality is one of the most important factors within a school that affects learners' performance. Both in Europe and South Africa continuous professional teacher/educator development (CPTD) are viewed of the utmost importance for sustainable learner performance.

From the side of the legislator, laws were promulgated on equity and equality, mirroring the need for a non-racist, non-sexist democratic society as indicated in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996). Redress of past injustices is mirrored in the R7.5 million budgeted for the Lejweleputswa district (FSDBE 2012:1-5) and invested in HC in the form of initiatives to sustain the academic performance for Grade 12 learners in the district.

In parliament (South Africa, 2012b:1-7) a few questions were asked regarding academic performance of learners in South African schools and how to maintain it. It is not feasible to sustain a financial input of R 7.5 million annually to enhance performance of Grade 12 learners within a single school district. A number of initiatives have been put

in place in the past number of years to raise accountability levels, and in particular the quality of education, but these have enjoyed very limited success. These have included

- DAS to evaluate teacher performance and offer support
- The IQMS which provided for the evaluation of school-based educators including SMT members. The IQMS also made provision for the evaluation of principals by circuit managers – an area that has never really taken off in the system and
- The provisions of section 6A of the South African Schools Act (No. 84 of 1996) that requires the Minister to determine:
  - A national curriculum statement indicating the minimum outcomes or standards; and
  - A national process and procedures for the assessment of learner achievement.

Section 16A of SASA further requires that a principal of a public school must prepare and submit to the Head of Department an annual report outlining, amongst others, the academic performance of the school in relation to the minimum outcomes and standards and procedures for assessment determined by the minister in terms of section 6A. Section 16A (C) (i),(ii) (aa) and (bb) and (iii) further state that upon submission of an annual report, the Head of Department may determine whether a school is underperforming or not in terms of the standards determined in 6A. The provisions of section 16A are aimed at enhancing accountability amongst school principals and force them to deal with underperformance where it occurs. There is currently no evidence that the provisions of Section 16A of the SASA are being enforced or complied with by both Heads of Departments and school principals.

In line with the Government Gazette, 3 April 2013, the role of the District Office is clearly defined as, "… to work collaboratively with principals and educators in schools, with the vital assistance of circuit offices, to improve educational access and retention, give management and professional support, and help schools achieve excellence in learning and teaching". Therefore district offices, supported by circuit offices, have definite roles which must be executed with due priority being given to those schools in need of their services to improve and sustain academic performance.

Research shows that school sustainability (to continue to be regarded as functional schools) needs to address challenges in three wide areas (Taylor & Moyana, 2005:15), namely: actions in the classroom (learners and teachers), school leadership, management and governance, and the administration of the education system. Flowing from this, effective education sustainability requires interventions aimed at addressing various challenges at schools. Key role players in this regard are the district and circuit officials, school leadership, teachers, learners, the community and parents.

1.2   PROBLEM STATEMENT

The world of work expects from the education system a competent, skilled and knowledgeable workforce to enhance economic growth within South Africa. Educators and principals are expected to keep abreast of new developments in the curricula, whilst the Grade 12 results are still the measuring tool to measure academic performance. To combat this situation large amounts of money are spent to enhance performance of learners in general and that of Grade 12 learners in particular (Lejweleputswa district: 2012b). The pool of applicable and relevant qualified educators in key subjects force education districts to be involved in a large number of interventions to uphold and better the performance of learners in general and for Grade 12 in particular to adhere to the goals set by action plan 2014 (DBE, 2012a) (cf. Par 5). The key problem resounds about secondary schools that are unable to sustain or improve academic performance in Grade 12 when financial support for intervention strategies rolled out from the district offices, is no longer sustainable.

1.3   PRELIMINARY LITERATURE REVIEW

Leadership is generally acknowledged as in the process of realising school effectiveness and evolvement (Bush & Oduro, 2006; Robinson *et al* 2009:65). The diverse transformation in education in South Africa during the last two decades make the role of leadership in schools more deserving of significant consideration than ever before. According to Lingam and Lingam (2014:63), most principals have received no

formal professional training for their leadership role and therefore rely mostly on their teaching experience. They may lack the necessary leadership skills to confront the countless contemporary leadership problems manifested in schools. To manage these challenges, principals need applicable knowledge, skills and abilities to offer appropriate service to the learners, teachers and communities they lead. Not only is strong school leadership necessary to strive for academic successful schools, but also leadership from district offices of the Department of Basic Education (DBE).

The literature to be elaborated on in this study includes the essences of leadership, educational leadership, as well as various aspects of educational leadership. These aspects include instructional leadership, transformational leadership, collaborative leadership and sustainable leadership. These aspects of leadership are all linked with the aim to ensure learner academic performance. This chapter only provides a high level overview of literature aspects to be elaborated on in Chapter 2.

1.3.1 What is Leadership?

An investigation into the literature indicates that earlier leadership studies concentrated on physical, sociological and psychological qualities of the leader (Sikula, 1993; Modiba, 1997). The personal-behavioural styles on the other hand suggested that leaders should anticipate situational variables such as the expectations, skills and previous experience of their followers (Hersey & Blanchard, 1989; MacBeath, 2007). The contingency theory in turn aims to describe the significance of leader-member relationships, structure of the task at hand and the use of positional power (Nxumalo, 2001).

In virtually all of the leading current theories on leadership the perception is that leadership is a process that involves influencing a group of people on their way to the attainment of certain goals (Wolinski, 2010). Therefore, Miller, Devin and Shoop (2007:12) define leadership as the action of influencing others to readily attempt group

objectives. Leadership is therefore seen as a process of openly encouraging the actions of individuals or a group of people in attaining their goals.

1.3.2 Educational Leadership

In the context of this study, educational leadership relates to leadership of school management teams (SMTs) in the school setting, as well as to leadership that needs to be provided by district offices to schools. SMTs usually comprise the principal, deputy principal(s) and Heads of Department (HoDs). Bush and Glover (2014:556) state that the increased attention to educational leadership in the 21st century is based on the fact that there has been a recognised relationship between educational leadership qualities and learner academic performance. High performing schools traditionally had strong leadership, generally from the principal. Wilson (2011:393) states that the leadership of the principal is crucial to a school's success and primarily significant in schools that have performed persistently low over time. Successful principals impact on academic achievement through the support and development of educators and the execution of effective administrative practices (Tobin, 2014).

1.3.3 Aspects of Educational Leadership

This section explores the following important aspects of educational leadership; Instructional leadership, transformational leadership, collaborative leadership and sustainable leadership.

1.3.3.1 Instructional leadership

Southworth (2002:79) indicates that instructional leadership is primarily linked to teaching and learning, including the professional learning of educators, as well as learner growth. Bush (2013:S6) agrees that instructional leadership is important as it targets the school's critical activities, namely teaching and learning. Instructional leadership emphasises teaching and learning and the behaviour of teachers in working

with learners. Leaders' influence is directed at learning that occurs via educators. The emphasis is on the direction and impact of influence rather than the influence process itself.

1.3.3.2   Transformational leadership

James MacGregor Burns originally introduced the concept of transformational leadership. According to Burns (1978), transformational leadership can be seen when leaders and followers influence each other to advance to a higher level of moral and motivation. Through the power of their vision and personality, transformational leaders are able to motivate followers to change expectations, opinions, and motivations to work towards mutual goals. Later, researcher Bernard M. Bass expanded upon Burns' innovative ideas to develop what is today referred to as Bass' Transformational Leadership Theory.

1.3.3.3   Collaborative leadership in schools

Over the last two decades, researchers recognised that effective school leadership creates settings that sustain effective teaching and learning and constructs the ability for professional learning and change (Hallinger, Bickman & Davis, 1996; Hallinger & Heck, 1996:21; Wiley, 2001; Mulford & Silins, 2009:160). There has been increased interest in viewing school leadership more broadly than that exercised by only the principal. Collaborative leadership accentuates strategic school-wide actions that are focused on school improvement and shared among the SMT, educators, administrators and others. In the context of this study, collaborative leadership includes the use of governance structures and organisational processes to empower staff and learners, inspire broad involvement in decision making and foster mutual accountability for academic learning. Collaborative leadership therefore should enable SMTs and educators as a means of promoting school improvement.

1.3.3.4 Collaborative leadership between education districts and schools

Consistently low-performing schools are in need of support from education districts in order to build capacity to permanently change the teaching and learning culture and work environments at such schools (Murphy, 2008:87). School leadership is seen to be most prolific when entrenched in supportive and consistent district-level leadership (American Institute for Research, 2010:5). In such a case the education district regulate the overall vision and expectations of schools in the district, but is willing to allow the principal of the school to lead with some sovereignty. It is necessary that education district leadership should not only sanction a certain amount of autonomy and flexibility over school operations and instruction, but should also offer the necessary structures of support for each individual school that is being transformed (Herman, Dawson, Dee, Greene, Maynard & Redding, 2008). Focused vision, guidance, and support from district leadership are therefore imperative.

1.3.3.5 Sustainable leadership

Gummerson (2013:2) comments that three views presently direct sustainable practices in educational leadership and that these three views are extraordinarily alike. Each distinguishes elements, principles or factors that educational leaders need to assimilate if they are to successfully uphold sustainable leadership. These views are from the research scholars Michael Fullan, Andy Hargreaves and Dean Fink, as well as Brent Davies. Fullan's approach (2010) to sustainable practices is grounded in eight elements, that of Hargreaves and Fink (2006:17) promotes seven principles, while the view of Davies (2007:2-3) is based on nine factors an educational leader must grasp if he or she is to promote sustainable practices.

All leadership has an influence on learner academic achievement in schools. The next section elaborates on this aspect.

1.3.4 Successful School Leadership for Academic Achievement

In a study by Robertson *et al* (2009) there are significant differences between the actions of leaders in similar high-performing schools and similar low-performing schools. In high-performing schools, leaders seemingly give greater prominence to setting, communicating, monitoring, and reporting school goals, especially those that are associated with learner achievement. In high-performing schools, leaders work directly with educators and/or heads of department to plan, coordinate, and evaluate educators and teaching. They are more likely than their colleagues in similar, low-performing schools to provide evaluations that educators find valuable and ensure that learner progress is monitored and the results used to improve teaching.

Successful school leadership includes practices helpful in addressing all observable dimensions of performance – particularly in relation to educators, whose performance is central to what type of learning occurs. Exactly what is it that principals do that continually results in higher academic achievement and instructional excellence (Parag, 2014:54). A ground breaking study by Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris and Hopkins (2006) identified core leadership practices or the basics of successful school leadership. These four practices are:

- setting directions;
- developing people;
- redesigning the organisation; and
- managing the instructional (teaching and learning) programme.

These will be elaborated on in Chapter 2.

1.3.5 Influence of School Climate on Academic Achievement

No one universally agreed-upon definition of school climate currently is found in literature. Experts and researchers use various terms, such as atmosphere, feelings, tone, setting, or milieu of the school. School climate speaks of the quality and character of school life and is centred around patterns of people's experiences of school life and reveals norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning

practices, and organisational structures (Hill, 2014:6). A sustainable, positive school climate nurtures learner development and learning required for a productive and satisfying life in a democratic society. This climate embraces norms, values, and expectations that support people feeling socially, emotionally, and physically safe. Learners and educators work together to develop, live, and contribute to a common school vision. Educators model and nurture an attitude that underlines the benefits of learning. Each person contributes to the processes of the school and the care of the physical environment. However, school climate is more than individual experience: It is a group phenomenon that is larger than any one person's experience. School climate, or the character of the school, refers to spheres of school life (e.g. safety, relationships, teaching and learning, the environment) (Lee, 2012:335).

1.4   RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIVES

The study sought how educational leadership (EL) can assist in sustaining learner academic performance (LAP) in schools in the Lejweleputswa education district. This leads to the following research questions answered by the study:

- What are the essences of EL and its impact on LAP?
- How is leadership support on a vertical (upward and downward) level perceived by educators at school and district level?
- How do educators perceive the teaching environment and overall school climate?
- Do educators feel empowered towards promoting LAP?
- What are the consequences of academic intervention strategies and their successes for LAP?

The overall aim of this study is to investigate the reflections on EL and how they relate to LAP in the Lejweleputswa Education district. The specific objectives of this study are to:

- Establish the essences of EL and its impact on LAP.

- Determine the leadership support on a vertical (upward and downward) level perceived by educators at school and district level.
- Verify how educators perceive the teaching environment and overall school climate.
- Ascertain whether educators feel empowered towards promoting LAP.
- Determine the consequences of academic intervention strategies and their successes for LAP.

1.5   METHODOLOGY

The methodology of the study followed a concurrent triangulation approach where quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis took place simultaneously. The quantitative analysis employed descriptive statistics where the sample was described in terms of educator levels; gender; qualification levels and teaching experience. Various aspects, inclusive of how vertical (upward and downward) educational leadership (EL) are experienced by all educator levels; overall school climate perceived by all educator levels; empowerment to promote effective teaching and learning by all educator levels; present feelings about teaching as a career; and ultimately consideration in term of leaving the teaching profession by all educator levels. The open-ended questionnaire sought to explain the views and opinions of educators on all levels from a qualitative standpoint relating to the acknowledgement of the existence of the relationship between EL and LAP; and the consequences of academic intervention strategies and their successes for LAP in the Lejweleputswa education district. The methodology will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

1.6   SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The findings of this study would be helpful in terms of improved EL in the Lejweleputswa Education district - leading teachers and maintaining a supportive setting for them in which they can grow professionally and contribute to learner achievement. In addition,

the suggestions that were created by the study will provide a strong theoretical rationale supporting the outcomes on EL and LAP in an endeavour to strengthen the latter in the Lejweleputswa Education district.

Against this backdrop, the researcher is of the view that if educators functioning on various levels in the Lejweleputswa Education district are effectively managed and led by leaders, it would alleviate LAP to an international competitive edge. If these applications of the study are utilised, the outcome should be in accordance with the South African educational perspectives and societal expectations for our learners to a competitive international advantage.

1.7   LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study focuses only on leadership actions and their influence on learner academic performance. Other actions which may also play a possible role, such as home environment, poverty and language of learning do not form part of this study.

1.8   ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

1.8.1 Permission to collect data

Permission to administer questionnaires was obtained on provincial level. A letter of permission was sent to the Head of Department, Department of Basic Education of the Free State.

1.8.2 Informed Consent

Prior to the distribution of questionnaires, consent was sought from each respondent. Although no written consent was sought, each participant was informed that if they did not wish to participate, they would be free to return their uncompleted questionnaire.

1.8.3 Confidentiality and anonymity

To ensure confidentiality, respondents were reassured verbally and in writing (in the questionnaire) that the information will be treated with the utmost confidence. Although the research report will be published, it will contain figures, percentages and deductions based on the analysis and interpretation of the data provided without identifying any respondent personally.

1.9 CHAPTER OUTLINE

Layout of chapters and time frame of study:

- Chapter 1: This chapter provides an overview regarding the background, research aim, questions and objectives as well as on the research design and conceptual clarification of the study

- Chapter 2: Based on literature research this chapter provides the theoretical exposition of leadership, educational leadership and various aspects of educational leadership. The chapter concludes with the influence of the school climate on learner academic performance.

- Chapter 3: The research methodology is discussed in this chapter whilst it elaborates on the research design, sampling of the study population and lastly data collection and analysis.

- Chapter 4: The chapter portrays the data collected, the analysis as well as discussions of the findings.

- Chapter 5: Recommendations based on the literature and empirical study are made in this chapter. Further study options are also provided

CHAPTER 2

LEADERSHIP FOR IMPROVED LEARNER ACADEMIC PERFORMENCE

2.1   INTRODUCTION

Leadership is universally acknowledged as an essential feature in the process of realising school effectiveness and evolvement (Bush & Oduro, 2006; Robinson *et al* 2009:65). The diverse transformation in education in South Africa during the last two decades make the role of leadership in schools more deserving of significant consideration than ever before. According to Lingam and Lingam (2014:63), where principals have undergone no professional training for their leadership role, except years of teaching experience obtained from the classroom, they could be confronted with countless contemporary leadership problems. To manage these challenges, principals need applicable knowledge, skills and abilities to offer appropriate service to the learners, teachers and communities they lead. Not only is strong school leadership necessary to strive for academic successful schools, but also leadership from district offices of the Department of Basic Education (DBE).

Shared leadership between district office officials and principals is needed for improved learner performance in under-performing schools. This chapter aims to provide information on leadership, educational leadership and the types of leadership styles necessary to positively influence learner performance at both primary and secondary schools, culminating in the National Senior Certificate (NSC) examination. The sustainability of effective school leadership to enable increased academic performance of learners is also addressed. It is necessary at this stage to provide information on leadership.

2.2   WHAT IS LEADERSHIP?

An analysis of the literature shows that initial leadership studies concentrated on physical, sociological and psychological qualities of the leader (Sikula, 1993; Modiba, 1997). The personal-behavioural styles on the other hand proposed that leaders should contemplate situational variables such as the expectations, skills and previous experience of their followers (Hersey & Blanchard, 1989; MacBeath, 2007). The contingency theory in turn endeavours to describe the significance of leader-member relationships, structure of the task at hand and the use of positional power (Nxumalo, 2001). More recent approaches to the clarification of leadership seem to focus more on the skills and knowledge required to involve followers in decision-making. Several models and theories, such as instructional leadership, charismatic leadership (Pounder & Coleman, 2002), transactional leadership and transformational leadership (Sergiovanni, 1990; Clarke, 2007) have developed from research into leadership.

In almost all of the foremost current theories on leadership the perception exists that leadership is a process that comprises influencing a group of people on their way to the realisation of certain goals (Wolinski, 2010). In this vein, Miller *et al* (2007:12) define leadership as the action of influencing others to readily attempt group objectives. Leadership is therefore seen as a process of openly encouraging the actions of individuals or a group of people in attaining their goals. According to Bush (2007:392), it involves a force that initiates actions in both leaders and their followers. Good leadership may be expressed as an assortment of concepts, values or practices that specify leadership as related to decision-making, i.e. providing directions to subordinates with the aim to inspire them to cooperatively and enthusiastically engage with work in order to achieve the organisation's set goals.

Robinson *et al* (2009:67) indicate that the general notion of leadership is to view it as a process that influences others to think or act in a different way with regards to some task or situation (different in the sense from how they would have thought or acted if they were not influenced). This, according to them, is not an adequate interpretation

however, as there are many ways of exerting influence or power that would not resort under leadership. Where leadership is applied, others may be influenced because they view that the leaders are in a position which provides them the right to mandate a certain course of action, or that they have acquired the needed personal qualities of leaders. These two explanations distinguish between the influence exerted by leadership and the influence wielded in other forms of power relations, such as force, coercion, and manipulation. These two sources of leadership influences are very direct and person-focused. Cook (2014) indicates that while this kind of leadership is very important, educational leaders also influence teaching and learning in other, more indirect ways by providing the settings that allow others to do things they would normally not have had the resources or the will to do. Educational leadership therefore is discussed in the next section.

2.3   EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Educational leadership in the context of this study relates to leadership of school management teams (SMTs) in the school setting, as well as to leadership that needs to be provided by district offices to schools. SMTs normally consist of the principal, deputy principal(s) and Heads of Department (HoDs). Bush and Glover (2014:557) indicate that the increased interest in educational leadership in the 21st century is based on the fact that there has been an established relationship between educational leadership qualities and learner academic performance. High performing schools have historically had strong leadership, mostly from the principal. Wilson (2011:393) states that the leadership of the principal is pivotal to a school's success and predominantly important in schools that have performed persistently low over time. Successful principals impact on academic achievement through the support and development of educators and the execution of effective administrative practices (Tobin, 2014).

The effect of strong effective educational leadership on academic success is evident from literature. Peleg (2012:5) indicates that educational leadership is seen as a long-term campaign growing from knowledge and experience. Whelan (2009:79) states that

learners' accomplishment in school and national examinations is decidedly related to effective educational leadership. Salfi (2011:415) asserts that effective educational leaders have an indirect but significant influence on school effectiveness and learners' academic achievement. The relationship between effective educational leadership and sustained academic performance of learners are evidently portrayed by the afore-mentioned authors. The following figure indicates the important aspects of the interrelationship between educational leadership and successful learning in schools.

Figure 3: Leadership for Successful Learning
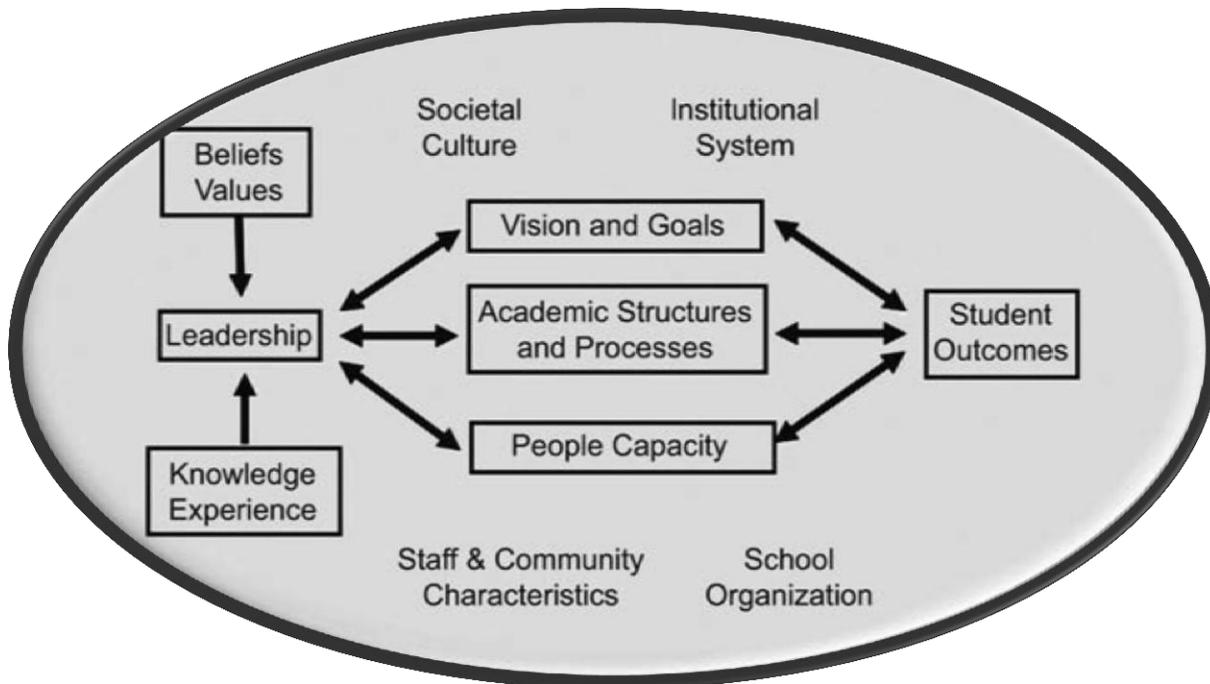
Source: Hallinger (2012:127)

This figure indicates a number of important aspects about leadership and learning. Firstly, it indicates that leadership is recognised within an organisational and environmental setting. Principals function in an open education system that involves not only the community, but also the institutional system and social culture attached to schools (Louis *et al* 2010:21). Secondly, educational leadership is also influenced by particular characteristics of the leaders themselves, such as personal values, beliefs,

knowledge and experience. Thirdly, the figure shows that learner academic outcomes are not directly influenced by leadership; rather, its impact is mediated by school-level processes and conditions, such as school and classroom conditions (Hallinger, 2012:127; Louis *et al* 2010:14). Important from the figure are the double-headed arrows that suggest that school leadership both influences and is influenced by these school-level conditions (Hallinger & Heck, 2010:97). Lastly, this figure indicates that leadership and learning outcomes of learners are linked and portrays the contribution that leadership makes to school improvement and learner academic outcomes.

This study investigates four major aspects of educational leadership deemed important for learner academic performance.

2.4   ASPECTS OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

This section explores the following important aspects of educational leadership; Instructional leadership, transformational leadership, collaborative leadership and sustainable leadership.

2.4.1 Instructional leadership

Southworth (2002:79) states that instructional leadership is mainly concerned with teaching and learning, including the professional learning of educators, as well as learner growth. Bush (2013:S6) concurs that instructional leadership is significant because it targets the school's essential activities, namely teaching and learning. Instructional leadership focuses on teaching and learning and on the behaviour of teachers in working with learners. Leaders' influence is targeted at learning that occurs via educators. The emphasis is on the direction and impact of influence rather than the influence process itself. Bush and Glover (2014:555) indicate that the increase in the management of teaching and learning as the major activity of schools has led to the focus on instructional leadership. The concept of instructional leadership has long been linked to leadership of learning.

Marzano, Waters and McNulty (2005) assert that in the school building, the principal is expected to understand the tenets of quality instruction, and to have sufficient knowledge of the curriculum to ensure that appropriate content is being delivered to all learners. This presumes that the principal is capable of providing constructive feedback to improve teaching, or that she or he can design a system in which others provide this support. Research shows that consistent, well-informed support from principals makes a difference, and principals accordingly face increasing pressure to deliver (or at least promote) better support for instruction (Hallinger, 2005:18; Mosenthal, Lipson, Torncello, Russ, & Mekkelsen, 2004:347).

Mkhize (2005) states that the role of principals as instructional leaders has undergone important changes in recent years causing gaps in scholarly literature. In South Africa and the African continent at large, limited literature exists explicitly about successful instructional leadership practices at schools in challenging school environments (Hoadley *et al* 2009). As a result, the difficulties around instructional leadership practices in challenging school environments do not seem to be fully understood. Furthermore, Mestry, Moonsammy-Koopasammy and Schmidt (2013:54) suggest that in South Africa, the function that instructional leadership plays in principals' organisational management of schools, their daily work lives, how they practice instructional leadership, and towards what instructional outcomes they work remains unclear. However, educational studies in general recognise and support the view that principals, as instructional leaders are fundamental to the success of their schools (Hoadley 2007; Bush 2013; Grobler & Conley 2013:211). Scholars cited above provide strong evidence that instructional leadership makes a significant difference to learning.

The question which arises is about how they enact this role, provided the dynamics and difficulties of the South African schooling system. Hallinger and Heck (1999), in Bush (2013:S8) claim that learning-centred leaders impact on learning and teaching in three ways, namely:

- Directly, by personal intervention: This may be enacted through their own teaching, or through demonstrating good practice.

- Reciprocally, by their work alongside other educators: This may be enacted through classroom observation and fruitful feedback.

- Indirectly, via other staff: This may be enacted, for example, through dialogue with educators.

The third approach is the most common because it is usually educators, not principals, who work directly with learners in the classroom.

Scholars maintain that schools advance their overall performance when they concentrate on their basic business, namely the delivery of effective teaching and learning (Robinson, Lloyd & Rowe, 2008; Louis *et al* 2010:85; Bush, 2013). This happens more successfully where there is effective leadership which prioritises an effective teaching and learning environment (Bhengu & Mthembu 2014:47). However, research from South Africa suggests that there are many barriers that undermine effective teaching and learning. Scholars such as Mestry and Pillay (2013), as well as Tan (2012) maintain that effective leaders use instructional leadership. These scholars further contend that instructional leadership is a complex, socially constructed phenomenon used by leaders and practitioners in their specific educational contexts. Supporters of this paradigm argue for the construction of contextualized knowledge that influences teaching and learning for the distinctive learner population they serve (Tan, 2012).

Instructional leadership therefore consists of several practices, including the management of the school's goals and curriculum, actions to improve classroom instruction, and the supervision of educators, learners, and instructional outcomes among many others (Hallinger, 2005:15; Robinson *et al* 2008:660). It can be concluded from the literature that instructional leadership does not require that the principal be a perfect or exemplary teacher, but that he/she must have the ability to create the organisational settings necessary to build pedagogical capacity, increase opportunities for innovation, supply and allocate resources, provide instructional direction and support

to teachers, and enable teachers to assume individual and collective responsibility for instructional improvement (Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson & Orphanos, 2009:45).

2.4.2 Transformational leadership

The concept of transformational leadership was initially introduced by leadership expert James MacGregor Burns. According to Burns (1978), transformational leadership can be seen when leaders and followers make each other to advance to a higher level of moral and motivation. Through the strength of their vision and personality, transformational leaders are able to inspire followers to change expectations, perceptions, and motivations to work towards common goals. Later, researcher Bernard M. Bass expanded upon Burns' original ideas to develop what is today referred to as Bass' Transformational Leadership Theory. Bass (1985) states that transformational leaders are those who stimulate and inspire followers to both achieve extraordinary outcomes and, in the process develop their own leadership capacity. Transformational leaders help followers grow and develop into leaders by responding to individual followers' needs by empowering them and by aligning the objectives and goals of the individual followers, the leader, the group, and the larger organization. Moolenaar, Daly and Sleegers (2010:642) agree when stating that transformational leadership models advocate leadership as an organisational aspect rather than the task of a particular individual. In this context, Leithwood and Jantzi (2006:214) assert that these models are too dependent on the transformational skills of the leader.

Many researches affirm that transformational leadership behaviours directly and indirectly affect followers' behaviour, their psychological states and organizational performance (Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbach, 1999; Leithwood, Jantzi, Earl, Watson, Levin & Fullan, 2004; Nemanich & Keller, 2007; Osborn & Marion, 2009). It has an impact on educators' commitment to change in vision building, high performance anticipations, developing agreement about group goals and intellectual stimulation, communication, supportive leadership, and personal recognition. According to

Moolenaar *et al* (2010:644), transformational leadership is connected to schools' innovative climate (discussed later on in this chapter) and it encourages educators to exert themselves more than expected in terms of extra effort and greater productivity and to exert changes to possible unsuccessful teaching practices,.

This kind of leadership has four main components, namely charismatic, motivational, intellectual stimulation and individualised consideration. The transformational leader instils trust, confidence and pride in working with him or her. This kind of leader cultivates a vision, improves meaning and encourages shared goals and common understandings of what should be reached. Such leaders intensify the degree of commitment of each follower towards the shared vision, mission and organisational values by enhancing the association between the hard work of followers and the realisation of organisational goals. Transformational leaders act in a way to model behaviours, are proactive persons and are seen as models for their followers (Barnett & McCormick, 2004:407). This type of leader inspires followers to aspire for resourceful solutions for problems, stimulating them to exceed their boundaries and to look for new goals and for new ways to attain the goals they set. They realise the need for professional development and of goal-attainment of each follower, reassuring followers to fully develop their abilities, and sometimes acting as a mentor to assist followers (Castanheira & Costa, 2011:2012).

Nemanich and Keller (2007:55) indicate that in the transformational leadership model, the school becomes less bureaucratic and it functions as its own transforming agent. Instead of empowering selected individuals, the school becomes empowered as a collective unit. If leadership is accepted as a process of interaction between leaders and followers where a leader attempts to influence the others' behaviours to accomplish organizational goals (Yukl, 2005:38), then leaders must raise strong community support for the change by creating a transformed vision for the school (Bass, 1985). Transformational leaders focus on capacity building for the purpose of organisational change, and as a result they sharpen their followers' skills and enhance their knowledge

from their own experiences. Hall, Johnson, Wysocki and Kepner (2008:2) claim that this approach can assist with educators becoming exceptional leaders.

Based on research by Hallinger (2007) and Finley (2014), there are strong suggestions that transformational leadership and instructional leadership have some similarities and differences. Both transformational and instructional leadership are similar in their approach of creating a shared sense of purpose within the school and leadership visibility within the school. Therefore, both aspects of leadership are noted to be essential and providing necessary support to ensure learners improved academic performance.

The instruments used to assess leadership reveal their theoretical origins. Since transformational leadership is oriented more towards the social psychology of leader-follower relations and less towards teaching and learning, it is likely that the assessments associated with this approach will be less able to discriminate the leadership practices that make a difference to learners. This can be illustrated by reference to the kinds of survey items typically used to assess goal orientation - a dimension that features in measures of both transformational and instructional leadership. The items in the left-hand column of table 2 are from an instructional leadership survey. They have a more precise focus on learner achievement than the items in the right-hand column, which are from a transformational leadership survey and emphasise an unspecified sense of shared purpose. This sense of shared purpose is important in transformational leadership theory because of its correlation with staff satisfaction, loyalty, and commitment. But for schools, the problem is that sense of purpose may or may not translate into goals that reflect the needs of particular learner groups. It is this kind of goal orientation that is most likely to deliver improved outcomes for learners (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006:222).

Table 2: A Comparison of Measures of Leaders' Focus on goals/missions

Items in instructional leadership survey	Items in transformational leadership survey
Strong instructional leadership of the principal	*Building school vision and goals*
1. The principal makes student achievement the school's top goal.	1. Gives us a sense of overall purpose
2. The principal states the school's mission in clear, concrete terms.	2 Helps clarify the practical implications of the school's mission
3 The principal ensures that there is an effective, ongoing system for evaluating the school's progress towards its goals.	3. Communicates school mission to staff and students
	4. Helps us understand the relationship between our school's mission and district office initiatives
	5. Works toward whole-staff consensus in establishing priorities for school goals
	6. Encourages the development of school norms supporting openness to change

Source: Robinson *et al* (2009:91)

The next sub-sections elaborate firstly on collaborative (or shared) educational leadership (both within the school context and between education districts and schools), followed by sustainable educational leadership.

2.4.3   Collaborative educational leadership in context

2.4.3.1   Collaborative leadership in schools

Over the last two decades, researchers established that effective school leadership generates settings that sustain effective teaching and learning and creates the ability for professional learning and change (Hallinger, Bickman & Davis, 1996; Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Wiley, 2001; Mulford & Silins, 2009). There has been increased interest in viewing school leadership more broadly than that which is exercised by only the principal. Collaborative leadership emphasises strategic school-wide actions that are focused on school improvement and shared among the SMT, teachers, administrators and others. In the context of this study, collaborative leadership involves the use of governance structures and organisational procedures to empower staff and learners, encourage broad participation in decision making and foster shared accountability for academic learning. Collaborative leadership therefore should enable SMTs and teachers as a means of promoting school improvement.

Many educational leaders, especially principals, often find themselves isolated and alone, believing that they are primarily responsible for leadership in their schools. Such a standpoint portrays a very narrow understanding of leadership. Principals need to be confident enough in their own identity to spontaneously share and distribute leadership tasks among deputy-principals, heads of department and teachers. In this way, principals are more likely to build school cultures where key stakeholders willingly take responsibility for the leadership of their school community. Such a shared approach to leadership in schools is receiving strong support in the literature on educational leadership (Harris, 2002; Hallinger & Heck, 2010:101).

According to Timperley (2010:398), principals can no longer count on leadership philosophies and management practices that were developed for earlier conditions and circumstances and which tended to focus on the principal as the leader of the school. Systemic problems or a troubled school climate are usually too big and too numerous

for one person to address and change alone. Schools need to recognize and develop leadership among many different kinds of individuals representing all education stakeholders to effectively model and develop a school climate that engages adults and learners in a shared mission that improves learner achievement. Shared leadership can come from principals who empower educators to become leaders and from educators who collectively take responsibility for the well-being of the school (Hughes & Pickeral, 2013:3). The current view is that leadership in a multi-faceted organisation such as a school, necessitates the energy, commitment and contributions of all who work there.

Leadership therefore, can be viewed as a shared communal occurrence derived from the interactions and relationships of groups. It seems reasonable, therefore, to conclude that in an educational context characterised by complexity, diversity and pressures on educators and learners to improve academic outcomes, a model of leadership focusing mainly on the principal is not desirable or workable. The challenge is to find ways of encouraging more educators to become leaders and to provide such educators with the support and resources necessary to change current individualistic pedagogical and teaching and learning practices (Guerrie, 2014). Previously educators were not really part of the education decision-making processes, despite the fact that research results have repeatedly confirmed this necessity. It seems, though, that educators have a perception that they are omitted from decision and management practices. Carl (2005:223), for instance, found that educators' perception was that, although they were the subject and/or learning area specialists, little consideration, if any, was given to their opinion.

The reality of workload of educators also needs to be mentioned here. Although educator involvement in initiating and responsibility-sharing practices seems to be vital, it is important to keep in mind that whether change amounts to reform, restructuring, or innovation, educator involvement in these practices entails new responsibilities and further workload pressures (Poppleton & Williamson, 2004:310). This could be a noteworthy factor, taking into account that earlier studies have shown that South African educators have to cope with a profoundly increased workload (Swanepoel & Booyse,

2003:97). In a research project led by the Human Sciences Research Council, validation was found for this trend when it was revealed that more than 80% of educators stated that their workload had increased significantly since 2000 (Rademeyer, 2005:2). Regrettably, this reality creates some uncertainty whether educators want to be involved in more responsibilities, even if they are change agents that could have a positive influence on their work environment.

2.4.3.2 *Collaborative leadership between education districts and schools*

According to Murphy (2008:87), consistently low-performing schools are in need of support from education districts in order to build capacity to permanently change the teaching and learning culture and work environments at such schools. School leadership is seen to be most productive when rooted in supportive and reliable district-level leadership (American Institute for Research, 2010:5). In such a case the education district determine the overall vision and expectations of schools in the district, but is willing to permit the principal of the school to lead with some autonomy. It is necessary that education district leadership should not only allow a certain amount of autonomy and flexibility over school operations and instruction, but should also provide the necessary structures of support for each individual school that is being transformed (Herman *et al* 2008). Focused vision, guidance, and support from district leadership are therefore imperative.

An important aspect education districts need to keep in mind when supporting the turnaround of a low-performing school is to be aware that the equal dissemination of resources across schools will never guarantee turnaround success. Persistently low-performing schools need more support—be it monetary or qualified human resources. According to Pastorek and Vallas (2010:6), this necessitates that district leaders evaluate the needs of specific schools within the district, then prioritise, and then readjust resources to support the weakest schools.

Wilson-Morgan (2015:47-48) states that to improve education in low-performing schools, education districts must make the development of stronger school leadership a

top priority. Leadership is second only to teaching among school-related influences on learning. Two aspects are evident in this regard. First, solid leadership is a pre-requisite for turning around failing and low-performing schools. Second, education districts should place strong leaders in these schools and support them to enable sustained academic improvement.

Bottoms and Fry (2009:7) assert that teaching and learning are the fundamental tasks of all schools, so the effectiveness of principals and educators in implementing a high-quality instructional programme and a learning environment that encourages, involves and supports learning are essential. While National and Provincial policies have an influence on schools regarding improvement of teaching and learning, in the end, it is the district office that must assist each school translate policies into improved school practices. Districts play an indispensable role in bringing about improvement in schools at various levels, such as management, curriculum delivery and development. Without operational district-wide commitment, some schools may perform well while others continue to struggle. Murphy, Elliott, Goldring and Porter (2006) indicate that districts must be accountable for developing a system of achievable goals and a broad set of reform and support strategies in order to build the capability of each school leadership team to create and implement a reform agenda that they (the schools) feel they own.

The next sub-section deals with sustainable leadership, although the reader will find that some integration with instructional, transformational and collaborative leadership occurs, as these are all interrelated to ensure sustainable leadership.

2.4.4 Sustainable leadership

Gummerson (2013:2) asserts that three views currently direct sustainable practices in educational leadership and that these three views are remarkably alike. Each recognises elements, principles or factors that educational leaders need to integrate if they are to effectively uphold sustainable leadership. These views are from the research scholars Michael Fullan, Andy Hargreaves and Dean Fink, as well as Brent Davies.

Fullan's approach (2010) to sustainable practices is grounded in eight elements, that of Hargreaves and Fink (2006:17) promotes seven principles, while the view of Davies (2007:2-3) is based on nine factors an educational leader must grasp if he or she is to promote sustainable practices.

Not all the practices of these views are to be mentioned here, only the five common practices shared by all three views. Gummerson (2013:3) summarises these practices as follows: 1) To be effective, educational leadership must be grounded in a moral purpose and ethical practices. This means that the participants in educational leadership must be morally obliged to ensure that best practices regarding teaching and learning occur in an educational environment. 2) Decision making involves short term and long term considerations as well as the impact that it will have on others. All decisions taken have consequences, and therefore such should be to the benefit of those for whom such decisions are taken. 3) Sustainable leadership requires recognition of the interdependence of all educational stakeholders - educators, parents, community members, and education district officials. Decisions must be made with each stakeholder in mind. 4) Knowledge of the limits of human resources requires the sustainable leader to make decisions that conserve and protect human energy. Fullan (2010) pays particular attention to the limits of human energy that are so often overlooked by leaders and policy makers. To prevent the burnout that occurs due to enormous demands and time constraints, leaders are advised to allow teachers and learners to work at a more reasonable pace and to re-energise. 5) Finally, the end product of sustainable leadership practices is ultimately life-long learners.

Key aspects for sustainable school leaders involve putting sustainability at the heart of the school's mission, as an ethos that infiltrates all aspects of the school, such as curriculum, policies and culture and its external partners. In addition, to also provide continuing opportunities for all staff members to develop an understanding of the essences of education for sustainable development. Fullan (2005) states that the practice of helping others to reach their full potential is at the heart of school leadership that is sustainable over time. In a school system this would point toward all school

personnel sharing a common vision to work both individually and collectively to not only achieve the goals, but contribute to the sustainability of the results. The leader who communicates and spreads a widely understood school vision, promotes and enables a positive school culture, encourages collaboration and shared-decision-making, and promotes and encourages teacher leadership capacity is promoting leadership sustainability within the learning community.

Owens and Valesky (2011:55) assert that the establishment of high-quality sustainable educational leadership is essential to the continual growth of schools. To seek sustainable educational leadership the school principal, teachers, school governors and external stakeholders must be committed to the development of a school culture that develops strength and improvement over time. Earlier research, (Glickman, 2002) and Stoll, Fink and Earl (2002) put forward that sustainable leadership should be more than merely temporary success in academic achievement, but should create lasting improvements in learning. This statement supports the significance of creating a school culture of collaboration through shared beliefs, values and vision within the school community. It is on this culture that the foundation of sustainable leadership should be developed and supported.

Sustainable leadership is a factor in shaping the academic growth of learners and the professional growth of teachers and other staff. Sustainable leadership is regarded by Maxwell (2010:67) as necessary, especially in a time of increased accountability and political pressure to maintain the academic growth of learners. Sustainable leadership is necessary for maintaining a constructive school culture and high morale among teachers, learners and other staff and involves everyone in the school community in having an opinion and a role in order to contribute to the culture of the school. People will work hard in a school where they are able to collaborate with colleagues who support them and where there is an expectation that they can improve their school (Benham & Murakami-Ramalho, 2010:83).

The need for sustainable leadership to enhance academic achievement in many South African schools is dire, especially when taking the following into consideration:

Many schools are dysfunctional, and are not transforming time, teaching, physical and financial resources into learning outcomes. The curriculum delivery is poor; teachers do not complete the curriculum, and pitch their teaching at levels lower than those demanded by the curriculum (Khanyisa, 2006). In many instances, teacher content knowledge, professionalism and work ethos are poor. Support and monitoring functions received from district offices are often inadequate and ineffective. Community support of schools and household involvement in children's learning are practically non-existent. Flowing from this, effective education reform requires interventions aimed at addressing these challenges, as well as the social behaviours of key players in the process, namely district and circuit officials, school management, teachers, learners, the community and parents (Taylor & Moyana, 2005).

All leadership has an influence on learner academic achievement in schools. The next section elaborates on this aspect.

2.5   SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL LEADERSHIP FOR ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

In a study by Robertson *et al* (2009) there are important differences between the practices of leaders in similar high-performing schools and similar low-performing schools. In high-performing schools, leaders reportedly give greater emphasis to setting, communicating, monitoring, and reporting school goals, especially those that are related to learner achievement. In high-performing schools, leaders work directly with teachers and/or heads of department to plan, coordinate, and evaluate teachers and teaching. They are more likely than their counterparts in similar, low-performing schools to provide evaluations that educators find useful and ensure that learner progress is monitored and the results used to improve teaching. Educators in high-performing schools report that their leaders are initiators of and active participants in professional learning and a valuable source of advice on pedagogical problems. Nelson and Sassi (2005:101) state that when leaders are actively involved in professional

learning, they appreciate the conditions that educators require to achieve and sustain improvements in learner academic achievement. They are then able to discuss changes with educators and support them as they make appropriate adjustments to class organisation, resourcing, and assessment procedures.

School principals cannot be the sole academic leader in a school due to the complexity and the range of leadership skills necessary to influence academic achievement of learners. High levels of learner achievement are possible when schools and education districts perform as coordinated units of change. Principals, with the SMT are an essential part to the school improvement process (Chrispeels, Burke, Johnson, & Daly, 2008). Hallinger (2012:13) asks the question: Whose leadership fosters successful learning? He answers this question by stating that collaborative leadership implemented by the principal, deputy principals, department heads and teachers is needed. The rationale for linking collaborative school leadership and academic achievement is grounded in the notion of sustainable change. In schools, leadership must be able to create sustainable changes that are incorporated and owned by the teachers who are responsible for implementation in classrooms. Moreover, given the observed escalation of activities of leaders in schools, leadership must also be sustainable for those who lead. Gronn (2009:24) states that sustainable school improvement must be supported by leadership that is shared among stakeholders.

International research on school improvement shows that the two main factors influencing the quality of education are classroom practice and leadership. Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris and Hopkins (2006) explain that principals can impact on classroom teaching by adopting a proactive approach and becoming instructional leaders. The research by Robinson *et al* (2009) on the effects of leadership shows that the impact on learner outcomes is likely to be greater where there is direct leader involvement. The closer leaders are to the core business of teaching and learning, the more likely they are to make a difference to learners' academic performance. Similarly, referring to the South African context, Hoadley (2007:1) states that there is a consensus around the importance of leadership to improved learner performance. These

statements collectively provide strong evidence that instructional leadership makes a significant difference to learning outcomes.

Successful school leadership, therefore, will include practices helpful in addressing all observable dimensions of performance – particularly in relation to educators, whose performance is central to what type of learning occurs. Exactly what is it that principals do that continually results in higher academic achievement and instructional excellence? (Parag, 2014:54). A ground breaking study by Leithwood *et al* (2006) identified core leadership practices or the basics of successful school leadership. These four practices are:

- setting directions;
- developing people;
- redesigning the organisation; and
- managing the instructional (teaching and learning) programme.

2.5.1 Setting direction

This category of practices conveys the majority of the effort to motivate leaders' colleagues. It is about the formation of moral purpose as a basic stimulant for one's work. Setting direction steers all actions at all levels of the school towards the attainment of specific goals. Three more specific sets of practices are included in this category, all of which are aimed at bringing a focus to both the individual and collective work of staff in the school (Leithwood, *et.al,* 2006:34-36).

2.5.1.1 *Building a shared vision*

Building exciting visions of the school's future is a fundamental task included in transformational leadership models. Bass's (1985) inspirational motivation is incorporated in this practice, a dimension that is defined as leadership behaviour aimed at identifying new opportunities for his or her unit….and developing, articulating, and inspiring others with his or her vision of the future. Harris and Chapman's (2002) small

scale qualitative study of effective leadership in schools facing challenging conditions confirmed earlier research on effective schools, namely that the cooperation and alignment of others to the leader's set of values and vision is of utmost importance. Day, Sammons, Leithwood, Hopkins, Gu, Brown and Ahtaridou (2011:64) support this view and remark that successful principals strategically translate their values, beliefs and ethics into their visions, purposes, strategies and practices and that these are widely communicated, clearly understood and supported educators, learners and the external school community.

2.5.1.2   *Establishing common goals*

Having a vision on its own is not sufficient. To work towards this vision, it is of paramount importance that school goals are set. Leithwood *et al* (2006:35) state that this practice concerns itself not only with the identification of essential goals, but with persuading others in the school to own these goals. Only then will such school goals have a motivational value. School leaders can therefore productively spend a lot of time on this set of practices. This set of practices includes leader relationship behaviours that are intended to promote collaboration among educators and motivating them to work collaboratively toward a common goal (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman & Fetter, 1990:112). According to Leithwood *et al* (2006:35), cooperation and collaboration form the essence of the strategic and improvement planning process in organisations such as schools. Research on successful principals by Moos and Johansson (2009:769) disclose that principals personalise organisational goals and encourage educators in accordance with such goals with the result of cementing a sense of trust between the educators and themselves.

2.5.1.3   *High performance expectations*

The setting of high expectations is associated with setting direction and as such correlate strongly with goals. High performance expectations are linked to the values of leaders and demonstrate what Podsakoff *et al* (1990:1120) appropriately explain as the

leader's expectations of excellence, quality, and high performance in the attainment of such goals. High expectations create an essential bridge towards a positive school climate that supports quality teaching and learning (Gupton, 2010).

Setting the direction is a fundamental leadership practice and everyone is held liable for effective learning to occur. Moos and Johansson (2009:771) maintain that everyone in the school is responsible via three principles, namely caring, accountability and a firm focus on learning. Day *et al* (2011:22) state that if building a collective vision and encouraging the recognition of common goals and high expectations of performance are adeptly implemented, setting the direction motivates and inspires school activities.

2.5.2   Developing People

The second practice is to develop people. Classroom teaching has a significant impact on the quality of learning (Day & Schmidt, 2006). Moos and Johansson (2009:770) state that since educators are fundamental components in the learning process, the circumstances under which they work must be conducive to promote strong relationships with learners. It is against this background that the professional development of educators receives pronounced importance to ensure that they are knowledgeable and skilled in curriculum content knowledge and pedagogy.

2.5.2.1   Providing individualized support

Scholars Bass and Avolio (1994) assert that knowing your followers' needs and raising them to more mature levels, sometimes through the use of delegation to provide opportunities for each follower to self-actualize and to attain higher standards of moral development. It therefore links extensively to developing people in that it explores the extent to which the leader responds to needs, coaches and mentors, and listens to the followers' concerns. It should not be uncommon for the leader to support, communicate with, identify with and challenge followers. Respect for one another is promoted and

individuals are encouraged to contribute to the well-being of the team – a clear link to transformational leadership (Podsakoff *et al* 1990:1122).

Leaders need to interact with their people to ensure that the need and desire for self-development prospers and that individuals are inherently motivated to execute their tasks. It is general knowledge that one cannot develop what you cannot measure. It is therefore necessary that educators' performance be measured and appraised in order to continually progress. Principals must engage in a process of assessment and performance appraisal to detect areas of need (Heystek, Roos & Middlewood, 2005:109).

Principals also need to develop a core of support staff at their schools to drive processes such as mentoring, as this is a very useful development intervention as it addresses issues at the classroom practice level. Mentoring is a challenging task and as a consequence educators engaging in this process need time and in-service support appropriate to the increased responsibilities being allocated to them (Heystek, 2007:496). Principals and district officials (such as subject advisors and circuit managers) need to recognise that the main objective of professional development is to enhance the performance of the individual and thus increase the school's competitiveness (Heystek, Nieman, Van Rooyen, Mosoge & Bipath, 2008:162).

2.5.2.2 *Intellectual stimulation*

Intellectual stimulation is also an element of the transformational leadership model put forward by Bass and Avolio (1994). Intellectual stimulation links to that aspect of leadership practice that reveals the extent to which the leader interrogates assumptions, take part in risk-taking and implores ideas from his or her people. Behaviours forming part of this dimension include inspiring colleagues to take intellectual risks, re-examine assumptions, look at their work from different perspectives and rethink how it can be performed (Avolio, 1994). Waters, Marzano and McNulty (2003) include challenging the

'status quo' among the practices contributing to leader effects on learners. This is where the leader's role in professional development is found to be key, especially for leaders of schools in challenging circumstances. Such intellectual stimulation involves leaders mobilising their people in continuing professional development activities with the express purpose of enhancing their performance in their core roles and responsibilities.

Principals attempt to promote a learning culture among their educators as it grossly improves learner academic achievement, more especially when leaders themselves participate in learning with their staff (Robinson *et al* 2009). Ideally, principals should therefore draft and implement strategies for encouraging professional and academic development within their schools. All models of transformational leadership include this set of practices. A considerable amount of the educational literature assumes such practices on the part of principals, most notably the literature on instructional leadership which places principals at the centre of instructional improvement efforts in their schools (Hallinger, 2003:335; Stein & Spillane, 2005).

2.5.2.3 *Providing an appropriate model*

This category relates to leading by example, a wide-ranging set of practices connected with models of dependable leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005:322), representing transparent decision making, confidence, optimism, hope, resilience and consistency between what is said and what is done. In such an instance, core values are established by exhibiting core values in one's own practices. Hallinger (2003:345) and Waters *et al* (2003) note the importance of the principal to maintain high visibility in the school, a visibility linked with high quality relations with both staff and learners. Effective principals set examples for staff and others to follow that are consistent with the school's values and goals. By modelling desired dispositions and actions, leaders heighten others' beliefs about their own capabilities and their eagerness for change.

2.5.3   Developing the organisation

In the third leadership practice, effective leaders enable the school to function as a professional learning community to support and sustain the performance of all key workers, including teachers and learners. School leaders attend to aspects of the school as an organisation and a community, with consideration of internal processes and external relationships.

This aspect deals with the working conditions variable. There is little to be gained by increasing peoples' motivation and capacity if working conditions will not allow their effective application.

2.5.3.1   *Building collaborative cultures*

Ross and Berger (2009:465) assert that principals enhance the performance of their schools by providing opportunities for staff to participate in decision-making about issues that affect them and for which their knowledge is crucial. In this way, leaders help others to shape the school in ways that can realise shared goals and address individual concerns as well. A large body of proof has accumulated since the early 1980's which noticeably supports the significance of collaborative cultures in schools as essential for school improvement, the development of professional learning communities and the improvement of learner academic achievement (Little, 1982). For leaders determined to make their schools more inclusive, building more positive cooperative and achievement-oriented cultures is a crucial task. One means of promoting collaboration is to distribute leadership to others in the school and to support their efforts to endorse that leadership (Kramer & Crespy, 2011:1025).

Leaders who distribute leadership through collaborative processes have been described as leaders who motivate their colleagues to action rather than givers of commands and instructions. Distributed leadership has a substantial impact on learner academic achievement (Heck & Hallinger, 2009:670). The success of collaborative activity is

determined by the ability and motivation of collaborators along with chances for them to collaborate. Success also depends on preceding conditions in the school. For example, a history of working together (teamwork) will sometimes build trust making further collaboration easier. Trust is increasingly recognised as a key element in encouraging collaboration and that individuals are more likely to trust those with whom they have established good relationships (Hattie, 2009:86).

In addition to teamwork and trust, interpersonal communication is regarded as a vital component in a school as an organisation (Parag, 2014:70). For interpersonal communication to be effective, and augment collaborative cultures in the school, principals need to be transparent, compassionate and compromising. It is necessary for principals to listen to their HODs and teachers attentively, ask their opinions, provide constructive feedback and abstain from blaming (Connolly & James, 2006).

2.5.3.2 Modifying organisational structure

Leithwood *et al* (2006:40) assert that this is a function common to almost all concepts of management and leadership practice. Developing and sustaining collaborative cultures depends on putting in place complementary structures, typically something requiring leadership initiative. Principals monitor and adjust the structural organisation of the school, including how tasks are allocated and executed, the use of time and space, the procurement and distribution of equipment, materials and other resources, and all of the routine operational processes of the school. Organisational structure is the skeletal outline within which people carry out their work. Structure can improve or hamper individual performance and the achievement of school goals. Effective educational leaders direct structural changes that will create positive conditions for teaching and learning (Day *et al* 2011:115).

2.5.3.3 Building productive relationships with families and communities

Shifting the attention of school staffs from an exclusively inside-the-school focus to one which embraces a meaningful role for parents and a close relationship with the larger community was identified during the 1990s as the biggest change in expectations for those in formal school leadership roles (Goldring & Rallis, 1993). Muijs, Harris, Chapman, Stoll and Russ (2004:156) have identified this core practice as important for improving schools in challenging circumstances.

Leithwood *et al* (2006:23) state that building relations with families is encouraged by evidence indicating the large influence on learner academic achievement of family or home characteristics (for example, parental expectations), the increase in public accountability of schools to their communities and the growing need for schools to build public support. Leaders who successfully build productive parent and wider community relations:

- Create a school environment in which parents are welcomed, respected and valued as partners in their children's learning;
- Demonstrate the type of leadership which parents trust (leadership which is confident, systematic and attentive to the details of the school's functioning);
- Develop staff commitment to engaging parents in the school;
- With staff, work directly with diverse families to help them provide their children with supports in the home that will contribute to their success at schools;
- Assist staff to better use the social and intellectual capital of learners from diverse family backgrounds for instructional purposes in their classrooms;
- Encourage staff to adopt a broad view of what might be entailed in parent engagement, a view that permits more parents to be involved than would be possible if engagement meant only attendance at events in the school, for example: when needed, help connect families to the wider network of social services they may need.

Day *et al* (2011:123) comment that while mastery of these basics provides no guarantee that a leader's work will be successful in a particular school context, lack of mastery likely guarantees failure. A successful leader needs to do more, but cannot do less.

2.5.4 Managing the instructional (teaching and learning) programme

In the last leadership practice, principals need to have a single focused concentration on teaching and learning as the essence of education and hence transforming schools into learning organisations.

2.5.4.1 Staffing the programme

This is a key function of leaders engaged in school improvement. Finding teachers with the interest and capacity to further the school's efforts is the goal of this activity. Recruiting and retaining committed staff is a primary task for principals and those governing the school. In order to positively address learner academic performance in low-performing schools, the type of teacher appointed and retained are of the utmost importance (Leithwood *et al* 2006:419).

2.5.4.2 Providing instructional (teaching and learning) support

Teacher quality is widely judged to be the most powerful influence on learner achievement. Studies of educator quality have measured it in a variety ways, most only approximating the actual quality of instruction experienced by students. One recent study demonstrated, nevertheless, that even proxy measures of such quality are closely associated with improvements in learner achievement (Kelcey, 2011:470).

Principals regularly have opportunities to bring other educators into their schools, for example, educators who move to other schools and retire. Recruiting and selecting educators with the interest and capacity to further the school's efforts is a key school improvement task in any school, but retaining skilled educators is especially important

for successfully leading schools in challenging circumstances. It is struggling learners, especially, who benefit from high quality instruction (Leithwood *et al* 2006:420). West, Ainscow and Stanford (2005:87) concur that, for leaders of schools in challenging contexts, focusing on teaching and learning is essential. This includes controlling behaviour, boosting self-esteem and talking and listening to learners. It also may include urging learners and educators to place a strong emphasis on learner achievement. Such an academic climate makes significant contributions to achievement (De Maeyer, Rymenans, Van Petegem, van der Bergh, & Rijlaarsdam, 2006)

2.5.4.3   *Monitoring learning and school improvement progress*

Waters *et al* (2003) analyse associated leadership effects on learners with leader monitoring and evaluating functions, especially those focused on learner progress. The purposeful use of data is reported by West *et al* (2005:88) to be a significant explanation for effective leadership in failing schools. Principals are now expected routinely to use systematically-collected evidence to justify their claims and inform decision making in their schools. This expectation includes having and using a broad array of evidence about learning, as well as the status of school and classroom conditions likely to influence learning. Systematically collected evidence about such things is expected to be a supplement to, rather than replacement for the vast amounts of information encountered naturally during the course of working in schools.

Monitoring the standards of teaching and learning are fundamental leadership practices that need to be implemented in a systematic way in order for constructive feedback to be provided. Bush and Glover (2014:560) state that monitoring is a continuous process, executed to determine the quality of teaching and learning and that a link exist between good monitoring and good teaching. According to O'Sullivan (2006:254), observation as a monitoring tool questions the quality of education with the intension of diagnosing the cause for the current situation. It also stimulates thinking on how to realistically improve the quality of teaching and learning, given the resources that are available.

2.5.4.4 Buffering staff from distractions to their work

A long line of research has reported the value to school effectiveness of leaders who prevent staff from being pulled in directions incompatible with agreed on goals. This buffering function acknowledges the open nature of schools and the constant bombardment of staff with expectations from parents and learners. Internal buffering is also helpful, especially buffering educators from excessive learner disciplinary activity. A study by Francera and Bliss (2011:361), found that among ten measured leadership practices, protecting educators' instructional time was the only practice with significant effects on both learner achievement and collective educator efficacy. Leaders who are successful in buffering the instructional time of educators:

- Create and enforce consistent, school-wide discipline policies;
- Minimize daily disruptions to classroom instructional time;
- Implement a systematic procedure for deciding how best to respond to initiatives from outside the school;
- Develop, with staff, guidelines to govern the amount of time educators spend on non-instructional and out-of-school activities.
- Regularly assess the contribution of all out-of-classroom activities to the learning priorities of learners.

In concluding this section it is important to mention that while school and district leaders have become the face of public school accountability, they depend on the capacities and senses of responsibility of their colleagues to accomplish the goals for which they are being held accountable. These are practices which build a shared sense of commitment to a productive climate for the school, and when such a productive climate is connected to staff members' personal and professional goals, academic achievement of learners should reap the benefit.

2.6   INFLUENCE OF SCHOOL CLIMATE ON ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

There is not one universally agreed-upon definition of school climate. Practitioners and researchers use a range of terms, such as atmosphere, feelings, tone, setting, or milieu of the school. School climate refers to the quality and character of school life and is based on patterns of people's experiences of school life and reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organizational structures (Hill, 2014:6). A sustainable, positive school climate fosters learner development and learning necessary for a productive and satisfying life in a democratic society. This climate includes norms, values, and expectations that support people feeling socially, emotionally, and physically safe. Learners and educators work together to develop, live, and contribute to a shared school vision. Educators model and nurture an attitude that emphasises the benefits of learning. Each person contributes to the operations of the school and the care of the physical environment. However, school climate is more than individual experience: It is a group phenomenon that is larger than any one person's experience. School climate, or the character of the school, refers to spheres of school life (e.g. safety, relationships, teaching and learning, the environment) (Lee, 2012:335).

The climate of the school is one of the vital factors that determine learners' perception of life and therefore how they respond to daily challenges. Hill (2014:7) argues that a supportive and responsive school climate fosters a sense of belonging and reduces possible negative circumstances of the home environment. He further states that social and emotional needs are congruent with learning needs. Therefore, these needs should be addressed so as to facilitate learning. Negative circumstances at home, for example, violence, overcrowding, poverty, informed and uninvolved parents influence learners' perception; as well as their responses to learning objectives in school environment. Learners who experience negative circumstances at home can be helped to actualize their potential by providing school climate that nurtures, supports and challenges them. In essence, enhancing school climate can assist learners who are challenged socially and emotionally (Brennan, 2015:58).

According to Bradshaw, Koth, Thornton and Leaf (2009:112), the best climate to function in is an open climate. An open climate is used to describe the openness and authenticity of interaction that exists among the principal, educators, learners and parents. It also reflects the principal and educators' cooperative, supportive and receptive attitudes to each other's ideas and their commitment to work. In an open climate, the principal shows genuine concern for educators and similarly between educators and learners. Also, in a school characterised with an open climate, educators are portrayed as understanding, helpful and respectful professionals. They are caring and willing to assist learners when need be. Educators work hard in order for learners to succeed. They care, respect and help one another as colleagues and even at personal level. As a team they work for the academic achievement of learners. Thapa, Cohen, Guffey and Higgins-D'Alessandro (2012:364) state that both the principal and educators are accessible and approachable and maintain close relationships with learners and parents.

Through the study of school climate - and specifically looking at the relationships among administrators, educators, learners and parents - a new understanding of what motivates and supports learning surfaces. It is now understood that learners learn much in the way of attitudes, values and concepts of justice from the structures and relationships that they observe and experience in the school. In other words, they learn from adult role models at school. Principals drive the direction of school climate. They act as role models for the attitudes and behaviours they wish to see in the teachers and learners. Principals set the belief system that all learners can achieve to the highest of standards, and they lay the groundwork for a positive and trusting environment.

Teachers are also a pivotal part of the process. Research by Le Cornu (2009:720) contends that educator' perceptions, expectations and behaviours help sustain and improve learner performance and ultimately the school climate. Le Cornu's study identified two general expectations that educators can impart to learners. The first regards their perception toward the learner's current performance. For example, educators who believe they are interacting with bright learners will most likely influence

them to believe so. But educators who believe the contrary will ultimately be a disheartening force to a learner. Secondly, an educator's expectation regarding a learner's future achievement will influence how the educator exposes the learner in the current class situation

Not only are principals and educators important within the school climate, but it is vital to include learners when planning school climate improvement. Schools must include learners in order to understand the extent to which policies and practices realistically assist the people for which they are intended. Too often, learners - especially those historically marginalised due to race/ethnicity, gender and socio-economic status - are the subject of policies rather than active participants in drafting policy. Rather than adult stakeholders positioning learners as "the problem" and thinking of ways to "fix" learners, learners are given the opportunity to identify issues and offer solutions.

2.7 CONCLUSION

School and District office leadership are essential in terms of creating the conditions conducive for teaching and learning that lead to higher levels of learner achievement. Without such effective leadership the vision of establishing effective schools with higher academic performance in national examinations will not become a reality. Fortunately, the nature of effective leadership at that level of the organization has come much more sharply into focus, and is characterized by both pressure and support. Louis *et al* (2010:145) state that investment in the professional development of principals and educators will have limited effects on efficacy and learner achievement unless districts also develop clear goals for improvement. On the other hand, setting targets and emphasising responsibility for achieving them is not likely to produce a payoff for learners unless those initiatives are accompanied by leadership development practices that principals perceive as helping them to improve their personal competencies.

A collaborative partnership between district officials (circuit managers and subject advisors) and schools (principals, HODs and teachers) is necessary if learner academic performance is to be enhanced. Education is constantly in a state of change and

schools cannot possibly be managed they were in the past. School leadership, including the SMT and teachers, and district officials need to be innovative and committed to ensure that low-performing schools are lift from their continuous academic mediocrity. Educational leaders need to strategically structure their leadership practices to enhance the quality of instruction and subsequent learner academic performance.

Various aspects of leadership have been discussed in this chapter and each one individually and as an integrative collective are needed at some stage to ensure proper collaboration between district officials and school leadership. Only through collaborative strategies will the academic performance of thousands of learners be improved. The chapter also engaged with four broad categories of leadership practices. It is evident that principals cannot lead successful schools without sharing a compelling vision, developing people in alignment with that vision, redesigning the school as organisation to exude collaboration and collegiality, and diligently engage in instructional leadership to ensure that there is high quality teaching and learning taking place. Such high quality teaching and learning can only occur in the presence of a conducive teaching and learning climate at the school.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1   INTRODUCTION

The goal of a well-substantiated research design is to collect unswerving data and ultimately provide results from it that are judged to be credible (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:102). Data is the imperative link between the absolute truth and the researcher's inquiring mind. To extract meaning from the data, we employ what is commonly called research methodology (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010:93).

This chapter intends to extrapolate the research methodology that was undertaken for this study. Within this chapter the research design and methods adopted are discussed and justified. This is done by describing the process utilized during this study pertaining to the selection and description of the sample, data collection, and the research instruments inclusive of the different strategies used for data analysis. The role of the researcher during the investigation was presented inclusive of the trustworthiness and the limitations of the study.

3.2   RESEARCH DESIGN

The purpose of a specific research design is to specify a plan for generating empirical evidence that will be used to answer the research questions (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:20). Polit and Beck (2008:765) add that a research design is defined as an overall plan for addressing a research question, including specifications for enhancing the study's integrity. Research design contains all the decisions the researcher makes in planning the study according to De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport (2009:268).

3.2.1 Mixed Method Design

For the purpose of this study, a mixed research paradigm, employing a combination of both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies was used. The researcher combined elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches (e.g. use of qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, data analysis) for the broad purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and collaboration (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie & Turner, 2007:123).

The concurrent approach of the triangulation was applied in this study. McMillan and Schumacher (2010:403) specify that in a concurrent triangulation design; the researcher simultaneously gathers both quantitative and qualitative data, merges them using both quantitative and qualitative data analysis methods, and then interprets the results together to provide a better understanding of the phenomenon of interest. Subsequently, the quantitative and qualitative approach was followed concurrently.

3.2.2 Quantitative Approach

Quantitative research involves those studies in which data are categorized and analysed numerically (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). Creswell (2012) also points out that quantitative research is confirmatory and deductive in nature and thus post-positivist and common to modern researchers. The methods of quantitative research ensure objectivity (questionnaire as an example), generalisability and reliability; as well as ensuring that the researcher becomes an external factor to the actual study (Howell, 2010). Most importantly, quantitative results become replicable at any given setting (Creswell, 2012:187).

Statistics are methods of organizing and analysing quantitative data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:149). There are two broad categories of statistical techniques namely descriptive and inferential. For the purpose of this study, descriptive statistics were employed. Jansen (2014:19) asserts that descriptive statistics transform a set of

numbers into indices that describe or characterize the data and portray and focus on *what* is with respect to the sample data. The use of descriptive statistics is the most fundamental way to summarise data, and it is indispensable in interpreting the results of quantitative research. This study, therefore, applied the quantitative approach, by collecting quantitative data (through a close-ended questionnaire) in an attempt to characterize the sample in terms of their post level, gender and experience; and secondly to quantify the participants' perception and conception regarding the support received on various levels in the Education system, the teaching and school climate perceived; and empowerment and attitude towards teaching as a profession in the Lejweleputswa Education district.

3.2.3 Qualitative Approach

Polit and Beck (2012) present qualitative research as a type of investigation of phenomena, typically in an in-depth and holistic fashion, through the collection of rich narrative materials using a flexible research design. The goal of qualitative research is to explore and understand a central phenomenon, which is the concept or process explored in qualitative research study. Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2011) further assert that when using a qualitative research design, the researcher needs to take note of the fact that qualitative research is a systematic, interactive and a subjective approach used to describe life experiences and give them meaning. It is conducted in the natural setting wherein the phenomenon under study is taking place.

The researcher followed the prescripts of the latter authors to have sought the views and opinions of the teachers regarding the relationship of Educational Leadership (EL), Academic Intervention, Academic Support, and Culture of Accountability in relation to Learner Academic Performance (LAP) in the Lejweleputswa Education district. An open-ended questionnaire was administered in this regard. Thus, the qualitative phase was used to augment the statistical data and thus explain the practices.

3.3   RESEARCH METHOD

3.3.1 Descriptive Survey Method

A non-experimental method called descriptive survey was used to characterize the sample in terms of their post level, gender and experience; and secondly to quantify the participants' perception and conception regarding the support received on various levels in the Education system, the teaching and school climate perceived; and empowerment and attitude towards teaching as a profession in the Lejweleputswa Education district. Maree and Pietersen (2014:155) postulate that surveys are used to learn about people's attitudes, beliefs, values, demographics, behaviour, opinions, habits, desires, ideas, and other types of information. They are frequently used in education because accurate information can be obtained for large numbers of people with a relative small sample.

McMillan and Schumacher (2010:217) further state that a descriptive study asks *what is?* Or *what was?* It reports things the way they *are* or *were.* Furthermore, the researcher distantiated himself or herself without intervention as would have been the case in an experimental study.

3.3.2 Phenomenological Method

A phenomenological study was used in this study to describe the educators' perceptions regarding the relationship, academic intervention, academic support, and culture of accountability in relation to Learner Academic Performance (LAP) in the Lejweleputswa Education district. This type of method describes the meanings of a lived experience (Nieuwenhuis, 2014:71). The researcher put aside all prejudgments and collected data on how individuals make sense out of a particular experience or situation. The aim of the phenomenological study was to transform lived experiences into a description of its essence, allowing for reflection and analysis. The typical research technique allowed the researcher to administer open-ended questionnaires directed towards

understanding their perspectives on their everyday lived experience with the phenomenon (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:24).

3.4   POPULATION AND SAMPLING

A population is the entire set of individuals or participants having some common characteristics (Polit & Becker, 2012:738) needed to answer the set research questions. Gray (2004:82) adds further that a population is the total number of possible units per study that conform to certain criteria. For this study, the target population will include all the educators on various post levels, inclusive of teachers, Head of Departments (HoDs), Principals, Subject Advisors and Circuit Managers of under-performing schools identified in the Lejweleputswa Education district.

Sampling is the process of selecting a portion of the population to represent the entire population (Polit & Beck, 2012:742).) A sample is therefore a subset within a population comprising those individuals selected to participate in the study (Polit & Beck, 2012:742). Qualitative sampling is generally based on non-probability sampling. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011:155) note that there are many types of non-probability sampling and they mentioned purposive sampling, convenience sampling, quota sampling, sequential sampling and snowball sampling. The researcher used purposive sampling for the purpose of this study. As proposed by the name, purposive sample has been selected by the researcher for a specific activity due to their characteristics that meets a certain criteria. Purposive sampling is not only restricted to the selection of participants, but also involves the setting, events, incidents or documents (Maree & Pietersen, 2014:178). The researcher justified purposeful sampling to be the most suitable sampling method for this study based on the concern that exists in the Lejweleputswa Education district regarding low performance of learners. The district has identified fifty-nine (59) schools and three hundred and ninety one (391) educators that were under-performing in 2015 and included them in the CUT Intervention Programme (CIS). The researcher is of the opinion that ineffective EL could be the reason for this phenomenon.

Therefore, for this study fifty-nine (59) schools were sampled from the Lejweleputswa district which will include three hundred and ninety one (391) teachers for the purpose of quantitative research. Of these selected schools, fifteen (15) schools inclusive of 3 educators from each school (Principal, HOD and teacher) were purposefully sampled for the qualitative part of this study. Furthermore, a selection of five Circuit Managers and five (5) Subject Advisors were included at District level. A total of twenty five (25) educators formed part of the purposefully selected sample for the qualitative study. The participants were selected because they illustrated some features that are of interest to the researcher (De Vos *et.al* 2009:328).

The size of the samples is determined by the type of the study and the methods used. In this study the researcher administered a questionnaire. According to Cohen *et al* 2011:162), there are four most important instruments for collecting data that utilize questioning as a technique are the following:

- The interview. This comprises a technique in which one or more questions are given to the respondent which the respondent should answer.
- The questionnaire. A questionnaire is a set of questions which a respondent should answer. It is usually in a written form, and can either be given to the respondent to complete or read to the respondent.
- A checklist. This is a questionnaire with very structured questions. Sometimes a few free response questions are also included.
- Critical incident. In this case a single question is usually posed to the respondent concerning a specific incident.

Valid and reliable results are only obtainable through the use of valid and reliable research methods and techniques. The validity and reliability of data obtained through questionnaires, especially when opinions and reasons/motivation are required, are dependent on the willingness, proficiency and grounding of the respondent. A limitation of this method is the possible misinterpretation of questions. It is therefore obvious that the researcher considers the possibilities and limitations of this method when compiling the questionnaire and while interpreting and using the data obtained.

The required sample size in qualitative research depends on when the theoretical saturation of the data is reached. Theoretical saturation occurs in data collection when: no new or relevant data seem to emerge regarding a category, the category is well developed in terms of its properties and dimensions demonstrating variation, and the relationships among categories are well established and validated (Nieuwenhuys, 2014:90).

3.8   DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES

In this study, data collection was done through questionnaires. The use of this technique in this study not only provided the researcher with the opportunity to produce rich data, but it also enabled the researcher to validate and cross-check the findings (De Vos *et.al.* 2009:314). The questionnaire is one of the most popular methods used to obtain information. Simon (2011:3) contends that it is estimated that the questionnaire technique for gathering data is used in more than one half of the total research in education. The advantage of this method is that it provides opportunity to investigate economically a wide field of research. Questionnaires can provide reliable data about a population when complete surveys or large test samples are used. Information can usually be interpreted easily and can use respondents from various heterogeneous strata. Each question is usually answered and confidentiality can be assured because the questionnaire can be completed anonymously.

The questionnaire for this study was divided into two sections. Section A comprised close-ended questions for the purpose of quantitatively collecting respondents' perception and conception regarding the support received on various levels in the Education system, the teaching and school climate perceived; and empowerment and attitude towards teaching as a profession in the Lejweleputswa Education district. The Independent variable (IV,) which refers to the educators in the district, was sub-divided into post levels (Teachers, HODs, Principals, Subject Advisors and Circuit Mangers), gender and experience. Section B of the questionnaire comprised of open-ended

questions in attempt to describe the teachers' perceptions regarding the relationship, academic intervention, academic support, and culture of accountability in relation to Learner Academic Performance (LAP) in the Lejweleputswa Education district.

3.9   DATA ANALYSIS AND TECHNIQUES

Data analysis is a process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data (De Vos *et al* 2009:334). Data analysis further refers to the process organizing raw data to extract useful information (Wisegute, 2012). Data analysis is understood as the systematic gathering of information needed to address the research problem or relevant to the research purpose (Polit & Beck 2012:725).

In qualitative research, data analysis is aimed at the identification of patterns, features and themes (Xavier University Library, 2010:1) and by using a wide-angled lens to gather a richness of information regarding the breadth and depth of the phenomena under study. The gathered information is unlocked by means of a coding process. A three-step coding process referring to open coding, axial coding and selective coding (Neumann, 1997:424) was done. As a result of evaluating and listing codes, thematic patterns were identified and the outcomes were described in terms of thematic themes and patterns. The research findings of this study are communicated in the form of a narrative report with contextual descriptions and direct quotations from research participants. A narrative contextual description with direct quotations form participants puts the stance of sustainable academic performance at schools in context, enriching understanding of the information. Transcripts of recorded interviews were carefully scrutinised and analysed to enhance familiarity with the content.

Qualitative data analysis tends to be an ongoing and iterative (non-linear) process, implying that data collection, processing, analysis and reporting are intertwined. According to McMillian and Schumacher (2010:367), the generic process in qualitative data analysis include: data preparation, coding of data, establishing of categories/ themes and developing patterns.

Table 3: Description of the Universal Steps in Qualitative Data Analysis

Steps	Description
Data preparation	Organizing and transcribing data:
Coding	Coding is defined as marking the segments of data with symbols, descriptive words or unique identifying names
Establishing categories/ themes	Categories are entities comprised of grouped codes.
Developing patterns	A pattern is a relationship among categories.

Compiled from: Nieuwenhuys, (2014:99); McMillan and Schumacher, (2010:367)

In this research project, the researcher elicited information by means of an open-ended questionnaire to gain different ideas, perspectives and arguments that educators hold. The open-ended format of the questionnaire enabled the participant to state his/her case freely. It evokes a fuller and richer response and probes deeper than closed-ended questions. The open-ended or free-response questionnaire frequently goes beyond statistical data or factual information into the area of hidden motivations that lie behind attitudes, interests, preferences and decisions. As already mentioned, data collection for this study was done by means of administering a questionnaire.

3.10 TRUSTWORTHINESS OF RESEARCH

In qualitative research terminology encompassing both reliability and validity (quantitative research) are credibility, transferability and trustworthiness (Bashir, Afzal & Azeem, 2008:39-42). Although the terms reliability and validity are used by some researchers for both qualitative and quantitative research, in this research report trustworthiness is used instead. One of the terms closely related to trustworthiness is rigour, referring to trends to assure reliability and validity in qualitative research (Roberts, Priest & Traynor, 2008:43; Bashir *et al* 2008:35-36). This is achieved by demonstrating competence, integrity, to adhere to detail and to be accurate, resulting in a research process with enhanced authenticity and trustworthiness (Bashir *et al*

2008:35-36*).* In essence, rigour aims at the authenticity and trustworthiness of procedures in a logical systematic way based on credibility, dependability, authenticity and conformability (Roberts *et al* 2008:43).

To increase the trustworthiness and authenticity of the research process a description of *what* was done*, how* and *why* it was done is needed whilst the stated criteria do not serve as a restrictive checklist, but as parameters to generate informational knowledge in accordance with the research objectives (Sinkovics, Penz & Ghauri*,* 2008:689-713). In this study, data was collected in accordance with the objectives of the study. A clear description of what was done, as well as how and why it was done were be provided. In qualitative research four measures are applied namely credibility, transferability, reliability and conformability.

3.10.1 Credibility

According to Ryan, Coughlan and Cronin (2007:743), credibility is described as the faith-fullness to the description of the phenomenon in question. It addresses the issue of whether there is consistency between the participants' views and the researcher's representation of them. To ensure credibility the researcher used various approaches to ensure the credibility of the study, these include: triangulation, member check and expert check (Simon, 2011:2).

In this study, triangulation was implemented by using the questionnaire to obtain data from participants at various levels. According to Padgatt, in de Vos *et.al* (2009:361), triangulation is the convergence of multiple perspectives that can provide greater confidence to assure that what is being targeted is being accurately captured. Credibility refers to accountability for the entire research process and includes actions in preparation of the field of research.

3.10.2 Dependability/Reliability

Dependability is the qualitative alternative to reliability, in which the researcher attempts to account for changing conditions in the phenomenon chosen for study, as well as changes in the design created by an increasingly refined understanding of the setting (Nieuwenhuys, 2014:113). Dependability refers to the stability of the findings over time. In order to address the dependability issue more directly, the processes within the study should be reported in detail, thereby enabling a future researcher to repeat the work, if not necessarily to gain the same results. To guarantee dependability in this study, data was analysed by themes and reported on in-depth. The processes of research are clearly indicated for the reader to follow.

3.10.3 Confirmability

The concept of confirmability is the qualitative investigator's comparable concern to objectivity. Researchers need to demonstrate that their data and interpretations drawn from the data are rooted in circumstances and conditions outside from researcher's own imagination and are coherent and logically assembled (Sinkovics *et al* 2008:699). Confirmability refers to the extent to which the characteristics of data, as posited by the researcher, can be confirmed by others who read or review the research results. Portland State University (2011:2) asserts that confirmability deals with whether another researcher outside of the study could independently confirm the findings. A detailed methodological description enables the reader to determine whether the data and constructs emerging from it may be accepted. Important in this process is the audit trail, which allows any observer to trace the course of the research step-by-step via the decisions made and procedures described.

3.10.4 Transferability

Transferability is understood as the degree at which the reader simplifies the results of a research study to suite their own context. This is achieved through presentation of

background information on the context, participants, processes of data collection, the researcher and the relationship between the researcher and participant in order for the readers to determine if the findings could also be applicable to their situations (Hanson, Balmer & Giardino, 2011:380; Universal Teacher, 2014). A comprehensive account of the participants, their background, and findings would be presented in order to ensure that a reader could determine if their settings are comparable (transferability). Transferability refers to the extent to which the results of the research can be applied in similar contexts.

3.11 CONCLUSION

Attention was given to the mixed-method of gathering data. The chapter further explained the population and the sample for this study. The population was indicated and the sampling procedure outlined. Data analysis and coding of qualitative data were elaborated on. The chapter concluded by explaining the validity, reliability and trustworthiness in research. The application of these to this study was also put forward. With this explanation, the researcher aims to ensure that the reader understands the methods that were followed during the research process. The findings of the study follow in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1   INTRODUCTION

McMillan and Schumacher (2010:2) believe that there is a renewed interest at all levels of education for decisions to be data driven and based on hard evidence. This has resulted in a greater need for all educators to understand, conduct and use research findings. Consequently, a more objective approach to educational research is called for, but we need to be clear about the role of human judgment which is indeed critical to research. Yet, there are principles of *evidence-based thinking* that make such judgments more accurate (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:3). These authors argue that evidence-based inquiry uses systematically gathered empirical data that are reported in such a way that the logical reasoning that underlies them can be painstakingly examined. Educators are constantly trying to understand educational processes and are required to make professional decisions that have a tremendous effect on the teaching and learning process. For this reason the researcher valued evidence-based inquiry during this study. Data gathered through concurrent triangulation research design were analysed, interpreted and discussed with relevance to the application of the effective relationship between Educational Leadership (EL) and Learner Academic Performance (LAP).

In *quantitative* research, the reporting was an objective presentation of results. The researcher attempted to describe the sample using statistical analysis through descriptive statistics presented by means of graphs. The researcher followed a well-thought process through qualitative analysis to set the background to the qualitative results. In *qualitative* research, the researcher presented the data in the form of lengthy narratives to illustrate and substantiate the researcher's interpretation of the implied practical significance of the study pertinent to EL and LAP.

4.2   PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study attempted to determine the extent of the relationship between EL and LAP in the Lejweleputswa School District based on the perceptions of educators on various levels in the Education milieu. Participants' perception and conception regarding the support received on various levels in the Education system, the teaching and school climate perceived; and empowerment and attitude towards teaching as a profession in the Lejweleputswa Education district were sought through quantitative analysis. Results are displayed and visualised graphical representation. Furthermore, descriptive statistics were employed to describe the sample in terms of educators' gender, experience and post level.

Educators' perceptions regarding the relationship, academic intervention, academic support, and culture of accountability driven by EL in relation to LAP in the Lejweleputswa Education district were sought through qualitative analysis. Results are reported through thematic analysis.

The findings would be helpful in terms of improved EL in the Lejweleputswa Education district - leading teachers and maintaining a supportive setting for them in which they can grow professionally and contribute to learner achievement. In addition, the suggestions that were created by the study will provide a strong theoretical rationale supporting the outcomes on EL and LAP in an endeavour to strengthen the latter in the Lejweleputswa Education district.

Against this backdrop, the researcher is of the view that if educators functioning on various levels in the Lejweleputswa Education district are effectively managed and led by leaders, it would alleviate LAP to an international competitive edge. If these applications of the study are utilised, the outcome should be in accordance with the South African educational perspectives and societal expectations for our learners to a competitive international advantage.

The research questions of this study are provided here for ease of reference::

- What are the essences of EL and its impact on LAP?
- How is leadership support on a vertical (upward and downward) level perceived by educators at school and district level?
- How do educators perceive the teaching environment and overall school climate?
- Do educators feel empowered towards promoting LAP?
- What are the consequences of academic intervention strategies and their successes for LAP?

Analysis of data on both quantitative and qualitative levels is discussed in the next section.

4.3 ANALYSIS OF DATA

The results of this study are presented as quantitative results in Section A and qualitative results in Section B.

4.3.1 Section A: Quantitative Analysis

The first step of statistical analysis usually involves descriptive statistics. You can use it to describe the sample, to check if the data is fit for specific analysis or to answer a specific descriptive or exploratory research question (O'Neil, 2009). The researcher executed this process for the exact purpose thereof. For different types of data, different descriptive statistics are used. In other words, different descriptive statistics are used for data from different levels of measurement. Nominal and ordinal data are henceforth referred to as categorical data/variables. This is since these two levels of measurement indicate different categorical answers in your data set. Interval and Ratio level data on the other hand is referred to as Scale data/continues variables. This is because they indicate respondent answers on a scale from 0/1, 2, 3, through to x.

A special type of categorical variable is the dichotomous variable. This is a variable that represents only 2 categories. For instance, the variable of gender represents male and female. Descriptive statistics include frequencies/frequency counts, statistics of central tendency and statistics that indicate variability/dispersion.

Frequencies indicate to us the amount of cases (respondents), which falls into each of the available categories. Frequencies can be displayed in terms of counts or percentages. Frequencies are usually displayed by means of frequency tables, but can also be displayed graphically in graphs and charts. Suitable graphs to display frequencies for categorical data are bar charts or pie charts (O'Neil, 2009).

As a first step in analysing the data, descriptive statistics have been calculated to summarise the characteristics of the data. The findings in this chapter are based on the descriptive data. Section A of the questionnaire consisted of sixteen (16) questions about the demographics of the respondents (see Appendix C - F) for the questions depicting the results of analysis of demographics in accordance to gender, teaching experience, participants' perception and conception regarding the support received on various levels in the Education system, the teaching and school climate perceived; and empowerment and attitude towards teaching as a profession in the Lejweleputswa district.

The graphs in Figure 4 to Figure 19 outline the descriptive statistics for the study. This was done to describe the sample composition on various descriptive variables as outlined above. It also served the purpose on gaining an insight into participants' perceptions regarding elements that link to the qualitative analysis and in attempt to answer to the research questions 2 - 4.

Figure 4: Educator Post Level Composition
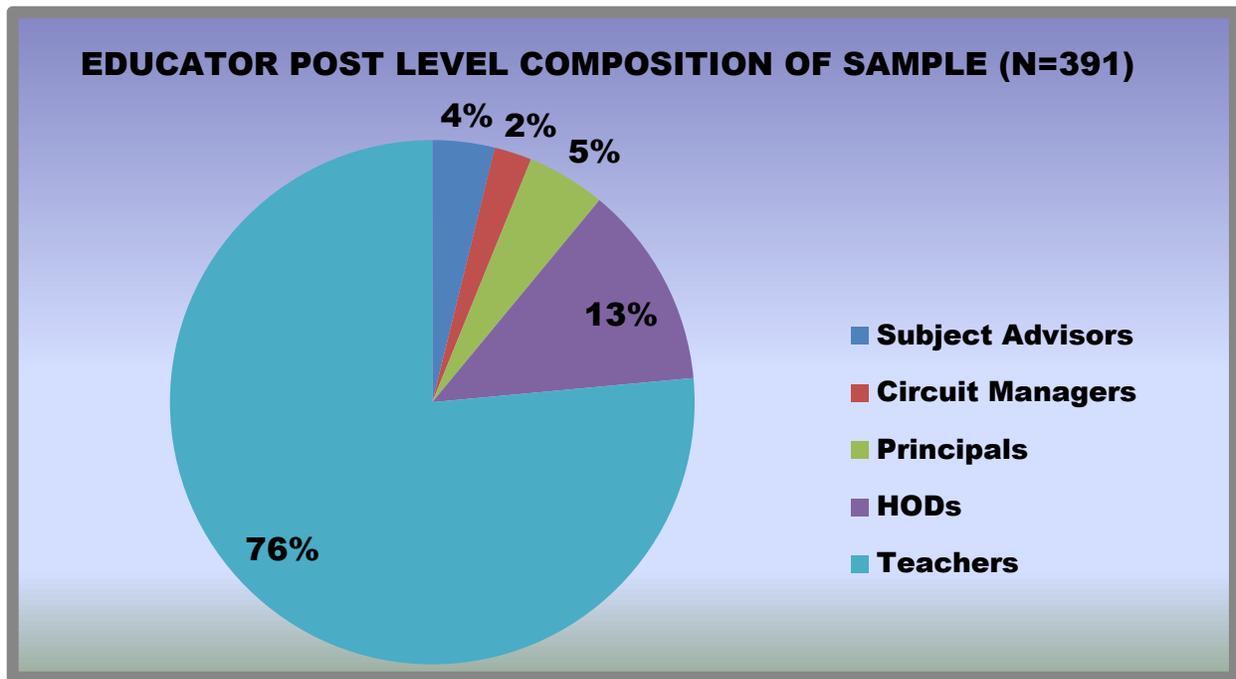
It can be derived from figure 4 that from the sample surveyed, the major component consisted of Teachers (76%). Of the 391 educators included in this study, teachers totalled 299 participants. In any educational setting, teachers comprise the biggest part in the system. The composition of the educators is outlined in Table 5 below.

Table 4: Composition of the Sample per Educator Level

EDUCATOR LEVEL	PERCENT	FREQUENCY
Subject Advisors	4	15
Circuit Managers	2	9
Principals	5	19
HODs	13	49
Teachers	76	299
Total	**100**	**391**

Figure 5: Educator Gender Composition

GENDER COMPOSITION OF SAMPE (N=391)

- Males 36%
- Females 64%
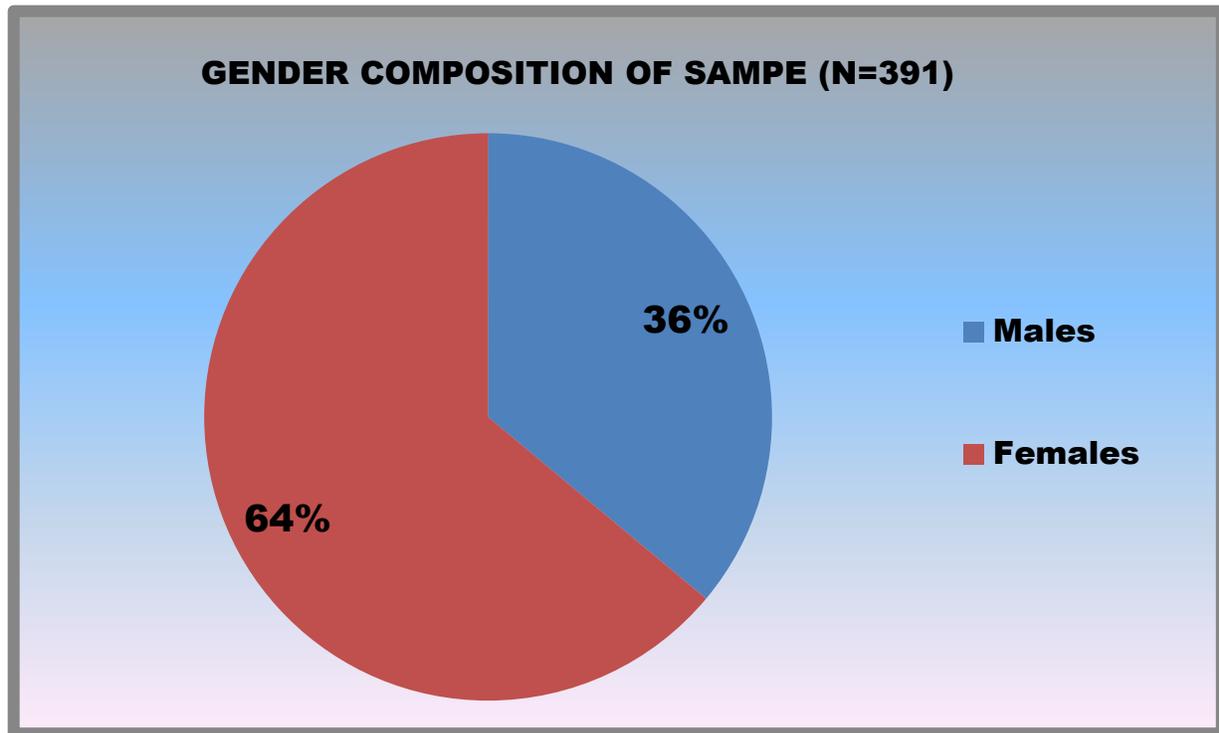
The gender analysis according to figure 5 reveals that more females than males participated in this study. Expressed in numerical values, the sample (n = 391) consisted of 141 male participants and 250 female participants. The researcher is of the opinion that these could be true for the total population. This is a general tendency throughout the Education system that more female educators serve the profession than males. The pool of teachers is presented by more females than males as evident from this study. This opinion is supported by Arends (2005:15) who has conducted statistical analysis in 2005 on the employment status of educators in South Africa.

Figure 6: Educator Teaching Experience Composition

TEACHING EXPERIENCE OF SAMPLE (n=391)

- 17% Below 5 years
- 83% 5 Years and above
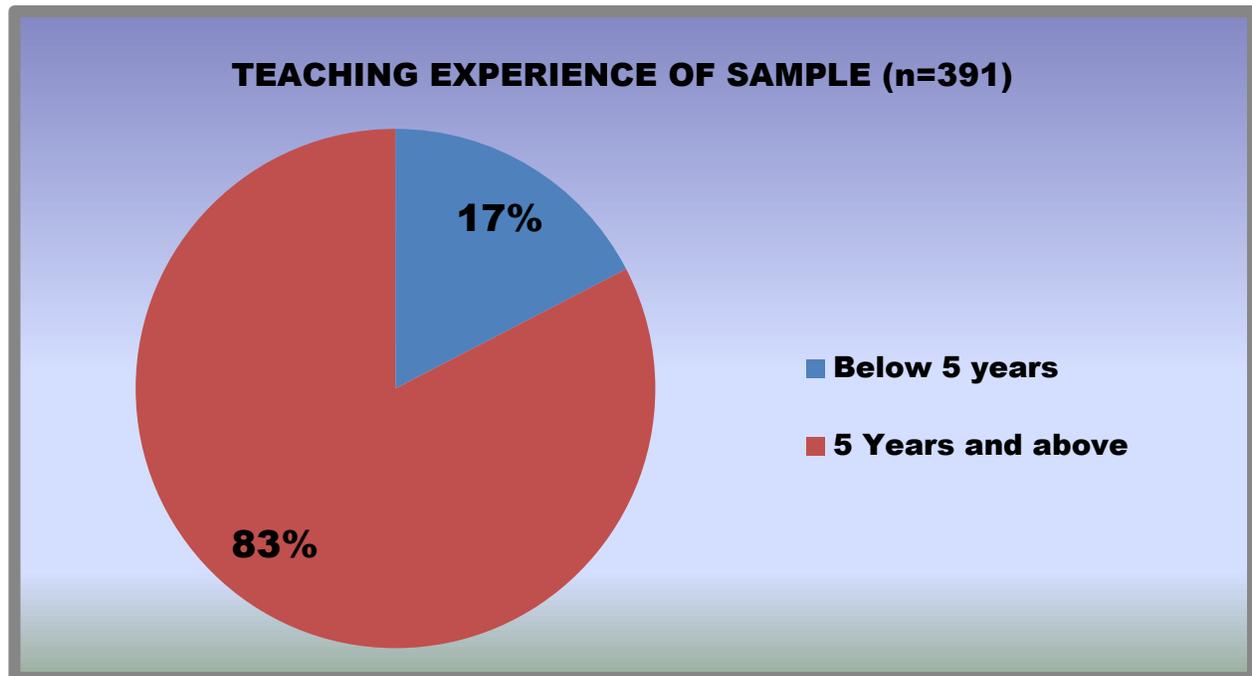
From the above graph, the study revealed that 83% of educators are experienced. The participants of this study was sampled purposefully, by including educators on various post levels that formed part of the schools identified by the Subject Advisors in various subject fields in the Lejweleputswa Education district. These schools did not conform to satisfactory pass levels and learner results during 2015. Interesting enough, the researcher is of the opinion that experienced educators should be in a position of producing desired results due to the nature of their experience in the profession. However, the analysis of the sample composition in terms of educator experience depicted a different scenario. In turn, the Centre for Public Education (online) expanded on this by mentioning that more than two decades of research findings are unequivocal about the connection between teacher experience and learner achievement.

These results revealed that there should be another reason(s) for non-compliance in terms of LP. The researcher sought the qualification levels of educators in the quest for further exploring the reason for low LP.

Figure 7: Educator Qualification Composition

QUALIFICATION COMPOSITION OF SAMPLE (N=391)

- ■ Matric
- ■ Diploma
- ■ Bachelor's Degree
- ■ Honours Degree
- ■ Masters Degree
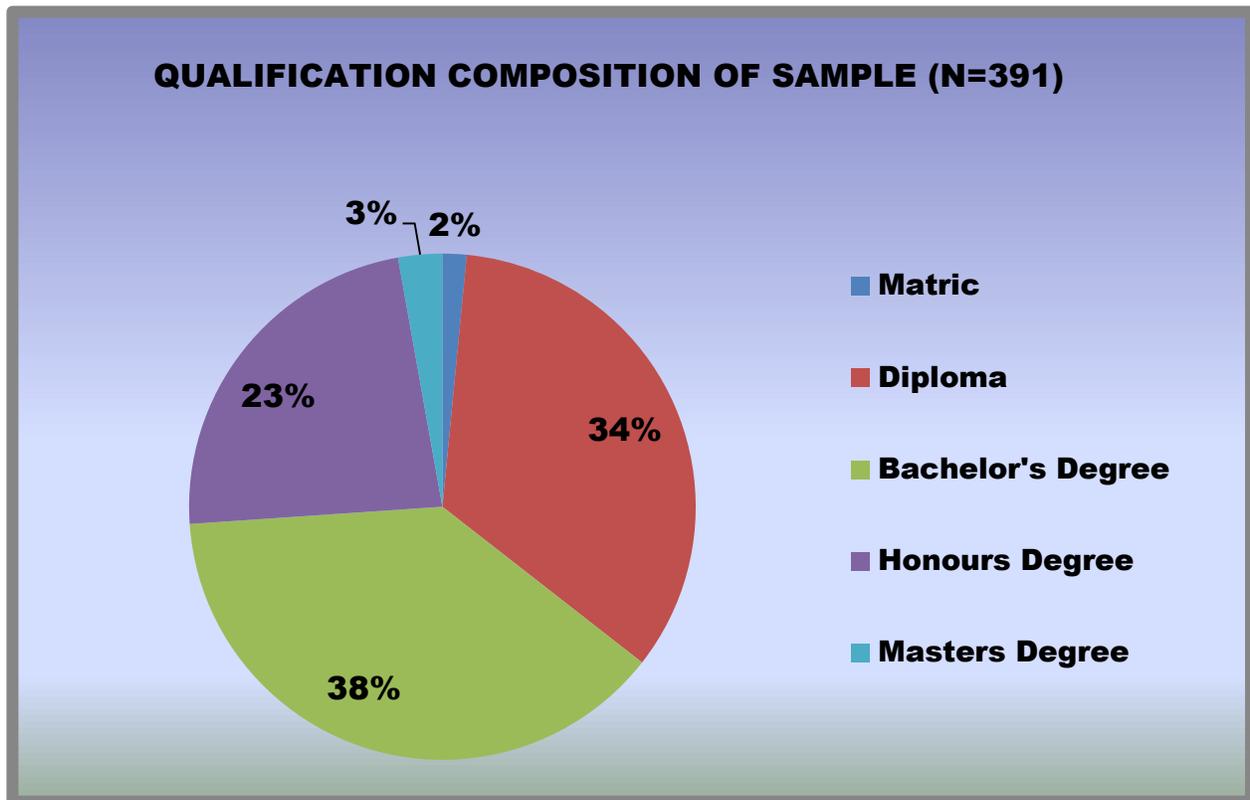
The challenge of teacher supply has its origins in pre-1994 South Africa, and is not about the number of educators in South African classrooms, but about the quality of educators who are teaching. The emphasis should be on improving educator quality instead of expanding the pool of educators. According to Bloch (2007:6), South Africa has not succeeded in improving quality education and ensuring quality in education. He states that if there is one phrase that summarizes the failings of the education system, it is poor quality. In failing to achieve quality delivery, the education system is working only for a proportion of the learners who are able to access relevant institutions. Owolabi (2012) could not agree more by adding that teachers' qualification level has impact on learners' performance.

As evident from the study, the majority of educators are properly qualified (figure 7). This situation depicts confusion as far as the researcher is concerned. According to

reported literature, qualified teachers should promote good learner results. As a result, the researcher further sought the levels of vertical leadership support perceived by educators on an upward and downward hierarchical structure in the quest for explaining the reason for low LAP.

The hierarchy of the Lejweleputswa Education district consists of educators on five (5) different management levels depicted in Figure 8 below:

Figure 8: Lejweleputswa Education District Vertical Leadership Hierarchy
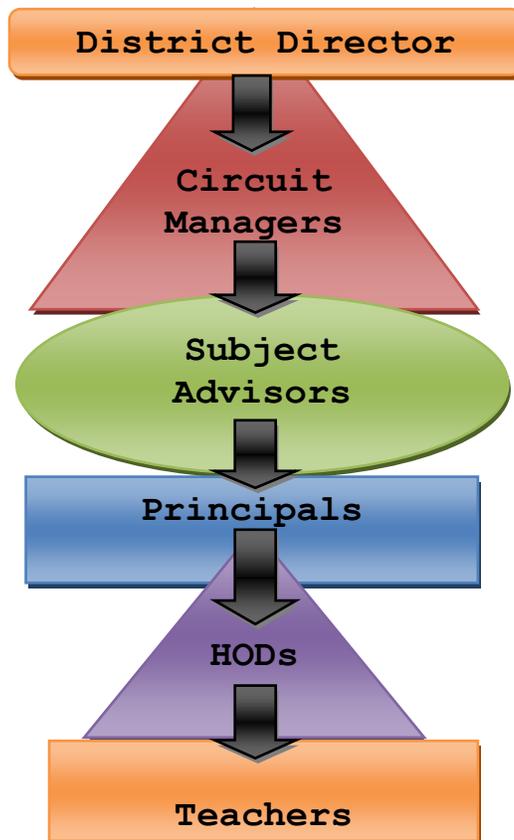
This hierarchy is simplified for the purpose of this study. The vertical leadership (upward and downward) are discussed in accordance to this simplified hierarchical flow. Upward EL support will follow the hierarchy from a bottom-up approach, whilst downward EL support will represent a top-down approach.

Guerrie (2014) contends that effective school leaders contribute to learning indirectly, but in a significant way, by creating a school environment where learners and teachers can flourish, and by influencing the many stakeholders who are a part of it. All things considered, the quality of any organization's performance cannot exceed the quality of its leadership. The following figure indicates the level of vertical leadership (upward and downward) perceived by educators in the Lejweleputswa district.

Figure 9: Upward EL Support Perceived on ALL Educator Levels

Support Experienced : Upward Educational Leadership on all Education levels

- Excellent — 16%
- Good — 56%
- Little — 23%
- No — 5%
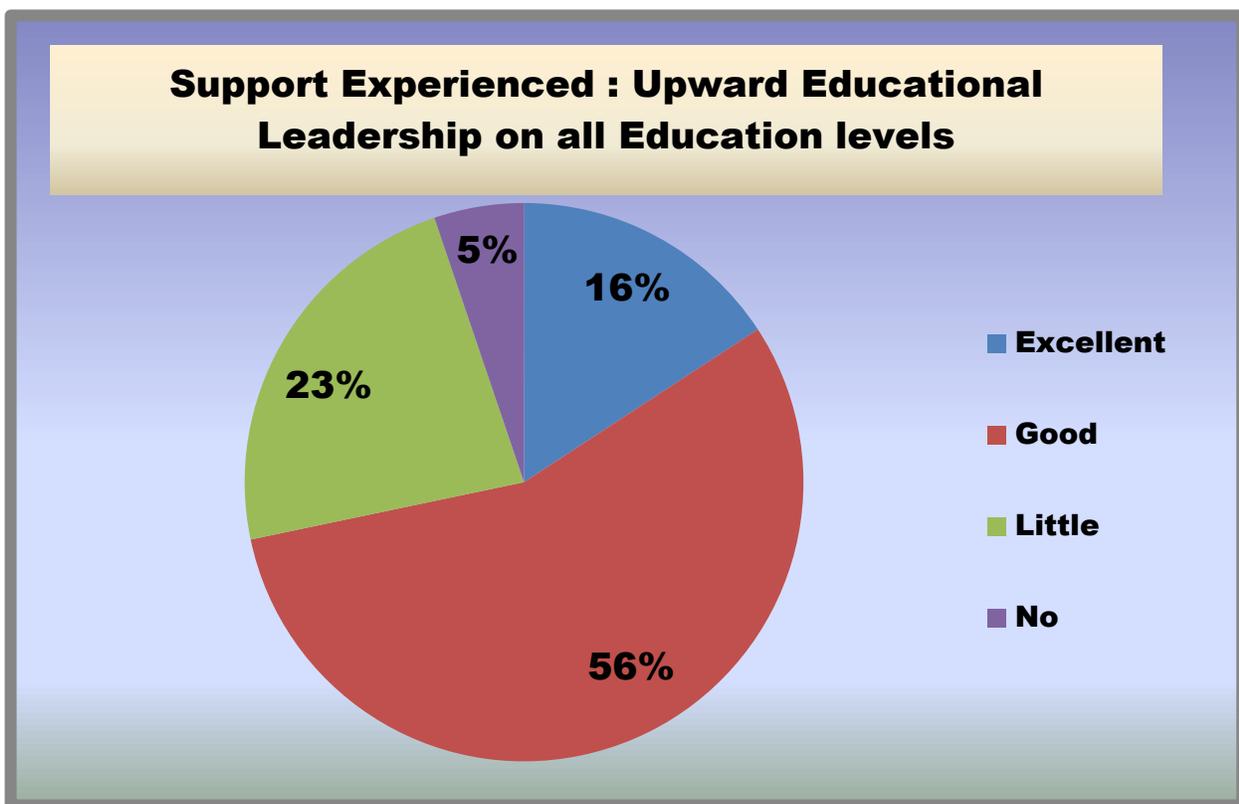
It is evident that 72% of the sample perceives upward EL excellent or good. Yet, there are still almost 30% of educators that experience upward EL provided as little or no support. The following graph depicts these overall statistics on various educator levels that exist in the Lejweleputswa leadership hierarchy.

Figure 10: Upward EL Support Perceived Expressed per Educator Level
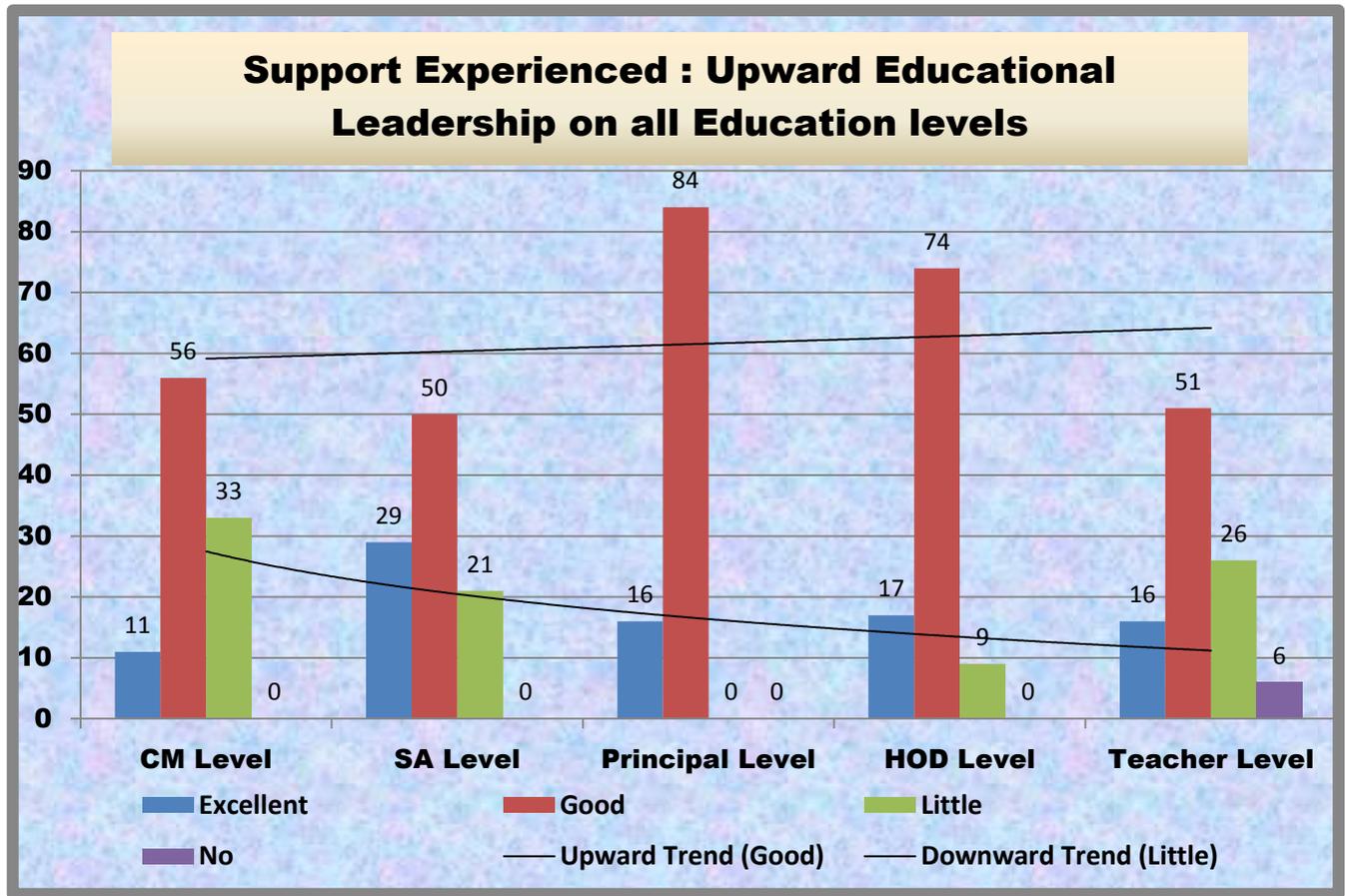
These results reveal the upward leader support educators on various levels experience. It is inevitable that 33% of the Circuit Managers perceive EL as little whereas only 11% were of the opinion that EL provided directly from the Lejweleputswa District office is excellent. The researcher is of the opinion that these figures should be the other way around in order to effectively manage the education system. The educator component which portrays the most positive view regarding upward leadership support is the Principals. This component directly receives support from the Circuit Managers at district level. A third of the teachers (32%) are of the opinion that EL support received from HODs and Principals are unsatisfactory (little or no support).

The results show that the higher the leadership hierarchy, the less EL support is perceived. The opposite effect is supported through solicitation of lower levels of EL perceived as more supportive.

Figure 11: Downward EL Support Perceived on ALL Educator Levels

Support Experienced : Downward Educational Leadership on all Education levels

- Excellent — 11%
- Good — 78%
- Little — 11%
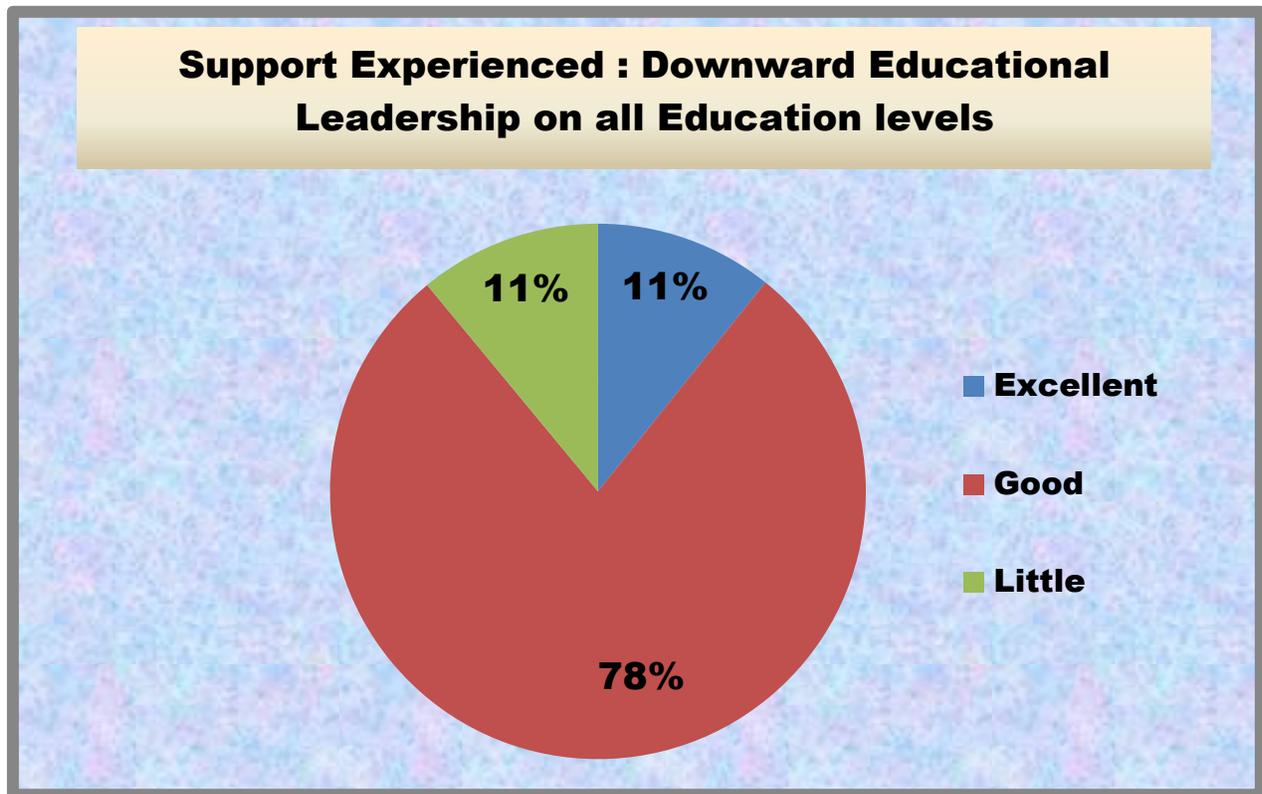
When downward EL support is analysed, it depicts more overall satisfactory results by educators. Only 11% of the educators perceive downward EL support as little. In summary, it is evident that overall downward EL enjoys more favourable consideration than upward EL by all educators in the district. Figure 9 displays these overall statistics on various educator levels that exist in the Lejweleputswa leadership hierarchy.

**Figure 12: Downward EL Support Perceived Expressed per Educator Level**

Support Experienced : Downward Educational Leadership per Education level
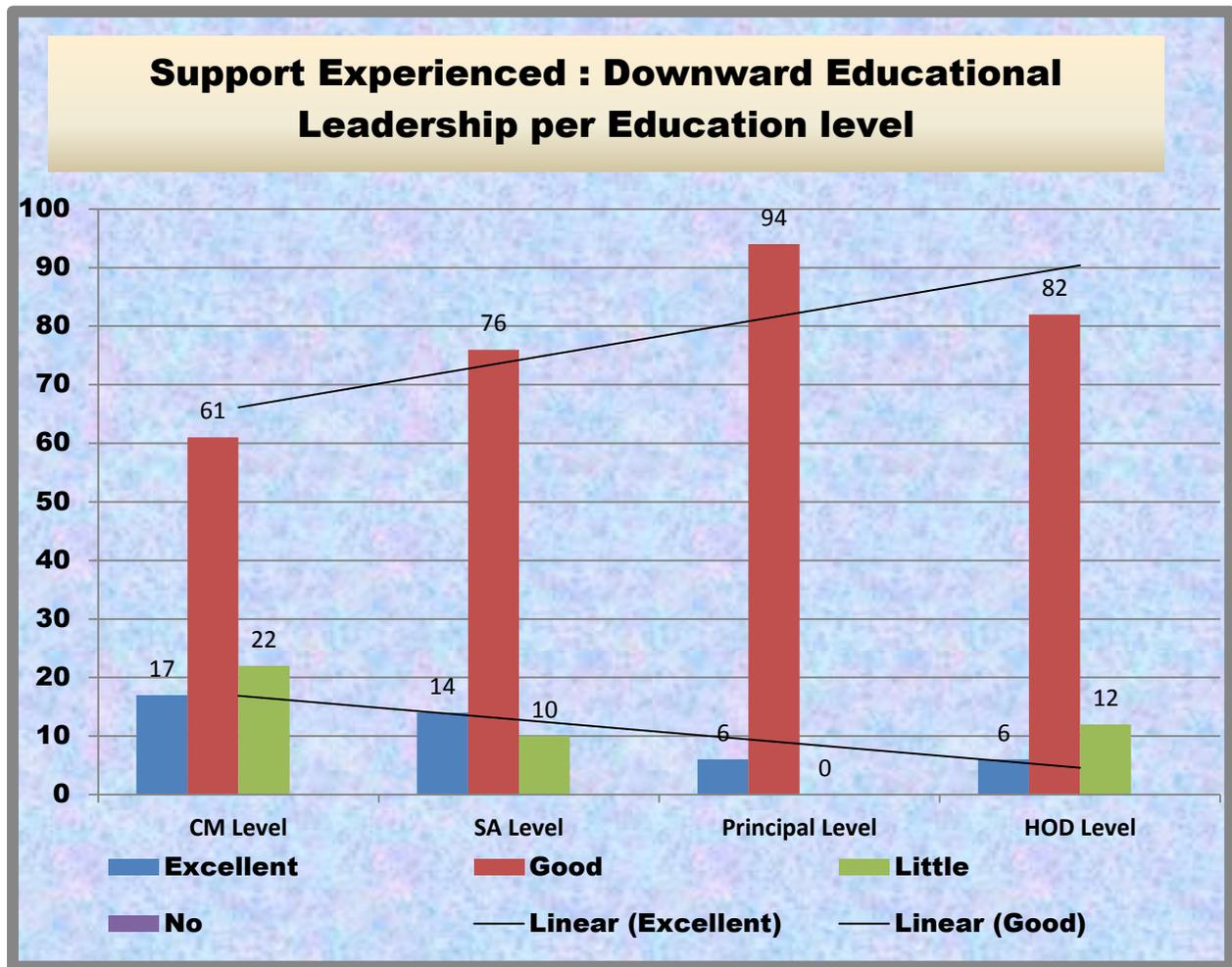
These results reveal the downward leader support educators on various levels experience. It is certain that perceived EL increase as the hierarchy decrease, meaning that subordinates seemingly contribute to a sound relationship with the next level of authority in the leadership hierarchy. The educator level that reported most satisfaction was principals – concluding that delegates reporting to this authority portray most favourable cooperation. As the hierarchy of authority increases, less support are experienced by lower level educators. The significance of the results resides in the unsatisfactory support the Circuit Managers perceive from the Department of Education (22%). Second most, teachers (12%) perceived little support received from Principals and HODs at school level.

Consistent, proactive and accessible school leadership has been identified as a critical engagement driver for teachers. The principal defines the vision for the school, sets the tone for inclusiveness, and builds trusting relationships, and models resilience and adaptability. In addition, the "shared" leadership that results from involvement of all stakeholders—principals, teachers, parents, school administrators, and others — is an even more important consideration. The principal creates the environment in which leadership becomes part of the organizational culture and a professional community is formed. Teachers then have the foundation to form relationships and work together to improve instructional practices that correlate to learner achievement (Guerrie, 2014).

The researcher is of the opinion that the EL support at school level is the most important factor in EL. In agreement with Guerrie, the researcher supports the important role of the principal in setting a overall positive school climate and culture. The school climate is an integral part of any school environment. Research interested in school effectiveness during the seventies and early eighties brought school climate to the fore as an important attribute of successful schools (Eubanks & Levine, 1983). Currently, the restructuring literature proposes that a school climate supportive of instructional innovation, combined with participatory decision making, will lead to a greater sense of professional efficacy among teachers and an improvement in teachers' feelings of satisfaction. Figure 13 portrays the overall school climate perceived by all educators in the Lejweleputswa district.

Figure 13: Overall School Climate Perceived on ALL Educator Levels
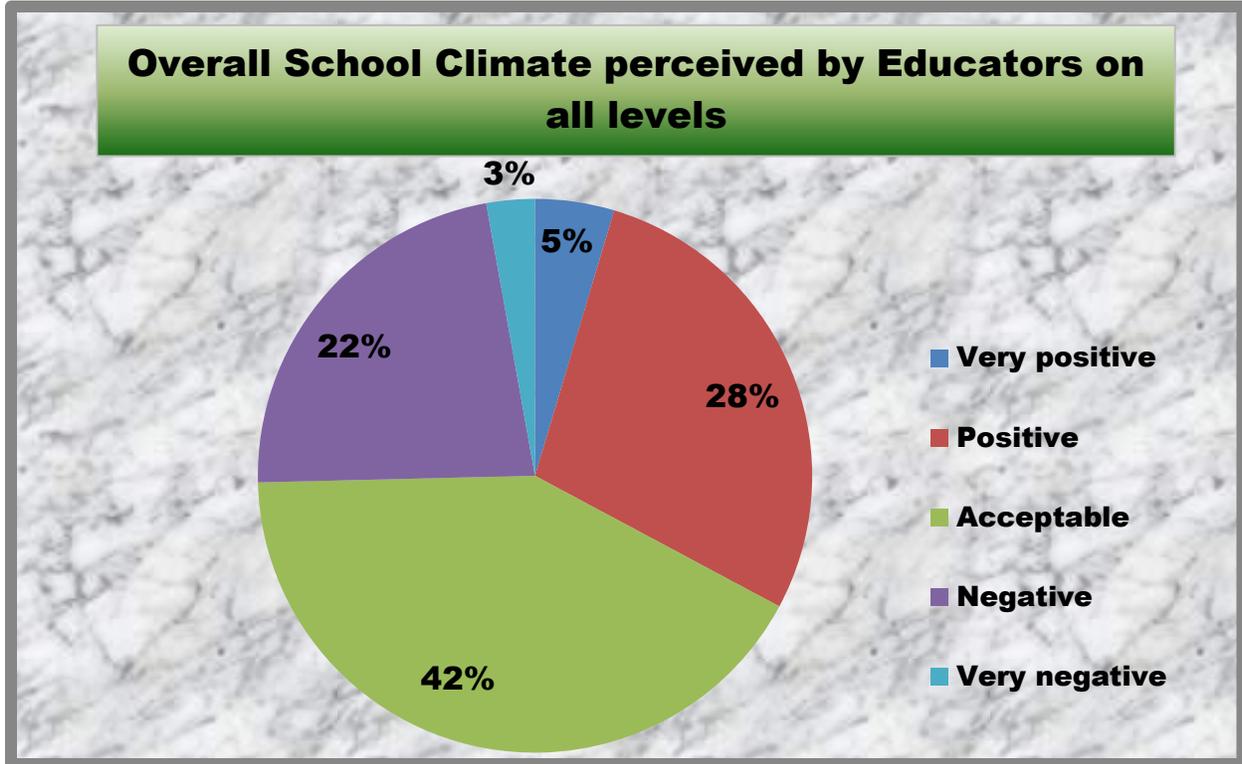
From the results it is clear that only 33% of educators perceive the overall school climate as positive, which result in more than half of the sample viewing the school climate as negative. In light of the aforementioned literature on effective leadership and school climate, is becomes evident that EL in the Lejweleputswa district does not support a positive school climate. The following graph displays these results per educator level.

Figure 14: Overall School Climate Perceived Expressed per Educator Level
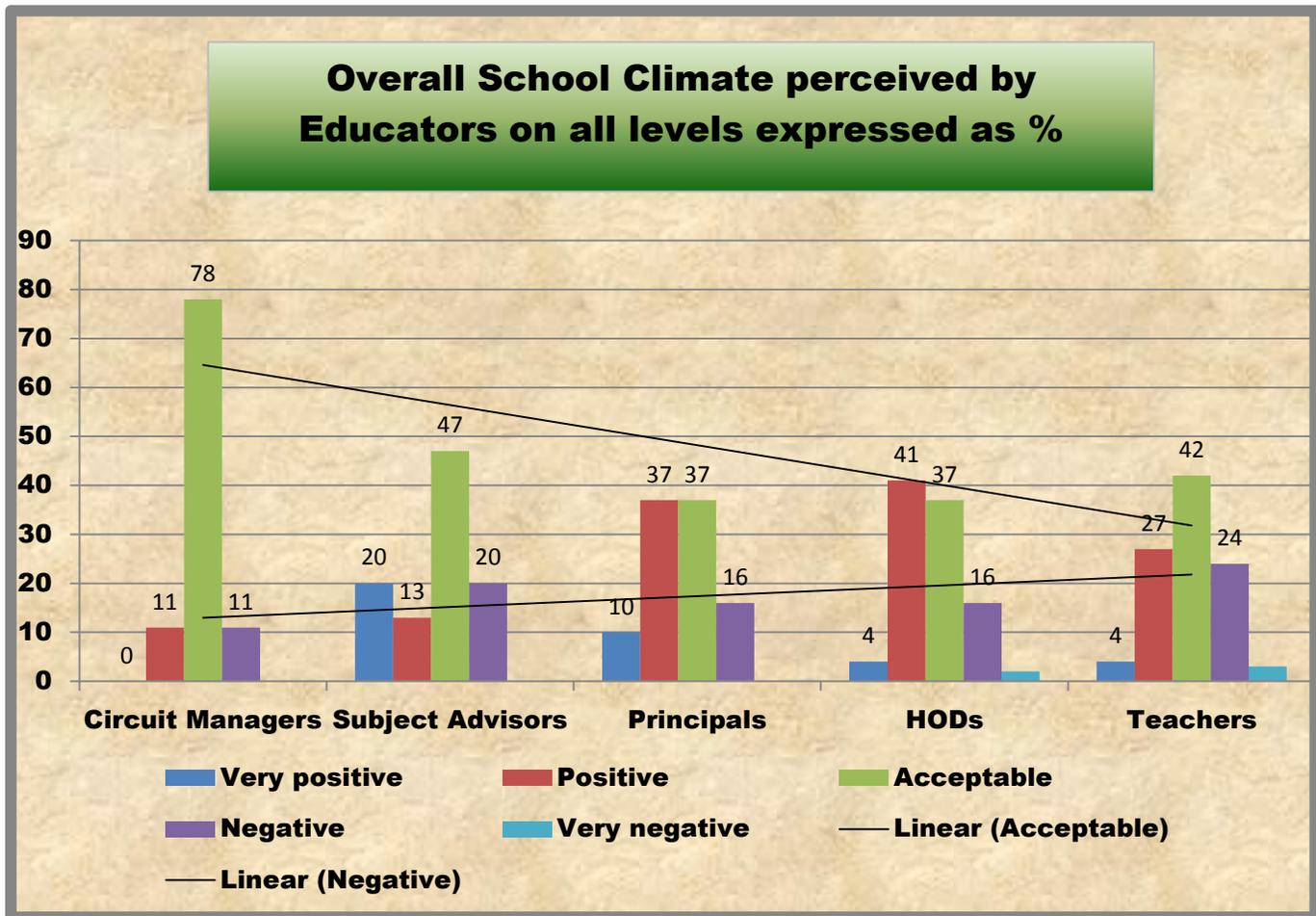
From the above statistics, the key role players (teachers) in the education process in the Lejweleputswa Education district mostly perceive the school climate as negative. The trend line depicts a decrease in an "acceptable" overall school climate perceived.

This impede negatively on the job satisfaction of teachers which subsequently influence the teaching and learning process at the cost of high and satisfactory LAP interrelated with EL. Results on previous studies also indicate that school climate has a noteworthy association with job satisfaction. Climate was found to be composed of three elements; principal leadership, faculty collegiality, and learner discipline. Each of these climate components has a relatively strong association with teachers' feelings of job satisfaction. Of particular importance is the principal leadership aspect of climate.

Strong leadership has been associated with successful schools in the effective schools literature (Purkey & Smith, 1983).

In light of the overall negative school climate perceived by all educators, as a result and subsequently one cannot expect leaders at the top of the hierarchy to feel empowered towards promoting effective teaching and learning in the district. Figure 12 outlines the descriptive statistics regarding educators' perceptions towards empowerment in the teaching profession. Figure 12 reveals that Circuit Managers report the highest result in terms of empowerment.

Figure 15: Empowerment to Promote Effective Teaching and Learning Expressed per Educator Level
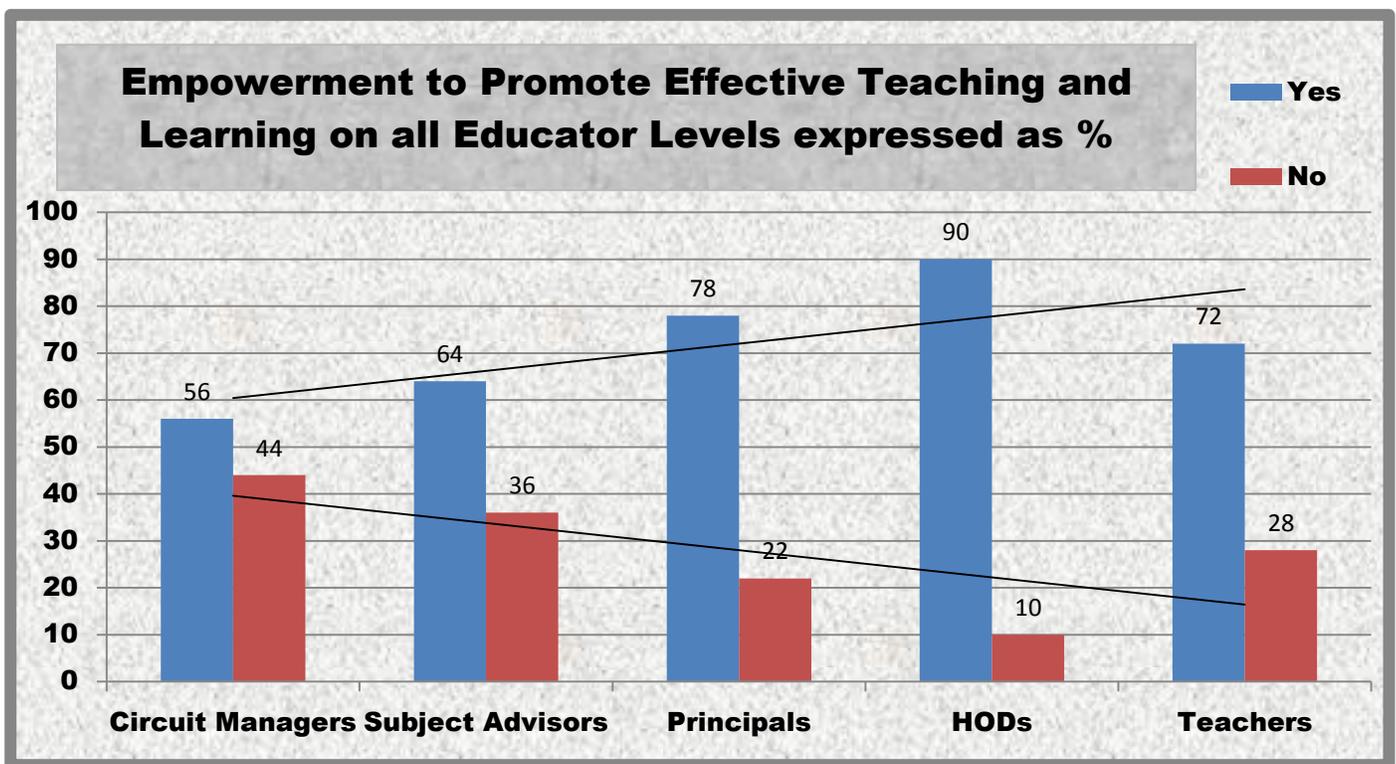
Interesting trends are established through Figure 15. HODs feel the most empowered to promote effective teaching and learning in the Lejweleputswa Education district. However, the trend line indicates a decrease in empowerment towards higher levels of authority in the hierarchy, or the statement of the alternative illustrates an increase in

empowerment as the hierarchy level decrease. The most empowered educator level (teachers) is the least satisfied as revealed in previous results.

Figure 16: Present Feelings about Teaching as a Career Perceived on ALL Educator Levels
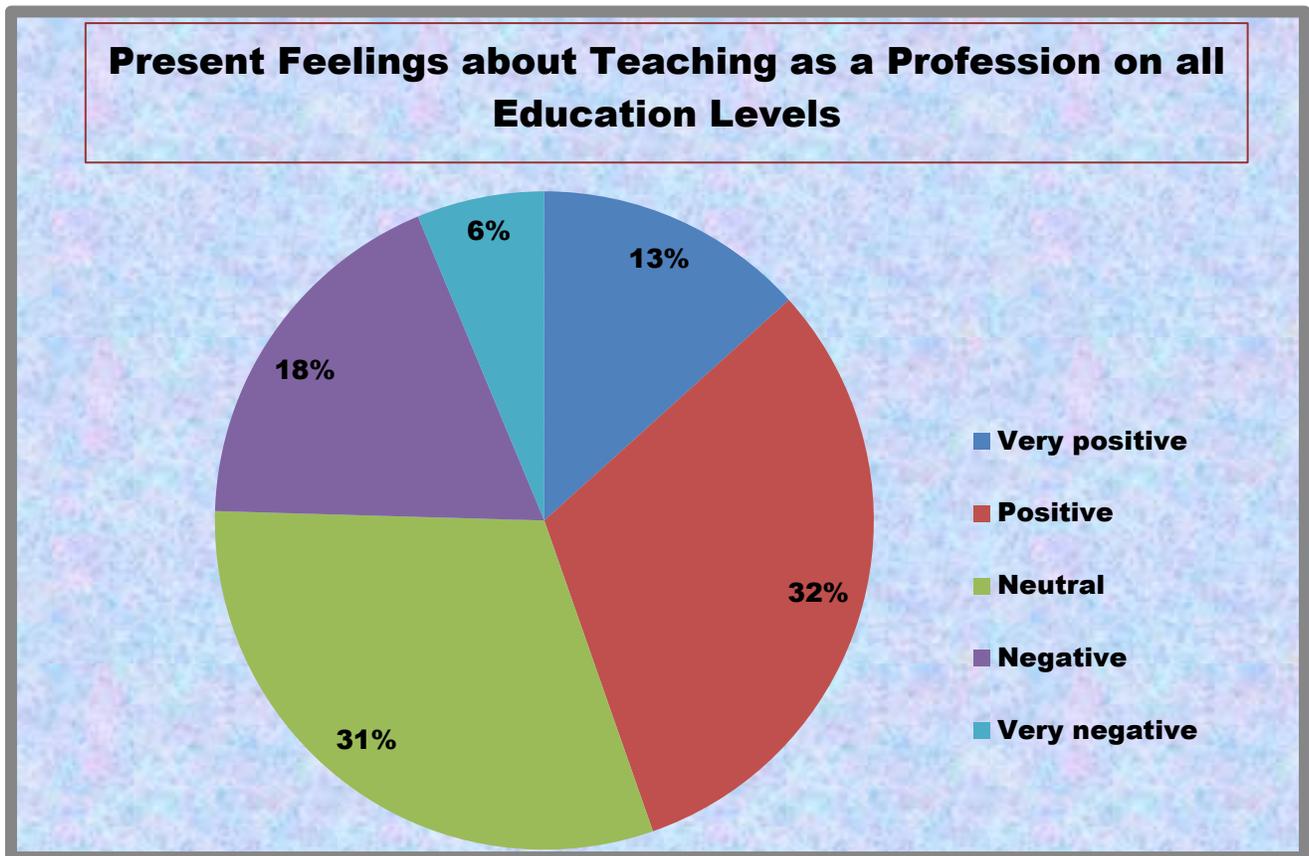
Educators in totality reported less than half of the pool of educators feeling positive towards teaching as a profession – leaving more than half being negative. This is a concerning factor as teachers are the foremost and important participant in the education process which subsequently influence the attitudes of learners in their classroom. We cannot expect learners to portray a positive attitude if their role models are negative. Scrivner (2009) supports the view of the researcher by adding that teacher's attitudes are connected with instructional behaviour which influences learner achievement. Gourneau (2005) further states that effective attitudes and actions

employed by teachers ultimately can make a positive difference on the lives of their learners. It is known that attitudes have a profound impact on teacher practices and behaviours. Figure 17 reports these results per educator level.

Figure 17: Present Feelings about Teaching as a Career Perceived expressed per Educator Level
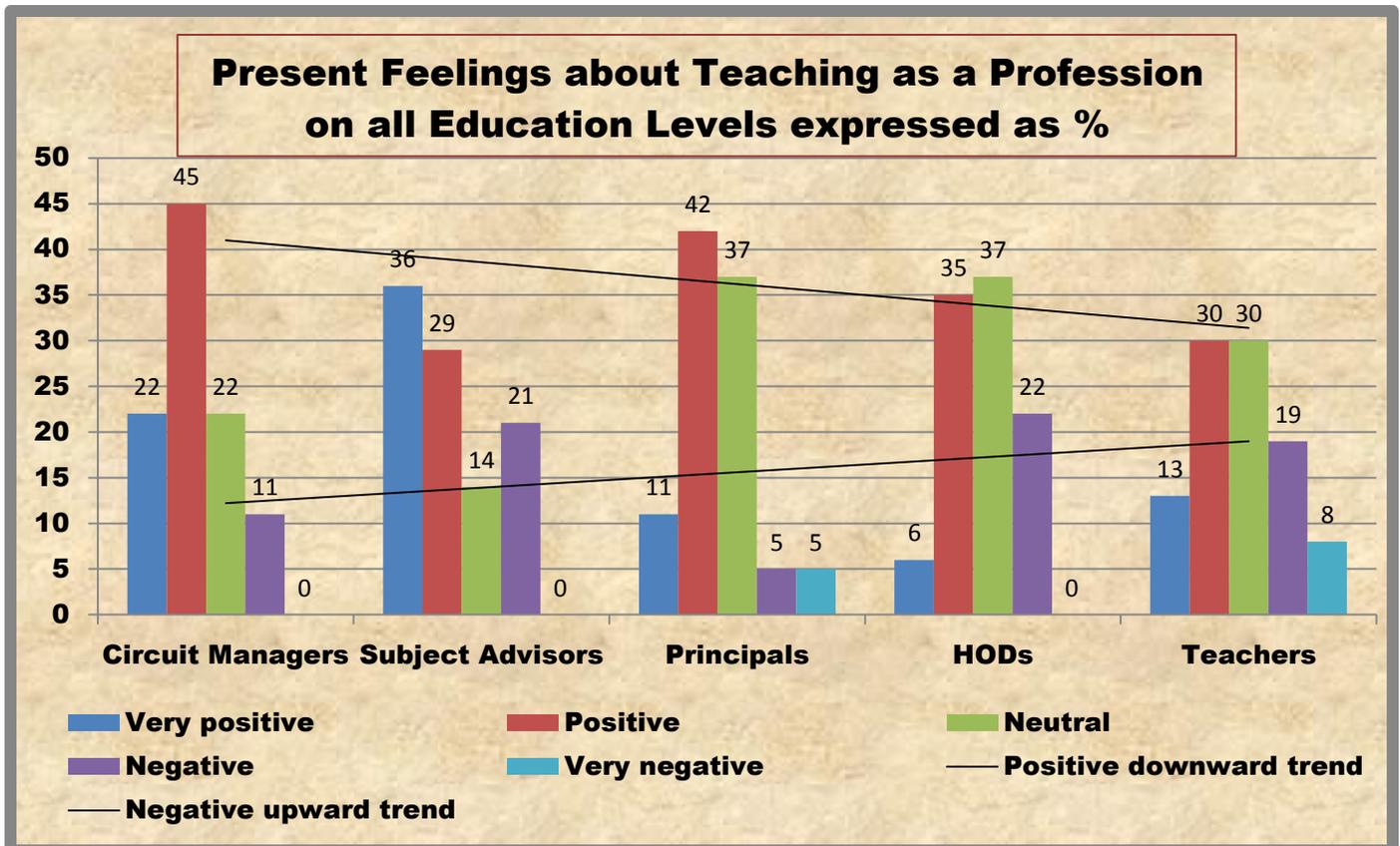
The results of the educator level analysis indicate that as the hierarchy level decreases, educators become less positive and more negative. In the next figure, these results are further confirmed in terms of leaving the teaching profession. Consequently, the researcher found it significant to analyse educators' consideration in leaving the teaching profession. Figure 18 shows these results.

Figure 18: Consideration in Leaving the Teaching Profession on ALL Educator Levels
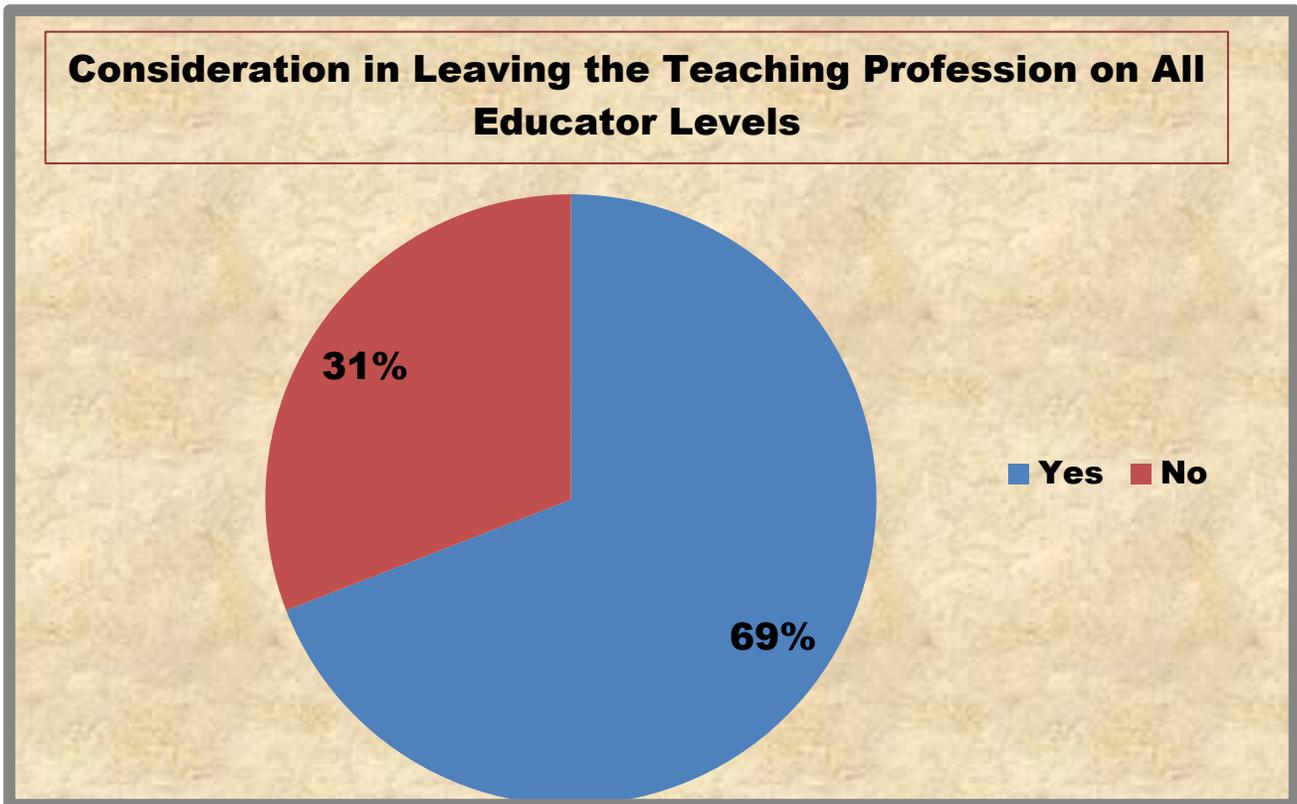
Holistically, 69% of educators want to leave the teaching profession. This is indicative that educators on all levels are not experiencing job satisfaction. A profession is more than a trade or business; and professional education is more than mastery of facts and rules (Vatter, 1964). Education is the cornerstone of a knowledge-based society, but will quality educators be available to provide it? Van Leeuwen (2010) could not agree more by stating that there is a growing world-wide shortage of educators.

The following graph depicts the educators on different levels in order to determine which level of hierarchy contributes the most to educators wanting to leave the teaching profession.

Figure 19: Consideration in Leaving the Teaching Profession Expressed per Educator Level

Consideration in Leaving the Teaching Profession on all Educator Levels expressed as %
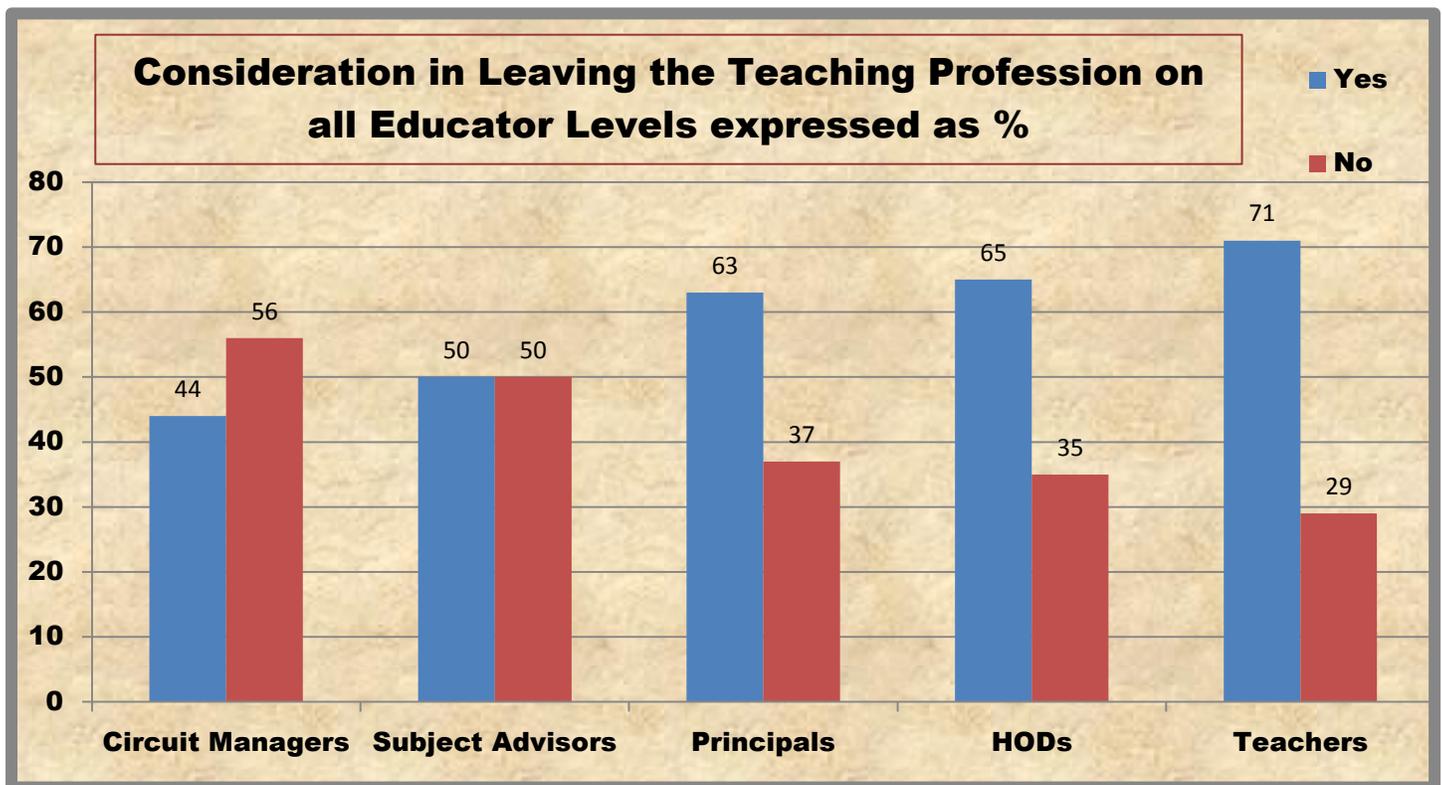
Once again, the biggest portion of educators refers to teachers. The educators at school level are the ones who must teach our learners. Yet the study reveals that principals, HODs and teachers contribute the biggest part towards wanting to leave the teaching profession. Gurney-Read (2015) postulates that more than half of all teachers abroad are considering leaving the profession in the next two years due to workload and low morale. Dayimane (2015) agrees by stating that the many changes in the curriculum that have led to increased workloads have also disheartened teachers, causing some to leave the profession, adding that poor working conditions are also a major problem.

Dayimane (2015) further adds that Mhlanga, the Communications Acting Chief Director at the Department, does however admit that there have been challenges, which have led to President Jacob Zuma setting up a commission to investigate employment conditions for public servants, with a large focus on teachers. The commission is being

led by Judge Sandile Ngcobo and is expected to reveal its findings this year. They also hope that this will ultimately improve teachers' working conditions. While the government waits for the commission's findings, the teachers union believes that the only thing that will keep teachers in their posts is for the government to pay them better and offer worthwhile benefits.

The study has researched various factors that might contribute to the state of the teaching and learning process in the Lejweleputswa Education district. The study has found that this phenomenon is attributed to poor management and leadership support that lacks proper planning, placements of staff and unreasonable targets set by the Department.

4.3.2 Section B: Qualitative Analysis

4.3.2.1 Research Questions

This study was designed to answer the following research questions:

- What are the essences of EL and its impact on LAP?
- How is leadership support on a vertical (upward and downward) level perceived by educators at school and district level?
- How do educators perceive the teaching environment and overall school climate?
- Do educators feel empowered towards promoting LAP?
- What are the consequences of academic intervention strategies and their successes for LAP?

Against this backdrop, the researcher designed an open-ended questionnaire through which he solicited for the views and opinions of the respondents in attempt to answer research questions 1 and 5. The selected purposeful sample for qualitative purposes consisted out of twenty-five (25) teachers.

4.3.2.2 Data Processing

Data processing for qualitative results entails the process of thematic analysis or text analysis including interpretation of data, which subsequently involves identification of themes and categories. Data analysis is a process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data (De Vos *et al* 2005:340-341). Qualitative data analysis is a search for general statements about relationships among categories of data. McMillan and Schumacher (2010:367) explain qualitative analysis as a process of interim discovery analysis aimed at developing coded topics and categories that may initially come from the data or which may be predetermined, and also pattern seeking for plausible explanations. The researcher initially read the written responses obtained from the open-ended questionnaires repeatedly in order to gain familiarity with them.

Creswell (2012:244) adds that reading, reading and reading once more through the data forces the researcher to become familiar with the data in intimate ways. The researcher searched through the data for regularities, patterns and topics and wrote words and phrases to represent those topics and patterns. The data was then divided into manageable themes or categories. The emergent patterns or categories were colour-coded. The emphasis on emic categories in data collection was preferred. Emic categories are explanations of what the phenomenon means to the participants (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:244).

4.3.2.3 Identification of Themes and Categories

In order to analyse and interpret the large volume of raw data collected through the process of consulting written records, a qualitative data analysis process was followed. During the first scanning the information was read through carefully.

From the readings the researcher identified units of information that served as the basis for defining or representing categories. A 'unit of information' refers to a sentence or paragraph that has the following two characteristics: First, it is aimed at the

understanding that the researcher needs to have and second, it is the smallest piece of information about something that can stand by itself (Brown 2004:104).

During the second scanning it was coded or categorised and during the third scanning the main themes were generated (Creswell 2012:247). The development of these themes and categories was guided by aims and objectives of the study. This process of categorizing the information assisted the researcher in content analysis and interpretation (Wiersma & Jurs 2009:216).

The main themes identified during the text analysis were as follows:
- Theme 1: Relationship between EL and LAP
- Theme 2: Academic Intervention and LAP
- Theme 3: Academic Support and LAP
- Theme 4: Culture of Accountability and LAP

The appendixes C to F refer to questionnaires used as data collection instrument for this study. The open-ended questions are displayed in Section B of the questionnaire. Some questions have been omitted owing to the low frequency of responses from the participants. This is in keeping with the view held by Gay *et al* (2011:469) who confirm that the task of interpreting data is to identify the important themes or meanings in data and not necessarily *every* theme. A detailed discussion of the research results follows in the next section.

4.3.2.4   Thematic Analysis for Qualitative Data

Four main themes are highlighted with each main theme consisting of various sub-themes. These themes and sub-themes are now discussed in detail to present the major findings of this research based on the open-ended questionnaires administered. In addition, applicable verbatim quotes obtained from the raw data are used to confirm and justify important findings.

- **THEME 1:   RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EL AND LAP**

  o *Sub-Theme 1: The existence of the relationship between EL and LAP and elements of this relationship*

The majority of teachers disregard the link between educational leadership (EL) and learner academic performance (LAP). The main reason for this opinion is non-cooperative and unhealthy relationships at school level. Comments and direct quotes from teachers included: Teacher 1: *"The principal has lost focus on the vision and mission of the school. As a result, the decision-making is not in line with what the school wants to achieve academically. This might be due to a shift in focus from teaching to fame."* Teacher 2 contended that the relationship between school leadership is not good. She further elaborated that the *"…attitude of the principal at my school is frustrating and he is running the school with gossips"*. Teacher 3: *"SMT of the school is run by the principal only. As a result, teachers become less interested in their work as their inputs are not considered."* Teacher 4: *"Because things are not done properly at our school, suggestions are made but not executed, and there is a lack of commitment from head-to-toe!"* She further added that school leadership is putting learners' education at risk by appointing teachers who are not qualified to teach a specific subject. Teacher 5: *"The educator morale is on its lowest! Support is not sustained. It is indeed very frustrating to be a teacher these days!"*

As is evident from the teacher responses, the majority of educators are of the view that the leadership roles in education are not necessarily occupied by individuals who have the natural capacity to lead. Naturally incapacitated leaders enforce their authority by means of disciplinary measures instead of accreditation by natural leaders. This signifies the reason why teachers rated upward EL as little or no support - negativity is generated by ineffective leadership. The issue of ineffective leadership and non-commitment from EL made its appearance as a contributing factor towards negativity amongst educators.

HODs generally rated the relationship between EL and LAP as poor due to ineffective support received from the district office as well as improper management from the principal. Comments include:

HOD 1: *"The academic support from the district is not good at all because Subject Advisors do not visit us more often to assist us in terms of curriculum-related issues. They only visit the school rarely for control purposes. We require on-going dedicated and sustainable support from the school and the district."* HOD 2: *"District educational leadership ignore the point that learners are from illiterate families."* HOD 3: *"Learner academic performance can only be attained where there is mutual respect between top officials and foot soldiers, where one's efforts are appreciated."* HOD 4: *"Principals tend to have assumed administrative role in their strides whereby they overlook their leadership roles as managers to give mentoring and lead their teams. Delegation alone cannot guarantee empowerment or capacitating teachers, as it would be more in line with education to rather lead by example."* HOD 4 also displayed a rebellious attitude across the range of questions. HOD 5 acknowledged the fact that the principal should be the source of encouragement, motivation and support in order to motivate the learners to work hard.

Principals mostly commented on the ineffective relationship they have with Circuit Managers. Principal 1 highlighted that the school would perform academically better if the Circuit Manager is more available to render a more sustained supportive role on a continuous basis. He added that Subject Advisors are also difficult to get hold of for required assistance. *"The district supports the learner academic achievement through intervention programmes, but the deployment of Subject Advisors needs to improve. Lesson the scope of Subject Advisor deployment so that they can concentrate on fewer schools to make their intervention more effective"*. Principal 2 concurred that Circuit Managers do not seem to be committed to assist principals with their leadership roles. *"As a principal leading the vision of the school, will require a Circuit Manager who is also inspirational and possess a positive attitude and provide positive mentoring, who will be very supportive so that we can establish a good and professional relationship. In most cases, Circuit managers tend to be very robust in their approach, lack the time to*

listen to principals, and opt for a top-down kind of approach which is not yielding results. However, the district has contributed positively in learner academic achievement through intervention programmes towards enhancing LAP". Principal 3 stated that: *"Teaching is no more regarded as a calling; most of the teachers are not doing justice for the education of our society. Furthermore, unions are preventing the promotion of effective teaching and learning."* He also elaborated on the insufficient financial management on national and provincial level that affects the set strategies at school level in order to improve LAP. He also elaborated on the performance of the former Model C schools that enjoy the support of the primary schools and attributed the success of LAP on the foundation set at primary school level – something that not all public schools can testify to. He contended that the district office only focus on secondary schools whilst the problem starts at primary school level. He suggested that the district should focus more on primary schools and emphasis should be placed on effective evaluation of skills, support given to teachers, learner-teacher ratios and consistent monitoring. Principal 4 indicated that: *"There are frustrating challenges that teachers encounter on a daily basis. At times you feel that the Department of Education and parents have made learners the responsibility of teachers. This is one of many! There is however a relationship between district-level administrative actions and LAP – it is not easy to detail what kind of relationship they have."* Principal 5 is of the opinion that Circuit Managers should support principals in carrying out their responsibilities. He emphasized the fact that they should be more supportive than judgemental, and have an understanding of the uniqueness of one school in comparison to another school. He stressed the fact that the principal should benefit from a Circuit Manager's visit to the school in being positive and professional in order to feel empowered after the visit. *"The allocation of human resources and the supply of textbooks is still a main challenge. Teachers are allocated according to learner numbers, irrespective of LOLT."* (Language of learning and teaching).

Most Subject Advisors stated that when they visit certain schools, the learners' work is not marked and therefore no feedback is provided to learners, and that this clearly indicates poor control by HODs. Subject Advisor 2 sums up this trend: *"In some schools*

the support from the HOD is not good at all and it is clearly visible from the performance of teachers and learners." Subject Advisor 3 concluded that if there is a lack of planning, self-discipline, work ethic and motivation within the School Management Team (SMT) – learners will follow with the same negative traits. Subject Advisor 4 indicated that: *"Sometimes I feel that I am standing alone and no one hears or sees how I am struggling."* Subject Advisor 5 complained about the lack of support and communication, although it was not made clear from whom support was lacking or which communication channels were problematic.

A few Circuit Managers commented that they sometimes feel demoralised with how the education system operates. They stated that they receive certain goals to achieve, but that the time allocated to achieve such goals is not sufficient to implement plans to ensure success. One of these Circuit Managers commented that educational leaders at all levels (in schools and in the district) have no interest in the academic performance of learners. Circuit Manager 1 stated that: *"One is demoralised by the way the system operates. Too many things needed at once without giving the time to monitor implementation of what the jobholder has done. Educational leaders' interest have declined, little interest of learners' wellbeing is considered which impact on performance."* Circuit Manager 2 provided a general answer: *"School performance is all about professional relationships and mutual respect – trust in one another and a common purpose towards excellence with all line managers and leaders will contribute to quality teaching and learning."* Circuit Manager 5 contended that there is too much politics involved whilst a lack of provision of support staff is also evident.

- ○ **Sub-Theme 2: The Educational Leadership Factors/Roles, Responsibilities and Support received that impact on LAP**

Teacher 1 reported on qualities a teacher should possess for the advancement of LAP which refer to: providing constant support towards learners; to be strict regarding completion of homework and being on time at school and for classes; and to be well-prepared for each lesson on a daily basis. Teacher 2 commented on the role of the SMT

in her school and did not provide any of her own leadership roles and responsibilities as leader of the classroom situation. Her educational leaders do not provide a positive trend to follow: *"Our school's SMT is not really making a positive impact on LAP. They also come late for classes or do not even attend it! They don't possess the required inter-personal and professional management skills! There is a negative attitude amongst the staff which highly affects LAP!"* Teacher 3 commented that it is not good enough to only have strategies to improve LAP, but it must be implemented. He explained that expert knowledge and training is needed in order to deal with problematic learners, who according to him make up the majority of learners. *"The leaders talk about strategies, but it is never really implemented. We have many learners who are problematic, but we are not trained or given skills in how to deal with the majority who are problematic."* Teacher 4 added cooperation, communication and motivation as roles and factors that should be visible at the school. Teacher 5 provided some factors/roles when stating that: *"Communication: clear and unambiguous instructions to teachers lead to better implementation of objectives; Mentoring: Teachers need assistance from seniors in order to evaluate their own strengths and weaknesses; Monitoring and control: It eliminates an atmosphere of "doing-as-I-wish" and also helps to detect problems at an early stage."*

Views expressed by HODs all reign in similarity confirming that continuous, dedicated and sustained support from district level is needed for the advancement of LAP in schools. HOD 4 also stressed that embracing a positive school culture and climate is of utmost importance for learner academic success. *"The whole culture and climate of the school should be positive before things will change. If you just do the same wrong things every day, then you will go nowhere with results."*

Principal 1 contended that a positive and supportive school environment is needed for LAP in schools. Principal 2 added that the SMT of the school should be more aggressive in addressing the teacher developmental needs. Principal 3 contested that leadership should focus on clear and effective communication with all school structures and keep reminding learners and teachers about the school's objectives and mission.

He further added that leadership should be firm on educational policies, e.g. code of conduct for both learners and educators. Principal 4 summed up many of the frustrations they as principals must face: *"Discipline, respect, determination and positive work ethic are substantial for effective LAP. In the FET band the EL is sound because pass requirements are fair and they enjoy more luxuries like camps and extra classes. In the senior phase, the department created a mess which they are shy to acknowledge. You cannot expect that every South African learner must attain 50% or level 4 in a DIFFICULT subject like Mathematics and make it a prime requirement. To revive relationships they must copy from the "past" system and provide pure Maths and functional Maths in order to cater for various learner IQ's."* Principal 5 provided some aspects of importance: *"Giving direction and setting the pace; motivating and developing teachers and learners; promoting a positive learning climate; develop and implement school and subject improvement plans."*

All Subject Advisors were supporting the importance of effective EL at school level towards the improvement of LAP with special reference made to teachers being committed – in other words possessing good work ethics. Subject Advisor 2 indicated that: *"Poor interpersonal relationships between SMT members and poor leadership from the principal, deputy principal and HODs make it very hard for effective LAP in schools."*

Various opinions were forthcoming from Circuit Managers. Circuit Manager 1 indicated that: *"Strong leadership and management by SMT's is the biggest threat!. Failure to monitor improvement strategies and holding teachers accountable for their performance is a huge concern for us."* Circuit Manager 2 elaborated on the fact that the provision of quality teachers is troublesome for LAP. Circuit Manager 3 made some valuable and interesting comments when stating that he is very concerned about the learners who are merely progressed after they have failed one year in a phase. This has very negative consequences for teachers of the higher grades in a school (Grade 10-12) who have many progressed learners in their classrooms. These learners are not interested to pass on their own, but are prepared to fail once and then be automatically progressed to the next grade. *"How can you teach learners who fail one year, is the held back for a*

year but then just progress automatically the next year. This is a system fault. The teachers of the higher grades suffer because such learners do not come to school to pass, only to be progressed." Circuit Manager 3 indicated that the appointments of teachers should be strictly done according to performance of teachers and by neutral panels. In such a way, the best teachers will be appointed and promoted. He also advised that more Subject Advisors and administrators should be appointed to suffice the immeasurable need of improved LAP. Circuit Manager 5 agreed when stating that: "*Good and qualified teachers at all schools are very difficult to get! The best ones should be appointed and kept."* He also stated that the infrastructure of schools should be revisited in terms of ablution facilities, water and electricity availability and educational resources. He stated that without these, no academic plan will be successful as the schools look like rubbish dumps.

- o ***Sub-Theme 3: Action Plan and Major Challenges for Sustainable Improvement of LAP***

Teachers attributed the major challenge towards improved LAP to poor home conditions of learners. They are of the opinion in general that varied teaching strategies should assist in the improvement of LAP. A comment summed up these opinions: *"Most of our learners do have good home conditions and this is to the negative side of their performance. On the teacher side all teachers should use different strategies in the class with different learners."*

HODs are of the opinion that more informal assessments should accomplish better LAP. HOD 1 commented that progressed learners are a major challenge in the system and unfair requirements are placed on teachers in this regard. He added that ongoing support, regular monitoring and control of teachers' work must be evident. HOD 2 said that*: "If all of us were to confine our efforts to do justice to the education process as required from us in terms of our contractual obligation, LAP should improve. The subject improvement plan as informed by the error analysis should be executed. The core business of learning and teaching should not be compromised."* HOD 3 postulated that

learners with barriers are to be effectively identified and taught according to their cognitive levels. He remarked that time for teaching and learning must be utilised effectively and that consistency by teachers is rated at the top. Commitment and dedication without any regular absenteeism of teachers is of vital importance in our schools. HOD 4 indicated that: *"External intervention will change the mind set of learners. Parental support and education to parents will bring and better performance. Changing policies will also show change in LAP."* HOD 5 asserted that: *"Teachers need to be appreciated and be treated as adults and professionals."* He did not indicate whether this is from the learners' or the HODs' side.

Principals are all in agreement that lack of parental involvement and support received are the major challenges. They are further concerned about the provision and availability of LTSM that are needed for effective, improved and sustained LAP. Principal 1 and 4 highlighted that lack of teacher commitment and strong SMTs are challenges imposed on them as principals. Principal 3 stated that: *"Demotivated teachers and ill-disciplined learners. Little support from the Circuit Managers; and gangsterism by learners; as well as poor support from parents."* Principal 5 indicated that: *"Inconsistent implementation of rules and procedures from the district are major challenges. To ensure LAP improves, one must regard the fact that motivation goes a long way. Both learners and teachers need motivation to better performances."* All principals voiced that varied teaching strategies, error-analysis of assessment papers and rewarding good teachers and learners could alleviate undesired LAP.

Subsequently, Subject Advisors expressed and are in agreement with the opinions of principals in terms of varied teaching strategies, error-analysis of assessment papers and rewarding good LAP. Subject Advisor 3 commented that: *"Teachers are not dedicated – they have overcrowded classes, bad facilities, and principals not supporting them. If we reward them I think they will get more positive and try to survive!"*. Subject Advisor 5 advised that teachers get lost in paperwork. She attempted in minimising the paperwork by supplying teachers with weekly lesson plans and incorporated the work schedules of CAPS. She confirmed that it has lifted a great burden from teachers and

that their focus shifted towards classroom management where improved LAP is more reachable.

In turn, Circuit Managers expanded on the opinions of Subject Advisors and principals by adding that remedial teaching could help the lower performing learner. Circuit Manager 3: *"One needs to look or focus on the positive side of an individual. Rewarding them will increase or promote their morale and the turnover will be very positive. Teachers will then be willing to walk the extra mile and even voluntarily so."*

Circuit Managers in general feel that restricted and limited authority has been bestowed upon them which limit their function of leading and managing the school effectively as a whole. Furthermore, Circuit Managers see their major challenge to improve sustained LAP to be: Leadership qualities from principals and SMTs; good and qualified teachers; appointment of teachers by SGBs and not by the SMT; quality of teachers provided by tertiary institutions; financial assistance and provision of LTSM; progressed learners and promotion requirements; learner discipline and attendance; failure to monitor improvement strategies; failure to hold teachers accountable for their performance; lack of support by parents; and accountability by all stakeholders in the education process.

- *THEME 2: ACADEMIC INTERVENTION STRATEGIES, MEASURES AND SUCCESSES FOR THE CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT OF LAP*

Teachers commented that in general, extra classes are to be organized as an intervention strategy, but that such extra classes do not have the desired effect. The reasons provided are that learners (especially those who are in need of them) do not attend such extra classes, some learners attend, but are not motivated to participate in such classes and that teachers are also not always motivated. Teacher 1 commented in this regard: *"Extra classes are not effective as it renders no improvement whilst some of the learners dodge those classes. The same applies for some learners who attend, but don't participate. You will find that teachers are also not always motivated, because they*

are also tired." Teacher 2 agrees and adds that sometimes these extra classes are chaotic as many learners turn up late; some leave the classroom when they want and some do not return after leaving. Teacher 3 indicated that: *"Error analysis and the subject improvement plan forms part of the intervention strategies at our school. One does not get the time to deal with the progressed learners due to the high number of learners who are progressed."* Teacher 4 and 5 summed up the general feeling regarding the Extended Hours Programme (EHP) or extra classes by stating that: *"The Extended hour programme (EHP) is successful to a certain extent but teachers and learners are exhausted. It is demonstrated by absenteeism and regular late coming!"*

Comments from HODs in general are similar to those of teachers and added that some of these interventions are successful to some extent, whilst others are just futile exercises for learners to study. They reported that learners need to be taught meaningfully during the official teaching time (school hours), be given enough time to rest, play and to attend to their social needs as children. HOD 3 stated that the grave mistake the district office tend to make is to recommend a blanket intervention approach for all subjects, failing to identify the fact that certain subjects need to be treated differently when intervention strategies are drafted. This HOD did not elaborate on such differences. An HOD stated: *"Learners do reap some benefits from these interventions, but in general this should not even be necessary as the teaching should occur during normal school hours, teachers and learners must be in the classroom and teaching must happen there. The after that learners will want to play and also rest."*

Principals commented that in general, such intervention programmes are not that successful. Principal 1 contested that the necessity for the initiation of academic intervention at the school should be "*as early as yesterday*". He stated that he believes that more focus should be placed on enhancing teachers' content knowledge, rather than just LAP. He is of the opinion that when teachers' content knowledge is uplifted, LAP will automatically follow. He stated that: *"Interventions should always happen as early as yesterday and I do not agree. They should focus on the teachers – get their content knowledge right and you will have less interventions for the learners. Learners*

will automatically begin to perform better then." Principal 5 supported this view by pointing out that interventions should never be scheduled during school hours. Principal 2 and 4 indicated that: *"All these programmes are challenged by a high rate of learner absenteeism. If attendance can be controlled, the results will be more positive."* He further elaborated by stating that learners and their parents should be committed to these classes. Principal 3 asserted that: *"It works only for determined learners and it is at the cost of teachers' personal time and energy. Involvement of parents should result in more successes for these interventions."*

Subject Advisors were of the opinion that teachers' content and practical skills (in the sciences) need to be developed in order to assist learners more efficiently. They added that when a teacher displays insight in the content, only then can it be effectively transferred to learners. Subject Advisor 3 also elaborated that the protection of teaching time is very important, and once teachers and learners spend more time in the classroom and not outside on the school grounds, academic performance will drastically improve. *"Interventions can have success if they only touch on the important things, but as it is now, almost the whole syllabus must be covered with interventions and there is just not enough time to make it successful."* A bold comment made by one Subject Advisor state that: *"Unfortunately these interventions have not been addressing the real problems. The problem lies with the many principals who are not leaders, with lazy HODs who do not support their teachers and teachers who are more out of their classrooms that in it. This becomes the culture and climate at the school and everybody seems to go with the flow. If a teacher wants to work, many learners are not in the classroom because they are used to not working with the others. It is a cycle that needs to be broken."*

Circuit Manager 1 indicated that a lot is being done to support schools. He is vague however on what support is provided. According to him Subject Advisors assist the teachers in problem schools. He added: *"…although not enough to assist ALL schools – too few Subject Advisors are appointed for the entire district."* This is problematic as teachers do not receive the support they deserve. There are just too many teachers

allocated to each Subject Advisor. Other Circuit Mangers were all in agreement that such intervention strategies can be very successful if correctly implemented and monitored. Circuit Manager 3 stated the following in support: *"Interventions, after identifying areas of concerns or improvement, must not be a once-off or it should not be seen as an event. Academic interventions cannot be a continuous process, the results must be sustainable. The benefit would therefore be that all role players – teachers; SMT; and SGB would know and agree with the expectations and purpose of these interventions."*

- ### THEME 3: ACADEMIC SUPPORT AND LAP

All educators were asked how the specific component that they are responsible for in the education process (teaching in the classroom) is being identified in terms of academic support. Teachers are directly responsible for learners and these are direct quotes captured in support of their opinion:

Teacher 1: *"Learners show no interest in their school work and when given homework they come late purposefully to school so that they cannot attend the class. Parents don't monitor the children's work and they hardly come to inquire about the progress of their kids."* Teacher 2: *"Milieu-deprived children will always and often struggle with completion of informal assessments. The root cause is the lack of basic needs at home which culminate in them coming late or not coming to school at all."* Teacher 3: *"Most learners show little or no interest in their school work. Some arrive late at school and we do not have effective ways of dealing with these issues."* Teacher 4: *"Mostly they don't do their homework, even in the classroom they don't take part nor write classwork. You have to make sure you monitor them to get them to write. Sometimes you will find they don't even have books at school!"* Teacher 5: *"They seem uninspired, demotivated, disdained and they are quick to show that they go to school for reasons best known by them than by anybody else. Most importantly they display bizarre or weird behaviours that are intricate and sometimes not easy to detect."* The general opinion from educators is that learners are not interested to focus on school work. They try to find ways to miss classes for which they have not completed their homework. Parents do not

seem to be aware of the academic progress of their children and rely on teachers to ensure that their children are academically successful.

Learners are also taught by HODs and their views regarding identification of learners being in need of academic support is highlighted next. HODs stated in general that learners have little interest in their work even when given tasks to perform at home. When a learner experience problems with their schoolwork it is even worse as such learners then do not come to school the next day, or miss that specific class.. They added further that regular incomplete informal assessments are evident from these learners and they almost always arrive late for school. HODs are also responsible to monitor the work of teachers and act as their immediate supervisor in the education process. HODs also commented on how teachers' need for academic support is identified. HOD 1 replied: *"Teachers arrive late on duty and in attending classes. They give learners work that does not include a variety of questions. They absent themselves on duty most of the times."* HODs in general however commented that teachers are in dire need of training. They are of the opinion that teachers would need training in subject content, time management and being committed to learner assistance.

It transpired that principals were of the same opinion than teachers and HODs regarding identification of learner academic support. However, principals commented on teachers in need of academic support in the following ways:

Principal 1 articulated that some teachers show little interest in teaching and that support regarding their commitment to the teaching profession is needed. He stated that in some cases this lack of commitment may be due to a lack of content knowledge, especially in subjects such as Mathematics and Physical Science. *"…and some teachers do not show commitment to teaching. I think they do not know all the content, especially in Maths and Science and then the learners must suffer."* He further added that poor work ethics leads to poor academic performance which is displayed through low teacher morale. In addition, Principal 2 also added that the following pertains to the identification of teachers who are in need of academic support: Lack of planning to

cover the curriculum in the academic year; non-attendance of subject meetings with fellow teachers and the Subject Advisor; no support from teachers towards HODs regarding programmes for enhancement of learner performance; a general negative attitude towards subject workshops and training programmes organized to assist teachers. Principal 3 and 4 stated that the IQMS are used as an identification tool through teachers' PGPs, together with the quality of the teacher's work. The problem however is that all teachers receive good scores and as such their real problems and needs are not addressed. Principal 5 was concerned about the union's role regarding assessment of teachers and indicated that most teachers unions are against assessing teachers. He further stated that most of his teachers are in need of academic support. In this regard he stated: *"I know my teachers need support, I hear them talk when they say some aspects in the syllabus is difficult even for them to understand."*

Furthermore, principals expressed their opinions on current trends of professional and academic development of teachers within their schools. Comments included that the majority of teachers do not engage in further private studies, though the incentive training system which was developed before democracy was more constructive than the current system. They added that the critical challenge in professional and academic development of teachers is imposed on the monitoring function thereof – it does not happen as frequently as they would expect. Principal 5 stated that professional and academic development of teachers are not enough and that such development does not really address the academic needs of the teachers.

Subject Advisors stated that many of the teachers they are assigned to do not have the passion to ensure that their learners receive the best teaching. It is almost as if many of them have given up and only go through the day to day motions. Subject Advisors indicated that specific support programmes for different levels of teachers need to be organised and presented by 'outsiders', meaning persons from outside the Department of Basic Education. Such support should not only include content training, but also training in classroom management, large class management, being leaders with HODs

and principals and a commitment to put the learners' academic future as the number one priority.

Circuit Managers indicated that in some instances the principals, HODs and teachers are the ones who are mostly being absent from school, with such absenteeism then filtering through to the learners. *"You think it is learners who are absent/ Check how many time principals, HODs and teachers are absent. The academic climate at these schools has gone so low that nobody seems to care anymore. And when your principal is absent, then the HODs stay away, and then the teachers and that filters to the learners. All need to be shown what commitment to teaching and leadership is."* Circuit managers also indicate that SMTs do not volunteer to serve on subject committees or to engage in any extra work in order to assist the learners. They see this as an extra burden. According to Circuit Managers, the level of commitment of SMTs as the leadership of the school has declined to the extent where they confront each other in meetings and where politics have overpowered the normal teaching and learning milieu.

- *THEME 4:   CULTURE OF ACCOUNTABILITY AND LAP*

Opinions on the impact of a culture of accountability maintained at schools and its impact on learner academic performance were sought from educators. Participants included all levels mentioned previously except for teachers, since they are at the lowest level of the leadership hierarchy and do not managing lower levels of the leadership hierarchy. Subject Advisors on the other hand are mainly responsible for an advisory role to be rendered to schools and were also excluded on the basis of being in a supportive role. Educators that expressed their opinions included HODs, Principals and Circuit managers.

As a result, HODs expressed their views and declared that no intervention towards improving LAP can be committed without embracing a culture of accountability at schools. HOD 1 argued: "*I believe the notion is as good as when it was first introduced.*

Since we are dealing with human nature, it is bound to fade away at some point. It is always condescending for authoritative figures to maintain the level of objectivity which is required during any such intervention implemented. I honestly become disgruntled with such programmes which are entrusted on individuals. An exception can only be when protocol is observed and measured on the basis of accountability". HOD 2 added that a culture of accountability held by teachers and all stakeholders in school will subsequently lead to learners adopting the same culture and prepare them for such quality at their future workplace. HOD 3 and 4 emphasized the fact that it would enable teachers to recognize their work as teaching to be a serious encounter and assist in realising the responsibility held to promote excellence in LAP in schools. They further added that a culture of accountability maintained in schools would instill a performance driven culture throughout the entire school environment. HOD 5 could not agree more by elaborating that accountability entails inspiration, honesty and respect for the teaching profession which ultimately derives self-esteem and self-satisfaction.

Principals were all in agreement that a culture of accountability would enforce sustainable performance in schools as well as support received from the district. They did however; bring up the issue of the progressed learners which should not be forming part of the accountability at school level. Principal 1 stated: *"It is necessary for the school's principal to work towards the direction of creating an open and supportive climate in which the following aspects of organizational life are expressed: supportive relationships; effective interaction; joint decision-making; high performance objectives; and recognition by appreciation, reward and promotion. All of these will set grounds for a culture of accountability incorporated in the policies of the school to be implemented and executed."* Principal 2 exclusively mentioned that accountability at school level should not include the process of progressed learners. "*Sometimes it becomes extremely difficult for teachers to account for the decisions made by the department. Progressed learners were already not coping at lower grades and now the teacher at the higher grade must perform miracles with the same learners."* Principal 3 and 4 explained that a culture of accountability would be helpful to develop the basic school identity and create an environment that is stable and consistent. They further added that

with accountability, everyone takes the required responsibility for their actions and answer for what they do. Lastly, principal 5 confirmed that it is highly necessary and important because teachers are not held accountable for undesired LAP as they would not work hard to sustain good performance if not held accountable.

All Circuit Managers were in agreement that such a culture of accountability is necessary at schools. Circuit Manager 1 expressed that it is having interest of individuals at heart. He further contended that it would create an environment where people are capacitated and trusted, equally so. Circuit Manager 2 and 3 elaborated by stating that it is the basic starting point for any school to excel and with responsibility comes accountability. Circuit Manager 4 contested that such a culture of accountability could be more capacitated by external NGOs. Circuit manager 5 shouted excellent! He emphasized that teachers and learners need to focus on the job at hand, and that is to conform to DBE goals which include amongst others, good results.

4.4   DISCUSSION OF THEMATIC ANALYSIS

This section portrays the summary of discussions of the qualitative thematic analysis of this chapter. Educators' perceptions regarding the relationship, academic intervention, academic support, and culture of accountability driven by EL in relation to LAP in the Lejweleputswa Education district were sought through qualitative analysis. The results were reported through thematic analysis in the above sections.

The thought was to discuss each theme with regard to the findings obtained from participants. When writing up the findings by theme a clear pattern emerged. The researcher can elaborate in depth about each theme, but this would result in unnecessary repetition. A combined thematic discussion therefore seemed more relevant. What emerged very distinctively from the results is the perception of each level of leadership that the blame for learners' low academic performance resorts at other levels than their own.

The teachers generally blame their principals for a lack of leadership and focus. According to them their principals have lost focus and in many instances run (lead) the school by themselves. This trend to blame other levels of leadership (also the lack of interest of parents) continued through all the themes discussed. Teachers in general blame the SMTs commitment to leadership in the school, also when it relates to intervention strategies to be implemented. Teachers also mentioned that the socio-economic aspects influencing learners play a major role in the commitment and motivation of such learners. No teacher indicated any deficiencies in their own repertoire.

HODs generally blame the Subject Advisors and principals. They indicated that Subject Advisors do not visit their schools on a regular basis and that principals indulge mostly in administrative duties and abandoned their leadership roles. This is contrary to what is found in literature which indicates that a collaborative leadership model is needed for academic success of learners. The trend for HODs to blame both downward (teachers) and upward (principals and Subject Advisers) leadership continued through all the themes discussed. None of the HODs indicated that they themselves lack in the leadership role they need to perform.

Principals blame the district office officials (Circuit managers and Subject Advisors) and stated that these officials do not provide the necessary leader support to positively affect LAP. Principals continue to also blame teachers' lack of commitment, unions' involvement in teaching and the district office for not concentrating more on primary school learners (which according to him would solve the problem when the learners reach secondary schools). The trend to put the blame elsewhere continued throughout the findings. In other themes the district office, SMTs, teachers, unions and parents are mentioned as problematic in one way or another. Some principals did indicate that they have a good working relationship with Circuit Managers, but this was not the norm. The trend for Principals to blame both downward (HODs and teachers) and upward (Subject Advisors and Circuit Managers) leadership continued through all the themes discussed.

None of the principals indicated that they should carry some of the blame for lack of leadership towards LAP.

Subject Advisors blame the HODs for their lack of leadership to motivate teachers and to control homework given. They also blame the SMTs for lack of planning, self-discipline, work ethics and motivation. Throughout the themes Subject Advisors made various comments regarding lack of leadership at various levels (both downward and upward). Their general perception regarding academic intervention strategies is that such strategies are not successful, as teachers do not seem to cover the curriculum and leave too much for these intervention sessions. Learners then fail to grasp content in such condensed interventions. In one instance a Subject Advisor blamed all levels of leadership within the school – from principals who fail to lead, to lazy HODs who do not support their teachers, to teachers who regularly absent themselves from the classrooms. This becomes the culture at such schools and the climate then is not conducive for proper teaching and learning to occur. None of the Subject Advisors designated some of the blame for lack of leadership regarding LAP towards them.

Circuit Managers blame the education system in that they struggle to attain their goals within the given time-frames provided to them. They also indicated that educational leaders at all levels (in schools and in the district) have no interest in the academic performance of learners. From the findings the following emerged as problem areas for sustained LAP for Circuit Managers: Leadership qualities from principals and SMTs; good and qualified teachers; appointment of teachers by SGBs and not by the SMT; quality of teachers provided by tertiary institutions; financial assistance and provision of LTSM; progressed learners and promotion requirements; learner discipline and attendance; failure to monitor improvement strategies; failure to hold teachers accountable for their performance; lack of support by parents; and accountability by all stakeholders in the education process. The trend for Circuit Managers to blame downward (Principals, HODs and teachers) and upward (District office) leadership continued through all the themes discussed. None of the Circuit Managers indicated that they should carry some of the blame for lack of leadership towards LAP.

When one reads through the above discussion, it is evident that what literature considers being necessary for academic success, is not what reveals itself in the schools and district office. Without exception, all levels of leadership perceive the lack of leadership to be somewhere else. Principals in general do not seem to be either instructional or transformational leaders, nor do they generally engage in sustained collaborative leadership actions within their schools or with district offices. The same can be attributed to HODs and teachers. The Subject Advisors and Circuit Managers in general also seem to neglect their leadership actions and resort to put the blame for poor academic achievement of learners at the door of the various school leadership levels. The overall climate of schools in the study does not seem to be conducive for successful academic interventions, let alone for such academic interventions to be sustained over time. It is unfortunate that the outcome of such a lack of accountability in the end negatively affect the academic performance of learners.

The findings of the study dispel the myth of the charismatic individual leader who knows everything. The study illustrates that no single person can unilaterally bring about substantive change in an organisation. The study acknowledges that effective educational leadership cannot accomplish great things alone. Kouzes and Posner (2010) also recognise that the ability to lead is not the private reserve of a few extraordinary people or those in particular positions of authority. They acknowledge that leadership capacity is broadly distributed in the population and is accessible to anyone who has passion and purpose to change things as they are. The findings of the study assert what Kouzes and Posner (2010) found that no single person has all the knowledge, skills, and talent to lead a district, improve a school, or meet all the needs of every child in his or her classroom. The findings of the study emphasise that it requires collaborative effort and dispersed educational leadership to meet the challenges confronting schools in the Lejweleputswa education district. Chapter 4 presented the results of the quantitative and qualitative designs respectively. Chapter 5 portrays the recommendations and notions for further study.

CHAPTER 5

RECOMMENDATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The intention of the study was to determine how educational leadership can help sustain academic learner performance in schools in the Lejweleputswa education district. Some secondary schools in the district have developed a tendency of being perennial underperformers. At the time of the study there were schools that never performed above 80% for at least ten years. These schools rely heavily on external support for them to be able to perform, learners from such schools being taught by teachers from other schools. Every year these schools fail to perform to the expected level despite being supported and assisted by the department through camps and other intervention measures. This chapter provides the recommendations pertained to this study. It concludes with some notions regarding possible further study.

5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

Leadership at all levels are necessary to ensure learner academic performance on a sustained level. Then recommendations are provided per level of leadership, namely teacher, HOD, principal, Subject Advisors and Circuit Managers. Some of the leadership actions recommended may overlap, but such overlap indicate the collaborative nature of leadership needed for success.

Recommendations for teachers to enhance learner academic achievement:

- Teachers are the leaders of their classrooms and need to plan the implementation of the curriculum. They are therefore collaboratively involved in the leadership of the school. The curriculum needs to be completed by quarter to

ensure learners are ready for assessment on a quarterly basis. This implies that teachers need to be in their classrooms daily and use time allocations per subject favorably.

- Teachers are to create a conducive atmosphere in their classrooms that will collectively lead to a positive academic climate in the school. Learners should be encouraged to attend classes, complete their homework and be actively involved in the classroom.

- Teachers need to set themselves (in collaboration with HODs) achievable academic targets for their learners and then actively engage with learners to achieve set targets. In such a way teachers will have tangible academic goals to pursue. Teachers then must hold themselves accountable to reach targets.

- Regular and open communication is necessary between subject teachers and their HODs. Possible problem areas can be collaboratively resolved to the benefit of learners.

- Teachers need to clearly state to Subject Advisors and HODs what support they are in need of. This relates to the Personal Growth Plan for each individual teacher. Teachers are to be adamant that lack of skills need to be addressed by training and development. Therefore, set and pursue professional development goals that focus on the goals and strategies identified to enhance and sustain learner performance.

- Teachers need to regularly attend subject meetings with the Subject Advisors. Problem areas must be discussed and resolved and innovative ideas to assist learners are discussed. This will benefit the learners.

- Active participation and assumption of leadership roles in establishing priorities, setting goals, and formulate implementation strategies to improve learner performance in the subject is necessary.

- Ensure that classroom strategies for improvement address the needs of the learners at all levels of learning. Assess learners in a variety of ways and develop strategies for improving the level of learner achievement.

- Academic intervention of any nature can only be sustained if teachers continue to implement new ideas, change teaching methods regularly and keep learners motivated and in the classroom. The teachers are to lead by example in terms of time management, learners will then follow.

Recommendations for HODs:

- HODs, as teachers, need to adhere to the same recommendations as put forward above.

- HODs, as part of the senior leadership of the school must lead by example in terms of time management. Too many findings relate to teachers and HODs not being on time at school and in their classrooms.

- HODs must ensure that teachers implement the curriculum as is prescribed. The HOD is the leader of an academic unit at the school and learner academic success is dependent upon his/her academic and instructional leadership.

- HODs should capacitate teachers by developing their sense of the meaning of the data they deal with in the classroom, as they learn to translate them into information needed to improve learner outcomes. For instance, assessment marks provide data to HODs for possible intervention actions to sustain learner academic performance.

- HODs must on a fortnightly basis (at least) call departmental meetings to ensure that collaboration occurs between teachers of the same subject. Such meetings will develop the academic climate of the department and school and will enhance both collaborative and sustainable leadership practices.

Recommendations for Principals:

Principals are the foremost leaders of a school. Although the recommendations made underneath link to the literature (as discussed in Chapter 2) and the findings of this study, the role of principals in various aspects of leadership link to facets also outside the above literature and findings. It was deemed necessary to include recommendations dealing with a wide range of leadership aspects of principals.

- Create organizational conditions (i.e. positive school climate) and effect institutional changes (implement time management, proper curriculum coverage) that will ensure that secondary schools provide quality education that will lead to quality educational outcomes. To achieve this they should align educational resources with education delivery which they are expected to monitor and supervise. They need to take informed decisions and decisive action for the above-mentioned and lastly to hold and be held accountable (to inside and outside stakeholders).

- Manage academic information of the school for quality improvement of learner academic performance. To improve performance and achieve the desirable educational outcomes, principals should take decisions based on concrete evidence derived from empirical data rather than assumptions. To achieve this, they need to regularly collect classroom information on learner achievement, use this information in discussions with teachers and HODs about adjusting and improving their teaching strategies. Such actions build the instructional leadership skills of the principal.

- Link with the district office to discuss possible school improvement planning. The principal must then lead subsequent meetings with staff, the school governing body, parents and the entire school community to discuss and implement such a school improvement plan. Continually gather information on learner achievement and communicate it to the school's community as part of the monitoring and evaluation process of such a plan. Leaders at all levels should be included in such discussions and implementation (teachers, HODs, principals, Subject Advisors and Circuit Managers). Collaborative leadership then becomes active with inputs and execution from all parties concerned.

- The principal should lead in such a way as to gain the respect of the school community. The school climate regarding accountability is set by the principal. Leading the way will demand the necessary respect from staff with positive learner academic performance as the most probable result. In this way the transformational leadership role of the principal will come to the fore.

- Provide support and ongoing professional development for staff members. This is to be organised in conjunction with Subject Advisors and Circuit Managers. Such support and development will positively influence the morale of teachers and HODs and the resultant filtering through to learners. Such actions enhance sustainable leadership practices.

- Principals should embrace the four core leadership practices, namely to set the direction (building a shared vision, establishing common goals and providing high performance expectations), to develop people (providing individual support, providing intellectual stimulation and leading by example), to develop the school (building collaborative cultures, positively change the school by implementing structures, building relationships with parents and communities) and to manage the teaching and learning programme (appoint qualified staff, provide teaching and learning support, monitor school improvement progress, buffer teachers from distractions to their work).

Recommendations for Subject Advisors:

- Subject Advisors must take the time to capacitate HODs and teachers by developing their sense of the meaning of the academic information they deal with in the classroom, as they learn to translate them into information needed to improve learner outcomes. Teachers need to understand the meaning of assessment results and the resultant actions to embark on to intervene.

- Ensure that the professional development of HODs and teachers is focused on building the requisite content and pedagogical knowledge, skills, and competences of teachers to help them accomplish the district and school goals.

- Work with HODs and teachers collaboratively to establish professional development goals that focus on the goals and strategies aimed at enhancing timeous curriculum delivery.

- Monitor the work of teams of teachers within the schools, circuit and at district level and provide direction and support.

- Regularly call subject meetings to share and provide solutions to possible problems, and to share best practices regarding teaching and learning sections of the curriculum. Ensure that a collaborative team of teachers responsible for the same subjects and grades creates a common formative assessment before teaching a new topic or chapter and agree on the standard learners should achieve to be deemed proficient .

- Confirm that effective classroom assessment serves as a powerful tool for enhancing learner achievement; monitor formal assessment practices, as well as class visits to observe the teaching and learning process.

- Ensure that teachers analyze the results to determine appropriate actions to be taken in class and to identify learners who require additional support through the school's system of intervention.

Recommendations for Circuit Managers:

- Circuit managers must state and describe the learner academic performance expectations to principals, HODs, teachers and parents. The current school environment in low-performing schools is a challenge for principals, HODs and teachers and therefore calls for such engagement to state and describe the learner academic performance expectations.

- Engage with clear explanations with all staff members, school governing body, learners and parents how teacher outcomes, school organizational outcomes, instructional outcomes and learner outcomes affect learner academic performance.

- Collaboratively participate with principals to implement the four core leadership practices in schools (cf. Recommendations for principals). Assist principals in the monitoring of these leadership practices. This should also include establishing collaborative non-negotiable goal setting in all secondary schools they are assigned to. Two important aspects to include in such goal setting are improved learner performance and dedicated classroom instruction.

- Manage academic information for quality improvement of learner academic performance. To improve academic performance and achieve the desirable educational outcomes, Circuit Managers, in collaboration with Subject Advisors and principals, should take decisions based on concrete evidence derived from empirical data rather than act on assumptions.

- Circuit Managers in collaboration with principals must set specific achievement targets for schools and learners and then ensure the consistent use of research-based instructional strategies in all classrooms to reach those targets. An action plan should be crafted to actualise the achievement of the set goals. Continually monitor achievement and instruction goals to ensure that these goals remain the driving force behind a school's actions.

- Engage with principals to confirm that schools regularly examine the extent to which they are meeting achievement targets; discrepancies between possible goals and actual practices must be addressed and interpreted and where necessary corrective measures must be taken to enhance learner achievement.

- Regularly monitor that allocated resources support the goals for achievement and instruction and that such resources are optimally utilized. Earmarked funding must be dedicated to professional development of teachers.

- Discuss with school governing bodies to align and support the district and school goals. School governing body alignment and support of district goals will ensure that the goals remain the primary focus of the district and school efforts and that no other initiatives detract attention or resources from accomplishing these goals.

- Assist the principal in developing a school-based culture of accountability by ensuring that educational leaders at all levels are held accountable for improved and sustainable learner academic performance.

- Discuss intervention strategies/plans with principals, HODs, teachers and parents. Such strategies/plans must address the following:
  - All learners must receive effective teaching and learning daily, the plan of intervention should not compensate for consistently weak and ineffective teaching.

- It is proactive rather than reactive; each school in the Lejweleputswa education district should conduct a baseline test to assess proficiency levels of learners when admitted to the school in order to provide a proactive response to such learners.
- Schools must have an assessment process that provides leaders within the school with frequent and timely information about the progress of each learner.
- Learners in need of additional support should be required to devote additional time to their learning and utilise additional layers of support.
- Identify the specific area(s) of difficulty a learner is experiencing and provide insights as to how that difficulty can be addressed.
- The intervention should address the needs of the different learners (differentiated approach).
- The intervention should be embedded in a culture of high expectations, collaboration and continuous improvement.

5.3   SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Suggestions for further research:

- An exploration into the strength of the relationship between district level administrative actions and average learner achievement.
- Perceived district-level leadership influences upon learner academic achievement.
- The influence of school leadership practices on classroom management, school Environment, and academic underperformance.

5. 4   CONCLUSION

Creating the conditions to assist learners to succeed academically is one the premier duties of the educational leader. School, circuit and district leaders are to create the conditions that assist more learners succeeding at all levels of schooling. They should build the capacity of educators to function as members of high-performing collaborative teams.

To create the conditions for high performing collaborative teams in schools and improve learner academic performance, educational leaders are to develop clarity of purpose and priorities, structures, support, feedback, and dispersed leadership. Time and again the power of collective capacity is observed. When the group is mobilised with focus and specificity, it can accomplish amazing results (Fullan, 2010). Teachers should ultimately shift the conversation from "What was taught?" or "How was it taught?" to questions such as "What was learned?" and "How we can use evidence of learner performance to strengthen our professional practice?" (Du Four & Marzano, 2009:62).

Every District director, Circuit manager, principal and teacher is in a leadership position. The questions to answer by them however are: "What kind of a leader am I and what kind of difference do I make? Do I approach my work as a calling or merely a job? Do I love those I serve or demean them? Do I translate my convictions into purposeful action and challenging goals or settle for the nobleness of my good intentions? Do I continue to learn how to be more effective, or am I satisfied that I know enough? Will I demonstrate a passionate conviction that by working collaboratively I can accomplish great things, or will I succumb to fatalism and cynicism? Will I link my efforts to the hopes and dreams of those I serve, or will I pursue my own agenda? Will I constantly remind those I hope to influence of the significance of the work they do and challenge them to do it well, or will I settle for mediocrity?

Robert Greenleaf (1970) differentiated between what he called leader-first leaders and servant-first leaders. The leader-first leader seeks leadership for personal power and

gain. The servant-first leader begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve to make sure that others' highest priorities are met. May you choose to be a servant leader, and in making that choice, may you develop the capacity of those you serve to carry on your legacy by becoming servant leaders themselves.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix A: Application Letter to DoBE

01 July 2015

The Head: Free State Department of Education

P.O. Box 521

BLOEMFONTEIN

9300

Dear Sir,

This letter serves to confirm that Mr M.S. Mokgobo, student number 212414690, is presently enrolled at the Central University of Technology for a Masters Degree in Education under my supervision.

The title of his dissertation is:

Educational Leadership and Sustainable Learner Academic Performance at Schools in Lejweleputswa Education District: A strategic approach towards improvement of learner results in Exigent Contexts and Changing Times

We request and are of the belief that you will grant him the requisite support in order to successfully conduct the required research in endeavour to complete his Master studies. We intend to provide your Department with a report explaining the outcome of the study.

Sincere Regards
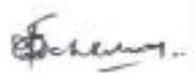
Prof G Schlebusch

HOD: Post Graduate Studies – Education

Faculty of Humanities

Appendix B: Permission Letter from DoBE: Free State

Enquiries: Dr MC Liphapang
Ref: Research Permission MS Mokgobo
Tel. 051 404 9290
Email: maphokal@edu.fs.gov.za

Mr MS Mokgobo
46 Langenhoven
Jan Cillierspark, 9649
Welkom

Dear Mr Mokgobo

APPROVAL TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE FREE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

1. This letter serves as an acknowledgement of receipt of your request to conduct research in the Free State Department of Education.

   Research Topic: Educational Leadership and Sustainable Learner Academic Performance at Schools in Lejweleputswa Education District: A Strategic approach towards improvement of learner results in Exigent Contexts and Changing Times.

   Approval is herewith granted to conduct research in the following schools: See Attached List

   Target Population: Circuit managers, Principals, Subject Advisors, HODs, and Teachers

   Period of research: For three months from the date of signature of this letter. Please note the department does not allow any research to be conducted during the fourth term (quarter) of the academic year.

2. Should you fall behind your schedule by three months to complete your research project in the approved period, you will need to apply for an extension.

3. The approval is subject to the following conditions:

   3.1 The collection of data should not interfere with the normal tuition time or teaching process.

   3.2 A bound copy of the research document should be submitted to the Free State Department of Education, Room 319, 3rd Floor, Old CNA Building, Charlotte Maxeke Street, Bloemfontein.

   3.3 You will be expected, on completion of your research study to make a presentation to the relevant stakeholders in the Department.

   3.4 The attached ethics documents must be adhered to in the discourse of your study in our department.

4. Please note that costs relating to all the conditions mentioned above are your own responsibility.

Yours sincerely

DR JEM SEKOLANYANE
CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

DATE: 07/08/2015

Strategic Planning, Policy & Research Directorate
Private Bag X20565, Bloemfontein, 9300 · Room 318, Old CNA Building, 3rd Floor, Charlotte Maxeke Street, Bloemfontein
Tel: (051) 404 9283 / 9221   Fax: (086) 6678 678

Appendix C: Questionnaire to Circuit Managers

No: ___

CENTRAL UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY, FREE STATE
SENTRALE UNIVERSITEIT VIR TEGNOLOGIE, VRYSTAAT
YUNIVESITHI E BOHARENG YA THEKENOLOJI FOREISTATA

Central University of Technology
WELKOM CAMPUS
P O Box 1881
WELKOM
9460

Tel: (057) 910 3572

19 June 2015

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR DETERMINING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP SUPPORT AND LEARNER ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN THE LEJWELEPUTSWA SCHOOL DISTRICT.

Dear Circuit Manager,

CUT is presently conducting a study to determine the views and opinions of Circuit Managers regarding the relationship between educational leadership support and learner academic performance. Please consider participating in the study. Your responses to the questions below are vital in assisting us to determine the status of educational leadership support in relation to learner academic performance in Lejweleputswa education district. All information will be regarded as CONFIDENTIAL, and no personal details of any respondent will be mentioned in the findings, nor will any results be related to any particular school or subject. Although the research report will be published, it will contain figures, percentages and deductions based on the analysis and interpretation of the data provided without identifying any respondent personally.

_____

Prof G Schlebusch
Head of Department
Department of Post Graduate Studies: Education
Faculty of Humanities

SECTION A

DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES

1.1   Gender:

SECTION B

QUESTIONNAIRRE

Listed below are a wide variety of questions. This questionnaire is designed to help us gain a better understanding of the level of support you receive/render from/to school leadership and how you perceive the relationship between educational leadership and learner academic performance in Lejweleputswa education district. Your answers will be kept strictly confidential and will not be identified by any names.

Your valuable input and concern will ultimately determine the success of this study. An aggressive approach is anticipated to empower you as a Circuit Manager to positively contribute to improved learner academic performance in our district and to ultimately receive/render the desired and identified educational leadership support from/to the school leaders/teachers required – at school level as well as district level.

Please indicate your opinion about each of the questions below *in reference to your current situation*. Rate each item as it pertains to you *personally*. Please indicate your opinion/view according to the options of possible answers provided in the blocks and then *elaborate in the space provided below each question*. You can choose more than one option at a time where relevant for each question. *Your valuable input towards the additional comment section below each question is of vital importance – please take the time to complete this section.*

CUT would be grateful in thanking you for your time and interest for your participation in this study.

Question 1: What is your opinion regarding the relationship between educational leadership and academic performance of learners at schools in your circuit?

☐ Strong relationship ☐ Good relationship ☐ Poor relationship ☐ No relationship

Please comment:

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Please motivate your answer to question 1.14 below:

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Question 6: How are learners who are in need of academic support identified by SMT and teachers in your circuit?

☐ Informal assessments ☐ Little/no support from parents ☐ Nutritional/basic needs

☐ Show little/no interest in school work ☐ Late coming/Absenteeism ☐ Lack of stationary

Please comment:

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Question 7: How are teachers/HODs/Principals that are in need of academic support/management identified in your circuit?

☐ Intervention strategies ☐ Increased support ☐ Training needs effectively addressed

☐ Show little/no interest in the education process ☐ Late coming/Absenteeism

☐ Lack of skills

Please comment:

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essential? ☐ Effective mentoring ☐ Meaningful workshops ☐ Higher commitment

☐ Intervention and training programmes ☐ More Formal Assessments

P a g e

Please comment:

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CIS Teacher Development Programme (Phase I): Educational Leadership and Learner Academic Performance
2015

Question 8: What is your opinion regarding the importance of developing or embracing a school-based culture of accountability at schools in your circuit?

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Question 9: Why is it necessary to ensure that the academic interventions take place systematically at all your schools within your circuit? What are the benefits of systematically introducing academic interventions at schools within your circuit?

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Question 10: What academic intervention strategies aimed at improving learner academic performance are conducted and implemented in your circuit. Also give your opinion of the success of these interventions.

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Question 11: What is your understanding of instructional and transformational leadership? What do you think are the barriers constraining instructional leadership?

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Question 12: What form of leadership (practice, traitor behaviour) will bring about school improvement and sustain such improvement, given existing conditions, notably school-based management conditions and other related contextual factor? And why that form of leadership?

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Question 13: Which specific district educational leadership responsibilities and initiatives do you believe have an impact on learner academic performance in your circuit and at any school?

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Question 14: What would you consider to be your major challenge as Circuit Manager to improve sustained learner academic performance in your circuit?

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Appendix D: Questionnaire to Subject Advisors

No: ___

CENTRAL UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY, FREE STATE
SENTRALE UNIVERSITEIT VIR TEGNOLOGIE, VRYSTAAT
YUNIVESITHI E BOHARENG YA THEKENOLOJI, FOREISTATA

Central University of Technology
WELKOM CAMPUS
P O Box 1881
WELKOM
9460

Tel: (057) 910 3572

22 June 2015

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR DETERMINING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP SUPPORT AND LEARNER ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN THE LEJWELEPUTSWA SCHOOL DISTRICT.

Dear Subject Advisor,

CUT is presently conducting a study to determine the views and opinions of Subject Advisors regarding the relationship between educational leadership support and learner academic performance. Please consider participating in the study. Your responses to the questions below are vital in assisting us to determine the status of educational leadership support in relation to learner academic performance in Lejweleputswa education district. All information will be regarded as CONFIDENTIAL, and no personal details of any respondent will be mentioned in the findings, nor will any results be related to any particular school or subject. The contents of the survey will not be discussed with your DCES, nor will it be part of the evaluation process. Although the research report will be published, it will contain figures, percentages and deductions based on the analysis and interpretation of the data provided without identifying any respondent personally.

Prof G Schlebusch
Head of Department
Department of Post Graduate Studies: Education
Faculty of Humanities

Machusi Road, Thabeng, Welkom, South Africa, 9459 • www.cut.ac.za • PO Box 1881, Welkom, South Africa, 9460

1 | Page

SECTION A

DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES

1.1 Gender:

☐ Male ☐ Female

1.2 Race group:

☐ Black ☐ Coloured ☐ Indian ☐ White ☐ Other

1.3 Age group:

☐ 20- 25 ☐ 26 - 35 ☐ 36 - 45 ☐ 46 - 55 ☐ 55 +

1.4 Highest qualification:

☐ Matric ☐ Diploma ☐ Bachelor's Degree ☐ Honours Degree

☐ Masters Degree ☐ PhD

1.5 Experience as Subject Advisor:

☐ Below 5 yrs. ☐ 5 yrs and above.

1.6 Socio-economic status of most of the school families at schools would be considered:

☐ Low ☐ Middle ☐ Upper

1.7 Rate the extent to which you as a Subject Advisor experience support from teachers:

☐ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Little support ☐ No support

1.8 Rate the extent to which you as a Subject Advisor experience support from the DCES:

☐ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Little support ☐ No support

1.9 Rate the extent to which you as a Subject Advisor experience support from the school

principal in general:

☐ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Little support ☐ No support

1.10 Rate the extent to which you as a Subject Advisor experience support from colleagues:

☐ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Little support ☐ No support

1.11 How would you describe the overall school climate at the schools you visit:

☐ Very positive ☐ Positive ☐ Acceptable ☐ Negative ☐ Very negative

1.12 How would you rate the teaching environment (school building, classroom and other facilities) at the schools you visit:

☐ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Acceptable ☐ Bad ☐ Totally unacceptable

1.13 Rate the provision of LTSM (Learning/Teaching Support Material) at the schools you visit:

☐ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Acceptable ☐ Bad ☐ Totally unacceptable

1.14 Do you as Subject Advisor feel empowered to promote effective teaching and learning at the schools/teachers assigned to you: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Please motivate your answer to question 1.14 below:

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1.15 Describe your present feelings about the education profession:

☐ Very positive ☐ Positive ☐ Neutral ☐ Negative ☐ Very negative

1.16 Do you sometimes consider leaving the education profession? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Please motivate your answer to question 1.16 below:

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SECTION B

QUESTIONNAIRRE

Listed below are a wide variety of questions. This questionnaire is designed to help us gain a better understanding of the level of support you receive/render from/to school leadership and how you perceive the relationship between educational leadership and learner academic performance in Lejweleputswa education district. Your answers will be kept strictly confidential and will not be identified by any names.

Your valuable input and concern will ultimately determine the success of this study. An aggressive approach is anticipated to empower you as a Subject Advisor to positively contribute to improved learner academic performance in our district and to ultimately receive/render the desired and identified educational leadership support from/to the school leaders/teachers required – at school level as well as district level.

Please indicate your opinion about each of the questions below *in reference to your current situation.* Rate each item as it pertains to you *personally*. Please indicate your opinion/view according to the options of possible answers provided in the blocks and then *elaborate in the space provided below each question.* You can choose more than one option at a time where relevant for each question. *Your valuable input towards the additional comment section below each question is of vital importance – please take the time to complete this section.*

CUT would be grateful in thanking you for your time and interest for your participation in this study.

Question 1: What is your opinion regarding the relationship between educational leadership and academic performance of learners in your subject at any school?

☐ Strong relationship ☐ Good relationship ☐ Poor relationship ☐ No relationship

Please comment:

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Question 2: What elements of leadership support received from your DCES will empower you to improve learner academic performance in your subject?

☐ Further training provided ☐ Dedicated and sustained support ☐ Contingent reward

☐ Good and professional relationships ☐ Positive attitude and mentoring ☐ Inspiration

Please comment:

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Question 3: What can you as a Subject Advisor do to ensure learner academic performance improves in your subject?

☐ More Informal assessments ☐ Error analysis ☐ Patience with learners/teachers

☐ Rewarding learners/teachers for good performance ☐ Varied teaching strategies

Please comment:

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Question 4: How will you know if each teacher in your subject has acquired the required content knowledge and concepts in the subject he/she is teaching, accompanied by the necessary skills, values and attitudes the CAPS document has deemed essential?

☐ Effective mentoring   ☐ Meaningful workshops

☐ Intervention and training programmes   ☐ More Formal Assessments

Please comment:

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Question 5: How are learners who are in need of academic support identified by teachers in your subject?

☐ Informal assessments   ☐ Little/no support from parents   ☐ Nutritional/basic needs

☐ Show little/no interest in school work   ☐ Late coming/Absenteeism   ☐ Lack of stationary

Please comment:

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Question 6: How are teachers who are in need of academic support identified in your subject?

☐ Informal assessments   ☐ Little/no support from HOD   ☐ Training needs

☐ Show little/no interest in teaching   ☐ Late coming/Absenteeism   ☐ Lack of stationary

Please comment:

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Question 7: What academic intervention strategies aimed at improving learner academic performance are conducted and implemented in your subject. Also give your opinion of the success of these interventions.

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Question 8: Which educational leadership factors/roles do you believe have an impact on learner academic performance at any school?

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Appendix E: Questionnaire to Principals

CIS Teacher Development Programme (Phase I): School Leadership and Learner Academic Performance
2015

No: ___

Central University of Technology
WELKOM CAMPUS
P O Box 1881
WELKOM
9460

Tel: (057) 910 3572

22 June 2015

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR DETERMINING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP SUPPORT AND LEARNER ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN THE LEJWELEPUTSWA SCHOOL DISTRICT.

Dear Principal,

CUT is presently conducting a study to determine the views and opinions of principals regarding the relationship between educational leadership support and learner academic performance. Please consider participating in the study. Your responses to the questions below are vital in assisting us to determine the status of educational leadership support in relation to learner academic performance in Lejweleputswa education district. All information will be regarded as CONFIDENTIAL, and no personal details of any respondent will be mentioned in the findings, nor will any results be related to any particular school or subject. The contents of the survey will not be discussed with the district, nor will it be part of the evaluation process. Although the research report will be published, it will contain figures, percentages and deductions based on the analysis and interpretation of the data provided without identifying any respondent personally.
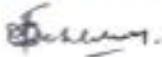
Prof G Schlebusch
Head of Department
Department of Post Graduate Studies: Education
Faculty of Humanities

CIS Teacher Development Programme (Phase I): School Leadership and Learner Academic Performance
2015

SECTION A

DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES

1.1   Gender:
☐ Male   ☐ Female

1.2   Race group:
☐ Black   ☐ Coloured   ☐ Indian   ☐ White   ☐ Other

1.3   Age group:
☐ 20- 25   ☐ 26 - 35   ☐ 36 - 45   ☐ 46 - 55   ☐ 55 +

1.4   Highest qualification:
☐ Matric   ☐ Diploma   ☐ Bachelor's Degree   ☐ Honours Degree
☐ Masters Degree   ☐ PhD

1.5   Experience as principal:
☐ Below 5 yrs.   ☐ 5 yrs and above.

1.6   Socio-economic status of the school families at your school would be considered:
☐ Low   ☐ Middle   ☐ Upper

1.7   Rate the extent to which you as a principal experience support from teachers:
☐ Excellent   ☐ Good   ☐ Little support   ☐ No support

1.8   Rate the extent to which you as a principal experience support from the Circuit Managers:
☐ Excellent   ☐ Good   ☐ Little support   ☐ No support

1.9   Rate the extent to which you as a principal experience support from the district:
☐ Excellent   ☐ Good   ☐ Little support   ☐ No support

1.10   Rate the extent to which you as a principal experience support from parents:
☐ Excellent   ☐ Good   ☐ Little support   ☐ No support

1.11   How would you describe the overall school climate at the school you manage:
☐ Very positive   ☐ Positive   ☐ Acceptable   ☐ Negative   ☐ Very negative

1.12 How would you rate the teaching environment (school building, classroom and other facilities) at your school:

☐ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Acceptable ☐ Bad ☐ Totally unacceptable

1.13 Rate the provision of LTSM (Learning/Teaching Support Material) at your school:

☐ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Acceptable ☐ Bad ☐ Totally unacceptable

1.14 Do you as principal feel empowered to promote effective teaching and learning amongst the HODs and teachers assigned to you? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Please motivate your answer to question 1.14 below:

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1. 15 Describe your present feelings about the education profession:

☐ Very positive ☐ Positive ☐ Neutral ☐ Negative ☐ Very negative

1.16 Do you sometimes consider leaving the education profession? Yes No

Please motivate your answer to question 1.16 below: ☐ ☐

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SECTION B

QUESTIONNAIRRE

Listed below are a wide variety of questions. This questionnaire is designed to help us gain a better understanding of the level of support you receive/render from/to school leadership and how you perceive the relationship between educational leadership and learner academic performance in Lejweleputswa education district. Your answers will be kept strictly confidential and will not be identified by any names.

Your valuable input and concern will ultimately determine the success of this study. An aggressive approach is anticipated to empower you as a principal to positively contribute to improved learner academic performance in our district and to ultimately receive/render the desired and identified educational leadership support from/to the school leaders/teachers required – at school level as well as district level.

Please indicate your opinion about each of the questions below *in reference to your current situation*. Rate each item as it pertains to you *personally*. Please indicate your opinion/view according to the options of possible answers provided in the blocks and then *elaborate in the space provided below each question*. You can choose more than one option at a time where relevant for each question. *Your valuable input towards the additional comment section below each question is of vital importance – please take the time to complete this section.*

CUT would be grateful in thanking you for your time and interest for your participation in this study.

Question 1: What is your opinion regarding the relationship between educational leadership and academic performance of learners at your school?

☐ Strong relationship ☐ Good relationship ☐ Poor relationship ☐ No relationship

Please comment:

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Question 2: What elements of leadership support received from your Circuit Manager will empower you to improve learner academic performance in your school?

☐ Further training provided ☐ Dedicated and sustained support ☐ Contingent reward

☐ Good and professional relationships ☐ Positive attitude and mentoring ☐ Inspiration

Please comment:

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Question 3: What can you as a principal do to ensure learner academic performance improves in your school?

☐ More Informal assessments ☐ Error analysis ☐ Patience with learners/teachers

☐ Rewarding learners/teachers for good performance ☐ Varied teaching strategies

Please comment:

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Question 4: How will you know if each teacher in your school has acquired the required content knowledge and concepts in the subject he/she is teaching, accompanied by the necessary skills, values and attitudes the CAPS document has deemed essential?

☐ Effective mentoring ☐ Meaningful workshops

☐ Intervention and training programmes ☐ More Formal Assessments

Please comment:

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Question 5: How are learners who are in need of academic support identified by teachers in your school?

☐ Informal assessments ☐ Little/no support from parents ☐ Nutritional/basic needs

☐ Show little/no interest in school work ☐ Late coming/Absenteeism ☐ Lack of stationary

Please comment:

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Question 6: How are teachers who are in need of academic support identified in your subject?

☐ Informal assessments   ☐ Little/no support from HOD   ☐ Training needs

☐ Show little/no interest in teaching   ☐ Late coming/Absenteeism   ☐ Lack of stationary

Please comment:

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Question 7: Which educational leadership factors/roles do you believe have an impact on learner academic performance at your school?

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Question 8: What would you consider to be your major challenges as the academic leader of the school to improve and sustain learner performance?

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Question 9: How do you think learner achievement and learning outcomes can be optimised at your school?

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Question 10: Please comment in detail on the relationship between district-level administrative actions and learner academic achievement?

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Question 11: What do you think will be the benefits for educators to expand beyond their current group knowledge to learn from and use outside trusted sources of information to empower themselves?

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Question 12: What is your opinion regarding current trends of professional and academic development of educators within your school?

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Question 13: When do you consider it necessary to initiate academic intervention at your school?

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Question 14: **What academic intervention strategies aimed at improving learner academic performance are conducted and implemented at your school. Also give your opinion of the success of these interventions.**

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Question 15: **What measures do you need to have/put in place to ensure that learners assigned to academic intervention reap the intended benefits of such intervention?**

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Question 16: Why is it critical for you as principal to use an ongoing cycle of continuous improvement to reflect on and share both positive and negative outcomes of such interventions?

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Question 17: What is your opinion regarding the importance of developing or embracing a school-based culture of accountability at your school?

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Question 18: What is your understanding of instructional and transformational leadership? And what do you think are the barriers constraining instructional leadership?

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Question 19: What form of leadership (practice, traitor behaviour) will bring about school improvement and sustain such improvement, given existing conditions, notably school-based management conditions and other related contextual factor? And why that form of leadership?

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Appendix E: Questionnaire to HODs

CENTRAL UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY, FREE STATE
SENTRALE UNIVERSITEIT VIR TEGNOLOGIE, VRYSTAAT
YUNIVESITHI E BOHARENG YA THEKSINOLOJI, FOREISTATA

Central University of Technology
WELKOM CAMPUS
P O Box 1881
WELKOM
9460

Tel: (057) 910 3572

22 June 2015

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR DETERMINING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP SUPPORT AND LEARNER ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN THE LEJWELEPUTSWA SCHOOL DISTRICT.

Dear HOD,

CUT is presently conducting a study to determine the views and opinions of HODs regarding the relationship between educational leadership support and learner academic performance. Please consider participating in the study. Your responses to the questions below are vital in assisting us to determine the status of educational leadership support in relation to learner academic performance in Lejweleputswa education district. All information will be regarded as CONFIDENTIAL, and no personal details of any respondent will be mentioned in the findings, nor will any results be related to any particular school or subject. The contents of the survey will not be discussed with your principal, nor will it be part of the evaluation process. Although the research report will be published, it will contain figures, percentages and deductions based on the analysis and interpretation of the data provided without identifying any respondent personally.

Prof G Schlebusch
Head of Department
Department of Post Graduate Studies: Education
Faculty of Humanities

Mathusi Road, Thabong, Welkom, South Africa, 9459   •   www.cut.ac.za   •   PO Box 1881, Welkom, South Africa, 9460

SECTION A

DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES

1.1 Gender:

☐ Male ☐ Female

1.2 Race group:

☐ Black ☐ Coloured ☐ Indian ☐ White ☐ Other

1.3 Age group:

☐ 20- 25 ☐ 26 – 35 ☐ 36 – 45 ☐ 46 – 55 ☐ 55 +

1.4 Highest qualification:

☐ Matric ☐ Diploma ☐ Bachelor's Degree ☐ Honours Degree

☐ Masters Degree ☐ PhD

1.5 Experience as teacher:

☐ Below 5 yrs. ☐ 5 yrs and above.

1.6 Experience as HOD:

☐ Below 5 yrs. ☐ 5 yrs and above.

1.7 Socio-economic status of the school families at your school would be considered:

☐ Low ☐ Middle ☐ Upper

1.8 Rate the extent to which you as a HOD experience support from teachers:

☐ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Little support ☐ No support

1.9 Rate the extent to which you as a HOD experience support from the Subject Advisors:

☐ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Little support ☐ No support

1.10 Rate the extent to which you as a HOD experience support from the school principal:

☐ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Little support ☐ No support

1.11 Rate the extent to which you as a HOD experience support from colleagues:

☐ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Little support ☐ No support

1.12 How would you describe the overall school climate at the school you teach:

☐ Very positive ☐ Positive ☐ Acceptable ☐ Negative ☐ Very negative

1.13 How would you rate the teaching environment (school building, classroom and other facilities) at your school:

☐ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Acceptable ☐ Bad ☐ Totally unacceptable

1.14 Rate the provision of LTSM (Learning/Teaching Support Material) at your school:

☐ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Acceptable ☐ Bad ☐ Totally unacceptable

1.15 Do you as HOD feel empowered to promote effective teaching and learning amongst the teachers assigned to you and the learners you teach? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Please motivate your answer to question 1.15 below:

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1.16 Describe your present feelings about the education profession:

☐ Very positive ☐ Positive ☐ Neutral ☐ Negative ☐ Very negative

1.17 Do you sometimes consider leaving the education profession? Yes No

Please motivate your answer to question 1.17 below: ☐ ☐

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SECTION B

QUESTIONNAIRRE

Listed below are a wide variety of questions. This questionnaire is designed to help us gain a better understanding of the level of support you receive/render from/to school leadership and how you perceive the relationship between educational leadership and learner academic performance in Lejweleputswa education district. Your answers will be kept strictly confidential and will not be identified by any names.

Your valuable input and concern will ultimately determine the success of this study. An aggressive approach is anticipated to empower you as a HOD to positively contribute to improved learner academic performance in our district and to ultimately receive/render the desired and identified educational leadership support from/to the school leaders/teachers required – at school level as well as district level.

Please indicate your opinion about each of the questions below *in reference to your current situation*. Rate each item as it pertains to you *personally*. Please indicate your opinion/view according to the options of possible answers provided in the blocks and then *elaborate in the space provided below each question*. You can choose more than one option at a time where relevant for each question. *Your valuable input towards the additional comment section below each question is of vital importance – please take the time to complete this section.*

CUT would be grateful in thanking you for your time and interest for your participation in this study.

Question 1: What is your opinion regarding the relationship between educational leadership and academic performance of learners at your school?

☐ Strong relationship ☐ Good relationship ☐ Poor relationship ☐ No relationship

Please comment:

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Question 2: What elements of leadership support received from your principal will empower you to improve learner academic performance in your subject?

☐ Further training provided   ☐ Dedicated and sustained support   ☐ Contingent reward

☐ Good and professional relationships   ☐ Positive attitude and mentoring   ☐ Inspiration

Please comment:

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Question 3: What can you as a HOD do to ensure learner academic performance improves in your subject?

☐ More Informal assessments   ☐ Error analysis   ☐ Patience with learners/teachers

☐ Rewarding learners/teachers for good performance   ☐ Varied teaching strategies

Please comment:

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Question 4: How will you know if each teacher in your subject has acquired the required content knowledge and concepts in the subject he/she is teaching, accompanied by the necessary skills, values and attitudes the CAPS document has deemed essential?

☐ Effective mentoring ☐ Meaningful workshops

☐ Intervention and training programmes ☐ More Formal Assessments

Please comment:

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Question 5: How are learners who are in need of academic support identified by teachers in your subject?

☐ Informal assessments ☐ Little/no support from parents ☐ Nutritional/basic needs

☐ Show little/no interest in school work ☐ Late coming/Absenteeism ☐ Lack of stationary

Please comment:

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Question 6: How are teachers who are in need of academic support identified in your subject?

☐ Informal assessments ☐ Little/no support from HOD ☐ Training needs

☐ Show little/no interest in teaching ☐ Late coming/Absenteeism ☐ Lack of stationary

Please comment:

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Question 7: How do you think learner achievement and learning outcomes can be optimised at your school?

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Question 8: Why is it important for you as HOD to consider underperformance as an opportunity to make improvements in the next planning phase of teaching?

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Question 9: What do you think will be the benefits for educators to expand beyond their current group knowledge to learn from and use outside trusted sources of information to empower themselves?

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Question 10: What academic intervention strategies aimed at improving learner academic performance are conducted and implemented in your subject. Also give your opinion of the success of these interventions.

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Question 11: What measures do you need to have/put in place to ensure that learners assigned to academic intervention reap the intended benefits of such intervention?

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Question 12: Why is it critical for you as HOD to use an ongoing cycle of continuous improvement to reflect on and share both positive and negative outcomes of such interventions?

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Question 13: Which educational leadership factors/roles do you believe have an impact on learner academic performance at your school?

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Question 14: What is your opinion regarding the importance of developing or embracing a school-based culture of accountability at your school?

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Question 15: What form of leadership (practice, traitor behaviour) will bring about school improvement and sustain such improvement, given existing conditions, notably school-based management conditions and other related contextual factor? And why that form of leadership?

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Appendix F: Questionnaire to Teachers

No: ___

CENTRAL UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY, FREE STATE
SENTRALE UNIVERSITEIT VIR TEGNOLOGIE, VRYSTAAT
YUNIVESITHI E BONARENG YA THEKENOLOJI, FOREISTATA

Central University of Technology
WELKOM CAMPUS
P O Box 1881
WELKOM
9460

Tel: (057) 910 3572

22 June 2015

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR DETERMINING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOL LEADERSHIP SUPPORT AND LEARNER ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN THE LEJWELEPUTSWA SCHOOL DISTRICT.

Dear Teacher,

CUT is presently conducting a study to determine the views and opinions of teachers regarding the relationship between school leadership support and learner academic performance. Please consider participating in the study. Your responses to the questions below are vital in assisting us to determine the status of leadership support in relation to learner academic performance in Lejweleputswa education district. All information will be regarded as CONFIDENTIAL, and no personal details of any respondent will be mentioned in the findings, nor will any results be related to any particular school. The contents of the survey will not be discussed with your principal nor will it be part of the teacher evaluation process. Although the research report will be published, it will contain figures, percentages and deductions based on the analysis and interpretation of the data provided without identifying any respondent personally.

Prof G Schlebusch
Head of Department
Department of Post Graduate Studies: Education
Faculty of Humanities

Methusi Road, Thabong, Welkom, South Africa, 9460 • www.cut.ac.za • PO Box 1881, Welkom, South Africa, 9460

1 | P a g e

SECTION A

DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES

1.1   Gender:

☐ Male   ☐ Female

1.2   Race group:

☐ Black   ☐ Coloured   ☐ Indian   ☐ White   ☐ Other

1.3   Age group:

☐ 20- 25   ☐ 26 - 35   ☐ 36 - 45   ☐ 46 - 55   ☐ 55 +

1.4   Highest qualification:

☐ Matric   ☐ Diploma   ☐ Bachelor's Degree   ☐ Honours Degree

☐ Masters Degree   ☐ PhD

1.5   Teaching experience:

☐ Below 5 yrs.   ☐ 5 yrs and above.

1.6   Socio-economic status of most of the school families would be considered:

☐ Low   ☐ Middle   ☐ Upper

1.7   Average class size:

☐ Below 20   ☐ 20 – 30   ☐ 30 – 40   ☐ 40 +

1.8   Describe the type of learner you teach with regard to manners and discipline:

☐ Excellent   ☐ Good   ☐ Acceptable   ☐ Bad   ☐ Totally unacceptable

1.9   Rate the extent to which you as a teacher experience support from parents:

☐ Excellent   ☐ Good   ☐ Little support   ☐ No support

1.10   Rate the extent to which you as a teacher experience support from the HOD:

☐ Excellent   ☐ Good   ☐ Little support   ☐ No support

1.11   Rate the extent to which you as a teacher experience support from the principal:

☐ Excellent   ☐ Good   ☐ Little support   ☐ No support

1.12   Rate the extent to which you as a teacher experience support from your Subject Advisor:

☐ Excellent   ☐ Good   ☐ Little support   ☐ No support

1.13   Rate the extent to which you as a teacher experience support from colleagues:

☐ Excellent   ☐ Good   ☐ Little support   ☐ No support

1.14   How would you describe the overall school climate at your school:

☐ Very positive   ☐ Positive   ☐ Acceptable   ☐ Negative   ☐ Very negative

1.15   How would you rate the teaching environment (school building, classroom and other facilities) at you school:

☐ Excellent   ☐ Good   ☐ Acceptable   ☐ Bad   ☐ Totally unacceptable

1.16   Rate the provision of LTSM (Learning/Teaching Support Material) at your school:

☐ Excellent   ☐ Good   ☐ Acceptable   ☐ Bad   ☐ Totally unacceptable

1.17   Do you as teacher feel empowered to promote effective teaching and learning at your school:
Yes ☐   No ☐

Please motivate your answer to question 1.17 below:

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1. 18   Describe your present feelings about teaching as a career:

☐ Very positive   ☐ Positive   ☐ Neutral   ☐ Negative   ☐ Very negative

1.19   Do you sometimes consider leaving the teaching profession?   ☐ Yes   ☐ No

Please motivate your answer to question 1.19 below:

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CIS Teacher Development Programme (Phase I): School Leadership and Learner Academic Performance 2015

SECTION B

QUESTIONNAIRRE

Listed below are a wide variety of questions. This questionnaire is designed to help us gain a better understanding of the level of support you receive from school leadership and how you perceive the relationship between school leadership and learner academic performance in Lejweleputswa education district. Your answers will be kept strictly confidential and will not be identified by any names.

Your valuable input and concern will ultimately determine the success of this study. An aggressive approach is anticipated to empower you as a teacher to positively contribute to improved learner performance in our district and to ultimately receive the desired and identified leadership support from the educational leaders required – at school level as well as district level.

Please indicate your opinion about each of the questions below *in reference to your current teaching situation*. Rate each item as it pertains to you *personally*. Please indicate your opinion/view according to the options of possible answers provided in the blocks and then *elaborate in the space provided below each question*. You can choose more than one option at a time where relevant for each question. *Your valuable input towards the additional comment section below each question is of vital importance – please take the time to complete this section.*

CUT would be grateful in thanking you for your time and interest for your participation in this study.

Question 1: What is your opinion regarding the relationship between school leadership and academic performance of learners at your school?

☐ Strong relationship ☐ Good relationship ☐ Poor relationship ☐ No relationship

Please comment:

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Question 2: What elements of leadership support received from your Grade leader, HOD and Principal will empower you to improve learner academic performance in your class?

☐ Further training provided   ☐ Dedicated and sustained support   ☐ Contingent reward

☐ Good and professional relationships   ☐ Positive attitude and mentoring   ☐ Inspiration

Please comment:

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Question 3: What can you as teacher do to ensure learner academic performance improves in your classroom?

☐ More Informal assessments   ☐ Error analysis   ☐ Patience with learners

☐ Rewarding learners for good performance   ☐ Varied teaching strategies

Please comment:

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Question 4: How will you know if each learner in your classroom has acquired the required content knowledge and concepts in the subject you are teaching, accompanied by the necessary skills, values and attitudes the CAPS document has deemed essential?

☐ Effective homework given   ☐ Meaningful assessment of homework given

☐ Expanded opportunities provided e.g. projects given   ☐ Formal Assessments

Please comment:

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Question 5: How are learners who are in need of academic support identified in your classroom?

☐ Informal assessments ☐ Little/no support from parents ☐ Nutritional/basic needs

☐ Show little/no interest in school work ☐ Late coming/Absenteeism ☐ Lack of stationary

Please comment:

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Question 6: What academic intervention strategies aimed at improving learner academic performance are conducted and implemented at your school. Also give your opinion of the success of these interventions.

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Question 7: Which school leadership factors/roles do you believe have an impact on learner academic performance at you school?

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