

**EDUCATOR PERCEPTIONS OF THE IMPACT OF THE DEPARTMENTAL MATRIC
INTERVENTION STRATEGIES ON SELECTED UNDER-PERFORMING SCHOOLS IN
THE QUEENSTOWN DISTRICT**

**A THESIS SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
DEGREE OF MASTER OF EDUCATION**

at the

UNIVERSITY OF FORT HARE

by

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the dissertation submitted for the degree of Masters in Education at Fort Hare University is my own original work and as such, it has not been submitted previously to any other institution of higher education or duplicated in whatever manner. I further declare that all sources cited or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged carefully by means of a comprehensive list of references.

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AMOS MZOXOLO MRALI

ABSTRACT

The problem of school under-performance as defined by the level of pass rates of learners in the matric examinations has been a point of educational debate in South Africa for a number of years, especially after the attainment of democracy. In the Eastern Cape, Matric Intervention Strategies (MIS) have been used to address the problem. The aim of this study was to investigate educator perceptions of the impact of the MIS on selected under-performing high schools in the Queenstown District.

Two case study schools classified as consistent under-performers participated in the study. Data was collected through in-depth interviews of key educators in these schools.

There were five main findings. First, educators felt that Departmental intervention strategies had not made any significant improvement in addressing under-performance in the two case study schools. Second, participants saw under-performance by schools as caused by a myriad of factors which include those related to leadership and management at school and district levels and educator and learner factors, as well as teacher union interference. They did not see MIS as being able to address the causes simultaneously. Third, the implementation of the (MIS) at school level was poorly monitored by the Departmental officials. It was reported that under-performing schools were hardly visited and supported by the subject advisors and (MIO)s. Fourth, educators perceived the role of subject advisors to be limited to CASS moderation as they did not provide any developmental support to educators experiencing content gaps. Finally, educators saw the MIS as a money making scheme for certain educators and district officials. They claimed this was linked to corrupt practices during the appointment of tutors. The teachers did not have confidence in the appointment procedures used by the district for tutors.

It can be concluded that the Matric Intervention Strategies in the two schools are not likely to achieve the intended results as long as educators do not think that the strategies are addressing the problems they face. Another conclusion is that the Matric Intervention Strategies are seen as 'quick fix' responses to what are really deep-seated and systemic problems in education.

Given the findings of this study, it is recommended that the impact of Matric Intervention Strategies be the focus of a survey research for which a probability sample must be drawn that can generate findings that are generalisable across the participating target population. For the delivery of the MIS it is recommended that the weaknesses identified by educators of the two schools be further investigated so that new implementation plans can be developed.

KEY WORDS: school performance; intervention strategies; matric pass rates; time-on-task

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ACRONYMS

CASS	- Continuous Assessment
DoE	- Department of Education
EDO	- Education Development Officer
FET	- Further Education and Training
GET	- General Education and Training
HOD	- Head of Department
IQMS	- Integrated Quality Management Systems
LAIS	- Learner Attainment and Improvement Strategy
MEC	- Member of Executive Council
MIO	- Matric Intervention Officers
MIP	- Matric Intervention Programme
MIS	- Matric Intervention Strategy
MoE	- Ministry of Education
NCS	- National Curriculum Statement
NQF	- National Qualifications Framework
NSLA	- National Strategy for Learner Attainment
RSA	- Republic of South Africa
SADTU	- South African Democratic Teachers' Union
SGB	- School Governing Body
SE	- School Effectiveness
SI	- School Improvement
SMT	- School Management Team

LIST OF TABLES

- Table 1.1 Percentage pass of the Queenstown district and number of under-performing schools.
- Table 1.2 Average percentage pass rate of the Queenstown district schools for the past five years.
- Table 1.3 Percentage pass rate of matric learners in the Hewu circuit of Queenstown.
- Table 1.4 National levels of achievement for grade 12.
- Table 3.1 Descriptions of the four paradigms of interpretivism.
- Table 3.2 Resource allocations for Public Ordinary Schools.
- Table 4.1 (a) Distribution of participants by years of teaching experience at current school.
- Table 4.1 (b) Distribution of participants by total years of teaching experience in education.
- Table 4.2 Distribution of principals by years' experience as principal.
- Table 4.3 (a) Distribution of respondents by highest level of academic qualifications.
- Table 4.3 (b) Distribution of respondents according to grades teaching and learning areas.
- Table 4.4 Distribution of respondents according to learner enrolment, number of educators and SMT.
- Table 4.5 Distribution of respondents according to age.

LIST OF FIGURES

- Figure 2.1 Theoretical Model by Scheerens.
- Figure 2.2 Theoretical Model by Sunet al (2007).
- Figure 2.3 National Strategy for Learner Attainment.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	i
ABSTRACT	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
DEDICATION	vi
ACRONYMS	vii
LIST OF TABLES	viii
LIST OF FIGURES	ix
CHAPTER 1	
1.1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY \ CONTEXT	2
1.2.1 Performance of schools in the Queenstown district	4
1.3 MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY	8
1.4 STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM	8
1.5 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY	9
1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY	9
1.7 DEFINITION OF TERMS	10
1.8 METHODOLOGY	11
1.8.1 Orientation of the study	12
1.8.2 Research design	12
1.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS	12
1.10 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY	13
1.11 CHAPTER OUTLINE	13

CHAPTER 2

2.1	INTRODUCTION	14
2.2	UNDERSTANDING SCHOOL PERFORMANCE	14
2.2.1	Global perspectives of school performance	14
2.2.1.1	School performance in terms of model 1 (Standard-Based Approach)	16
2.2.1.2	School performance in terms of model 2 (Value-Added Approach)	17
2.2.2	South African perspective of school performance	18
2.3	THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	22
2.3.1	School Effectiveness (SE)	22
2.3.1.1	Theoretical model by Scheerens	22
2.3.1.2	Relevance of the model by Scheerens to LAIS	25
2.3.2	School Improvement (SI)	27
2.3.2.1	Theoretical model by Sun <i>et al.</i> (2007)	28
2.3.2.2	Relevance of the model by Sun <i>et al.</i> to MIP	30
2.4	INTERVENTION STRATEGIES OF DEALING WITH SCHOOL UNDER- PERFORMANCE	33
2.4.1	Perspectives from California	34
2.4.2	Perspectives from England and Canada	35
2.4.3	Perspectives from South Africa	37
2.4.3.1	National Strategy for Learner Attainment	38
2.4.4	Eastern Cape perspectives of raising school performance	40
2.4.4.1	The Matric Intervention Programme (MIP) – The case of the Eastern Cape	41
2.4.4.2	Learner Attainment and Improvement Strategy (LAIS) – The case of the Eastern Cape	43
2.4.4.3	Evaluation of the Matric Intervention Strategy (MIS)	47
2.5	CONCLUSIONS	53

CHAPTER 3

3.1	INTRODUCTION	54
3.2	ORIENTATION TO THE RESEARCH	54
3.2.1	Approach to the study	56

3.3	RESEARCH DESIGN	56
3.3.1	Case study.....	57
3.3.2	Case selection	58
3.3.3	Case description	60
3.3.3.1	School A	60
3.3.3.2	School B	61
3.4	PILOTING.....	63
3.5	METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION	64
3.5.1	Interviews as a research technique	64
3.5.2	Document analysis and records review	66
3.5.3	Field notes.....	67
3.6	RESEARCH RIGOUR	68
3.6.1	Ethical measures.....	68
3.6.2	Measures to ensure trustworthiness	69
3.6.3	Ensuring validity.....	72
3.7	CONCLUSIONS	73

CHAPTER 4

4.0	INTRODUCTION	74
4.1	PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS.....	74
4.2	THEMATIC ANALYSIS.....	81
4.2.1	Feelings of respondents about the performance of their schools in the 2010 matric examinations	81
4.2.2	Underlying causes cited by respondents for school under-performance.....	82
4.2.2.1	Problems related to educators	82
4.2.2.1.1	Inadequate number of educators as per post establishment.....	82
4.2.2.1.2	Educator absenteeism	85
4.2.2.1.3	Impact of educator unions.....	87
4.2.2.1.4	Content gaps experienced by some educators	88
4.2.2.1.5	Lack of support from the DoE	91
4.2.2.2	Problems related to learners	94
4.2.2.2.1	Learner absenteeism	94
4.2.2.2.2	Problems around scholar transport	95
4.2.2.2.3	Lack of interest in education and setting of goals.....	96
4.2.2.2.4	Impact of socio-economic problems on learner performance.....	97
4.2.3	Leadership and management problems.....	98

4.2.3.1 Management problems and conflicts within management.....	99
4.2.3.2 Lack of management and administrative skills.....	100
4.2.4 Intervention strategies made by the school to improve school performance.....	102
4.2.4.1 Extra classes and incubation classes.....	102
4.2.4.2 Twinning with other schools which perform better.....	104
4.2.5 Perceptions of educators about MIP and LAIS to address under-performance in their schools.....	105
4.2.5.1 Attitude of educators towards these strategies.....	105
4.2.5.2 Impact of these strategies in dealing with under-performance.....	107
4.2.6 Attitude of respondents on school visits.....	110
4.2.6.1 The effectiveness of school visits.....	110
4.2.6.2 Lack of support given by subject advisors and matric intervention officers (MIO).....	112
4.2.7 DOCUMENT ANALYSIS AND REVIEW.....	113
4.3 CONCLUSIONS.....	113

CHAPTER 5

5.1 INTRODUCTION.....	114
5.2 STANDARD-BASED VERSUS VALUE-ADDED APPROACH IN MIP AND LAIS.....	114
5.3 CAPACITY PROBLEMS AT DISTRICT AND SCHOOL LEVELS.....	117
5.3.1 Shortage of Matric Intervention Officers (MIO's).....	117
5.3.2 Lack of competency of MIO's in supporting and monitoring schools.....	118
5.3.3 Poor co-ordination of MIP and LAIS.....	119
5.4 EDUCATOR ABSENTEEISM.....	119
5.5 IMPACT OF ACTIVITIES OF EDUCATOR UNIONS.....	122
5.6 LACK OF PARENTAL SUPPORT.....	124
5.7 BEYOND QUICK FIXES: TACKLING POOR PERFORMANCE IN SCHOOLS.....	126

5.8.1	CONCLUSION.....	128
CHAPTER 6		
6.1	INTRODUCTION.....	129
6.2	SUMMARY OF MAIN IDEAS OF THE STUDY.....	129
6.3	SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS.....	130
6.3.1	Impact of departmental matric intervention strategies in addressing under-performance in schools.....	130
6.3.2	Myriad of factors contributing to under-performance of schools and low matric pass rate.....	131
6.3.3	Capacity problems at district and school levels have compromised the efficacy of the Matric Intervention Strategies in schools.....	131
6.3.4	Poor Implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Matric Intervention Strategies in schools.....	132
6.3.5	MIP programme was commercialised to benefit district co-ordinators and educators appointed as tutors.....	132
6.4	CONCLUSIONS.....	133
6.5	THE POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY.....	133
6.6	RECOMMENDATIONS.....	133
6.6.1	For further research.....	133
6.6.2	For the delivery of MIS.....	134
7.	REFERENCES.....	135
8.	APPENDICES.....	143
8.1	Annexure 1-Application to the SG and District director to conduct the Study.....	143
8.2	Annexure 2- Permission granted by SG to do research.....	144
8.3	Annexure 3-Application to the school principals.....	146
8.4	Annexure 4-Interview schedule for educators.....	147
8.5	Annexure 5-Interview schedule for principals.....	151
8.6	Annexure 6-Data set/transcript of interviews.....	156
8.7	Annexure 7-Specimen of the interview.....	165

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In South Africa, 'school performance' is judged by learner achievement in public examination such as the Matriculation Examination (matric). It is assumed that under-performing schools are characterised by 'under-achievement' of learners, defined as those who fail to obtain an achievement rating 'L2', that is, below 30 percent in their various learning areas. It must, however, be noted that different countries worldwide employ different methods or techniques of determining school performance. The interest of this study is on strategies used in the Eastern Cape Province to deal with the problem of under-performance of schools. The strategies are called, the Matric Intervention Programme (MIP) and the Learner Attainment and Improvement Strategy (LAIS). The focus was in one area of the Queenstown District in the Eastern Cape.

The problem of under-performing schools is a worldwide phenomenon, which has attracted a lot of debate from both politicians and educationists and strategies for addressing the problem have been developed, especially in the Eastern Cape Province. This has created the impression that any form of under-performance is associated with the historically disadvantaged schools. According to the Eastern Cape Department of Education (2010), the constant dismal performance of matric classes over the years is a perennial problem which seems to defy all solutions and strategies that the Department of Education has devised so far. The Eastern Cape Education Department (2010) further argues that school under-performance seems to be an intractable problem that has preoccupied stakeholders and education practitioners alike in the Eastern Cape Province.

The biggest challenge facing Districts and schools in the Eastern Cape is how to raise achievement levels of learners in under-performing high schools with a view to improving their performance and thus reducing the number of struggling schools. Masitsa (2004) supports this view by arguing that for more than a decade there has been serious concern about the high failure rate among township matriculants, which manifested itself in a number of ways like, a high drop-out rate and lack of motivation among learners. In an effort to address these problems, the Department of Education introduced various interventions over time like instilling a culture of effective teaching which starts at the beginning of the academic year and regular attendance of school by educators and learners (Department of Education:2004).

1.2 BACKGROUND\ CONTEXT

In 1996, the Matric Intervention Programme (MIP) was developed in the Eastern Cape Province as an intervention strategy to turn the situation around regarding poor matric results (Eastern Cape Department of Education, 2011). According to the Eastern Cape Department of Education (2006), the MIP did not lead to any significant improvement of the matric results such that in 2005 the number of under-performing schools in the Queenstown District was worse than in 2004. In 2008, some amendments were made to the MIP programme and thus, the Learner Attainment and Improvement Strategy (LAIS) was formed with compulsory common exams for grades 3,6,9 and 12. (*ibid:2011*).

According to the Department of Education (2007), the Eastern Cape Province had 496 under-performing schools based on the 2009 matric results, most of which come from the Queenstown District where this study was undertaken. The increase in the number of under-performing schools is so worrying that the Eastern Cape Department of Education (2010: 2) has contended that,

Public Education and the schooling system of the Eastern Cape Province has experienced consistent instability over the past years which manifested itself in

school dysfunctionality, underperformance, high vacancy rates and poor implementation of the New Curriculum Statements (NCS)". "The most glaring indicator of this gloomy scenario has been the constant dismal performance of our matric results over the years. (2010:2)

Masitsa (2004: 214) argues in this regard that, "under-achievement is a universal problem experienced in every educational institution." Rich *et al* (2006), argue that the economic and social consequences for students who fail to obtain senior certificate are far-reaching and onerous and they lead to reduced through-put of students.

The Department of Education in the Eastern Cape Province remains committed to the ideal of rendering a quality education service that meets the expectations of the entire community in the Province in line with the South African School's Act but in terms of the education outcomes, this pursued ideal has remained unattainable (Eastern Cape Department of Education, 2010). According to Plewis (1991), the concept of 'under-performance' lacks a universally agreed and applied definition but in spite of its problematic nature, 'under-performance' in the South African context is used to judge and measure schools that are productive and those that are not so productive as determined by their matric results. It is assumed that under-performing schools are characterised by 'under-achievement' of learners, defined as those who perform below the benchmarks set by examining bodies. It is this downward trend of the matric results in the Eastern Cape Province that has triggered the attention and interest of the researcher to undertake this study in order to investigate the perceptions of educators regarding the impact of the departmental MIP and LAIS in addressing under-performance in the Queenstown District.

In terms of the current demarcation of districts in the Chris Hani District Municipality, the Queenstown District has 43 high schools which can be grouped into three categories namely, rural, urban, semi-urban and township schools. Each district is headed by a District Director\Manager, who in turn accounts to the Chief Director, who is based at the Provincial Head Office. It is also interesting to note that all these under-performing high schools come from the historically disadvantaged communities as shown by the District statistics (Table

1.1) where this study has been undertaken. These are the schools that are struggling at the bottom of the ladder of performance and, despite what can be interpreted as best intentions to help them improve, the problem persists. According to the Queenstown District analysis of grade 12 results from 2005 to 2009, the number of under-performing schools appears to be increasing every year, the statistics of which are shown in Table 1 below.

1.2.1 Performance of schools in the Queenstown District

The Queenstown district office (2011) reports that fifteen high schools scored below 50% in their 2009 and 2010 matric results and the majority of them come from the Hewu circuit which is predominantly rural in nature. The circuit has high schools that are characterised as dysfunctional or under-performing and require remedial attention or urgent intervention. These are the schools which are part of the on-going MIP and LAIS programmes in order to help them improve their school performance. Table 1.1 below shows statistics of under-performing schools in the Queenstown District over a five year period as well as the district pass percentage.

Table 1.1: Percentage Pass of the Queenstown District and number of under-performing schools in the Matric Intervention Programme (MIP)

(Source): Queenstown District office 2005-2009

Year	No. of MIP Schools	District % Pass rate
2009	26	42.25
2008	21	56.93
2007	13	63.6
2006	16	58.38
2005	16	60.64

It can be seen in Table 1.1 that the number of under-performing schools varied every year over the five-year period. The table shows that the matric pass rate in the Queenstown district declined from 60,64% obtained in 2005 to 58,38% in 2006, dropping further to 42.25% in 2009, making it one of the under-performing districts in the country (Eastern Cape Department of Education, 2009).

According to Clarke (2005), performance in 'low performing' schools is likely to move both up and down over relatively short time scales and he then uses the term 'natural variation' to refer to school performance showing this trend. In his explanation of 'natural variation' he says,

...if the baseline is set in a year when performance has been particularly depressed, upward movement may be no more than a reversion to the 'natural' level or trend; conversely, if it set after a 'good' year, it may appear that little or no progress has been made in the following year... .

(Clarke 2005:87)

It can be assumed from this argument that whilst there are schools in the Queenstown District that show some signs of improvement in one year and drop the following year, they are unable to sustain their improvement levels. This is perhaps the reason why there is a fluctuating District Pass Percentage and a number of under-performing schools as shown in table 1 above.

In addition to the data given in the Table 1.1 above, there is also an average percent pass rate of the Queenstown District for the past five years which is given in Table 1.2 of this document and it varies between 32% and 53%. In the Queenstown District, as the profile of performance in Table 1.2 shows, it has hovered around 50% and seemed to be declining in the years 2008 and 2009.

Table 1. 2: Average percent pass rate of the Queenstown District Schools for the past five years calculated from 21 Schools with significant drop in school performance over five years. (Source): Queenstown District Office

Year	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005
Av. % pass rate	32	31	53	50	52

All this occurs despite the fact that these are high schools that are constantly visited and monitored by the Department of Education as part of the implementation of the MIP and LAIS to make them improve their performance.

As can be seen from the data in Table 1.1, the number of under-performing schools appears to be going up instead of dropping, something which also impacts negatively on the District Pass Percentage. Table 1.3 shows percentage pass rate of the Queenstown District schools with most of the schools performing below the District average over a period of five years. Clarke (2005:156) contends that “There is evidence that indicates that schools that are facing challenging circumstances tend to perform at educational levels that are at or below the national average.” There are also consistent under-performers like schools A, B and J which continually perform below the District Average. This is so, despite the fact that the schools now referred to as under-performing are subjected to two Matric Intervention Strategies (MIS) initiated by the Eastern Cape Department of Education. The Member of Executive Council (MEC) for Education contends that:

Numerous attempts to turn the situation around have been less than effective, and the Department continues to explore strategies to make our system of Education work by commissioning studies that deepen our understanding of the phenomenon of rurality, poverty and schooling so that informed interventions are put in place and key barriers to successful teaching and learning are identified:

Eastern Cape Department of Education (2010: 1)

Table1.3: Percentage Pass Rate of Matric Learners in the selected Circuit of the Queenstown District (Source): Queenstown District Office

School	Percentage Pass Rate 2009	Percentage Pass Rate 2008	Percentage Pass Rate 2007	Percentage Pass Rate 2006	Percentage Pass Rate 2005
A	5.71	29.16	22.23	32.26	25.64
B	7.50	28.00	18.60	32.81	32.84
C	23.53	40.90	23.91	24.00	76.32
D	38.75	31.70	32.76	44.86	60.00
E	39.29	31.25	48.84	45.16	49.23
F	28.57	43.75	48.89	38.10	35.07
G	29.17	28.94	64.15	35.29	44.00
H	51.35	12.90	28.89	42.11	40.91
I	12.16	3.70	72.73	42.86	31.92
J	10.00	2.63	43.75	29.63	31.58

As can be seen in Table 1.3, most schools throughout the five-year period performed below 50%. Whilst the number of under-performing schools varies each year and there are cases of schools which improve in one year and drop drastically the following year, there are also consistent under-performers. This is a reflection that, much as certain schools show some degree of improvement in certain years, they are unable to sustain their improvement. Clarke (2005) argues in this regard that schools in historically disadvantaged areas have to work harder at sustaining performance levels than schools in more privileged areas and they have to maintain that effort as success can be short-lived and fragile in difficult or challenging circumstances. Failure to sustain improvement may be due to the fact that there are a number of economic and social problems which make it inevitable for the schools in challenging circumstances to improve learner attainment levels due to the complex nature of variables affecting each one in different ways.

To turn the situation around, LAIS was introduced in 2008 with amendments to the MIP, which had been there since 1996. The amendments included the introduction of common examinations for grades 3, 6, 9 and 12 and common pace-setters for all schools.

1.3 MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

Underperformance of schools is perceived by the public as a social problem that draws down significant sums of public money, it exercises many talented people and yet, time after time, we find that the impact of extended efforts and hard work simply diffuses and the challenges remain evident in the people's daily lives (Clarke, 2005:xii). This suggests that perhaps something is wrong in our approach and in our consequent measure of the effect of our activity with difficult schools or serial under-performers. Notwithstanding the fact that schools in historically disadvantaged areas are faced with a myriad of problems like shortage of qualified teachers for critical subjects, poor facilities, lack of resources and falling learner numbers to mention but a few, the problem faced by the Queenstown District is to get them to the starting line of improvement using the intervention strategies referred to in the Introduction, i.e. the Matric Intervention Programme (MIP) and the Learner Attainment and Improvement Strategy (LAIS) respectively. More research is, therefore, required that explores not only how schools in challenging contexts improve, but rather how they can sustain improvement over time. This is the reason why this study has, as part of its aims, an exploration of the impact of the Departmental Matric Intervention Strategies as turn-around strategies for improvement as perceived by educators.

1.4 STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Official statistics from the Department of Education in Table 1.3 show that despite over five years of Matric Intervention Strategies, targeted schools in one circuit of Queenstown continue to under-perform. This raises the question of the efficacy of these strategies as a way of addressing the problem of school under-performance. It has also meant that the search and quest for the most effective strategy to bring the Province the desired goals continues until the most viable strategy is found that will effectively turn the situation around

(Eastern Cape Department of Education, 2010). A focus on educator perceptions of how the strategies are working on the ground is the concern of this study.

1.4.1 Main Research Question: What do educators in the under-performing schools perceive to be the impact of the Matric Intervention Strategies (MIS) as a way of addressing the problem of learner underperformance?

1.4.2 Sub-research Questions:

1.4.2.1 What do educators think has been the impact of the MIS in the last five years?

1.4.2.2 What do educators perceive to be the pedagogical and professional development roles of MIS officers?

1.3.2.3 What are the implications of educator perceptions of MIS for future practice?

1.5 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to understand educator perceptions of the impact of the Matric Intervention Strategies (MIP and LAIS) in the selected schools.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The significance of this study lies in the fact that the MIS have been conceptualised and implemented in a top-down down fashion. The perspectives of the people on the ground, the educators, who are expected to help learners improve their achievement levels, have not been heard. By focusing on educator perceptions, the study not only gives voice to educators but also provides an opportunity to learn about how the strategies are working

and how they can be improved to achieve the desired ends. Findings of the study should inform the DoE on ways of improving the delivery of MIS in under-performing schools with better implementation plans aimed at improving school performance.

1.7 DEFINITION OF TERMS

- **Under-achievement** – is a situation that arises when learners do not perform according to acceptable levels, that is, those who fail to obtain an achievement rating level 2 to enable them to pass a subject in the South African context. In a nutshell what this means is that one group of learners or another fails to achieve its potential (West and Pennell, 2003:3).
- **School performance** – In South Africa learner achievement in public examinations is used as a yardstick of determining school performance and schools that fail to obtain a 50% pass rate are considered to be under-performing and those that obtain above this rubicon are considered to be performing and this is how schools are ranked in SA such that we have productive and non-productive schools.
- **Learner achievement/attainment** – is a benchmark set by the examining body, like Umalusi in the South African case, which requires that learners in grade 12 must obtain a qualification at level 4 on the National Qualifications Framework in order to get a NCS certificate (Assessment Instruction 13, 2010:1).
- **Matric Intervention Programme (MIP)** – it is the programme designed to increase the yield in the number of candidates going through grade 12 in a year by introducing further learning strategies and opportunities, known as 'intervention opportunities' (Eastern Cape Department of Education, 2000:1).

- **Learner Attainment and Improvement Strategy (LAIS)** – is a programme that was jointly developed by the management and officials of the Department of Education and its stakeholders, and was designed to provide a clear plan for total learner performance and education service delivery improvement, school management renewal and professional development of education managers and educators in the Province of the Eastern Cape (Department of Education, 2010:4).
- **School improvement** – is defined by Hopkins et al in Collins (2007:118) as a distinct approach to educational change that enhances student outcomes as well as strengthening the school's capacity for managing improvement initiatives... .School improvement is about raising student achievement through focusing on the teaching \ learning process and those conditions which support it (Hopkins *et al* 1997:1).

1.8 METHODOLOGY

This was a case study of two schools in one circuit in the Queenstown District of the Eastern Cape, South Africa. The study is anchored within an interpretivist paradigm and the cases were selected on the basis of their consistent under-performance in the matric results. A sample of eight participants from the two case study schools was purposively selected and the details are found in Chapter 3 of this study. Data was collected by means of qualitative approaches employing unstructured and semi-structured interviews together with document analysis. Interviews were conducted on a one to one person basis and tape recorded in a private office provided by the principal to guarantee confidentiality of information. According to Struwig and Stead (2001:59), unstructured (unstandardised) interviews do not have schedules of questions. The interviewer adapts, develops and generates questions as the interview progresses. Data was analysed by identifying emerging themes upon which findings for this study were developed and data quality was achieved by maintaining rigor in terms of the requirements of any scientific research to ensure its validity and reliability. A detailed account of the methodology used in the study is given in Chapter 3.

1.8.1 Orientation of the study

This study was anchored within the interpretivist paradigm because its research is descriptive and holistic in nature. The qualitative approach was used with the help of in-depth interviews. Van Rensburg (2001) defines research orientation as a socio-historical and philosophical compass-bearing, an explanatory bringing-together of key research concepts in relation to each other.

1.8.2 Research design

Babbie and Mouton (2004) define research design as a plan or blueprint of how one intends conducting the research. This is a case study of two schools in the Queenstown District which employed qualitative research methods. The two schools were chosen for this study on the basis of them experiencing the perennial problem of under-performance over five years as reflected in the district analysis and this in spite of them being part of the ongoing MIP and LAIS programme. Struwig and Stead (2001:56) argue that qualitative research generally attempts to understand the issues from the viewpoints of the participants, although the researcher and participants are involved in interpreting data. Another advantage of this technique is that it describes the social setting of the participants so that their views are not isolated from their contexts. The research was carried out in two phases. The first phase was a pilot study which was done two weeks before the interview stage. During the pilot stage, samples of respondents were selected from schools A and B purposively and in-depth interviews were then conducted after permission had been sought from the managers of both schools. The review of documents was also done during the pilot stage to identify the trends in under-performance and their details are in chapter 3.

1.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In undertaking the study the following ethical considerations were observed: permission to conduct the study was sought from the Superintendent-General of the Eastern Cape

Department of Education in writing; furthermore, the researcher adhered to principles of 'informed consent' and confidentiality. In addition, participation was voluntary and informed consent was obtained as request/permission letters were given to participants (see Annexure 1, 2 & 3). The above mentioned ethical considerations are discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

1.10 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This was a case study of two constantly under-performing high schools in the Hewu circuit of the Queenstown district and limited to eight respondents due to time constraints and work commitments of the researcher something which might have led to over-generalisation of under-performance in our schools. However, the in-depth interviews conducted in this study, generated a lot of rich data that can be used as a springboard for further research on the same topic since under-performance is a topical issue in the Eastern Cape Province.

1.11 CHAPTER OUTLINE

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Literature review

Chapter 3: Methodology

Chapter 4: Data analysis

Chapter 5: Discussion of findings

Chapter 6: Summary, conclusions and recommendations

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to present literature reviewed in this study. The chapter is divided into four main sections. The first section focuses on understanding the phenomenon of school performance. It does this by exploring two models, namely, model 1 (Standard Based Approach) and model 2 (Value-Added Approach) which are employed in the UK and their relevance to the South African situation is considered. As the chapter progresses, a theoretical framework that guides this study is presented and is based on two models, namely, School Improvement (SI) and School Effectiveness (SE) and, later on, some intervention strategies of raising school under-performance which are employed by different countries are interrogated with the main focus being on the Eastern Cape Departmental Matric Interventions, namely the Matric Intervention Programme (MIP) and the Learner Attainment and Improvement Strategy (LAIS). The chapter ends by presenting a superficial report done by the Education Leadership Institute in East London regarding the effect of MIP and LAIS on twenty selected high schools which had a pass percentage of 20% and below.

2.2 UNDERSTANDING SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

2.2.1 Global perspectives of school performance

According to Clarke (2005: 80), "The measure of school performance has always been a contested issue." This is because different countries employ different strategies for determining school performance. Clarke goes further to question the appropriateness of the current performance measurements used in England, which fail to provide sufficient context specificity (2005). According to the recent research, the form of measure of performance for those schools in challenging circumstances is particularly troubling because it is based on 'inappropriate yardsticks' that compares them with the more effective schools with very

sharp differences. Clarke uses the term 'challenging circumstances' to describe a discrete set of schools within a society in a process of transition in environments which differ markedly from what might be accepted as tolerable, e.g., shortage of teaching personnel, poor resources and poverty, to mention but a few. The point here is that for these schools to improve their performance, they need to manage change even if it is curriculum-related or has to do with assessment methods in such a manner that any significant improvement shown can be sustained. He therefore suggests the revision and modelling of the current performance measures using a special pedagogic skill and knowledge when developing strategies for raising achievement in 'low performing' schools, (*ibid*).

Kgaile and Morrison (2006), on the other hand, provide some techniques used globally for determining school performance which include, among others, public examination results; tests at different ages; 'league tables' of student performance; university entrance; value-added approaches, and so on. In the UK where these measures of school performance are used, they are often used with data from school inspection. In using input measures, schools carefully need to select students at entry level in order to gain control over the output (the overall school performance) (*ibid*). On the basis of this interplay between input and output variables, schools are held accountable for student performance and then ranked into effective and non-effective schools and this information feeds into determining position in 'league tables'.

In USA, especially California, there is a different approach that is being used to determine school performance and it is based on Academic Performance Index (API) scores to rank public schools that are eligible for state funding. According to Tobias (2004:55), "The 1999 Public Schools Accountability Act (PSAA) in California created an Academic Performance Index (API) for assessing school performance and for ranking all public schools in the state." In conjunction with the PSAA, the Governor's Performance Awards Program (GPAP) was created and its aim was to target schools showing adequate improvement in API scores and thus becoming eligible for state funding. The decision regarding whether or not a given public school is 'awards eligible' is based on two requirements, the accumulation of a minimum API growth of five points and it has met a school-wide API growth target. There

are, of course, other eligibility requirements that public schools have to meet but the two mentioned above are the main ones. According to Tobias, California's rule imposes an implicit penalty on high achieving schools, while schools with low base API's do not have to meet their expected performance to become awards eligible, and schools with initially high APIs need to realize these expectations to receive rewards under the GPAP (*ibid*). The following sub-section explores in detail the two models of determining school performance which are used in the UK.

2.2.1.1 School performance in terms of model 1 (standard-based approach)

According to Clarke (2005), two different models or approaches are currently in play in the UK with respect to public judgements of school performance. Model 1 is based on what is commonly called a 'standard-based' approach where all schools are judged against a single yardstick, such as the percentage of pupils securing five or more A*- C passes at GCSE. This measure is widely recognized as a comparatively 'high' hurdle and owes its origins to the levels of performance to which, in the past, almost all pupils in grammar schools were expected to aspire. Its relevance to schools in disadvantaged circumstances is more limited. This model takes little or no account of the context of schools and its relevance to schools in disadvantaged circumstances is limited (*ibid*). This model is not without criticism because it seeks to compare the performance of schools from disadvantaged areas with schools in more affluent areas, which differ remarkably based on one single criterion. Downey *et al* (2008) in his critique of the standard-based approach in the United States goes even further to say that achievement-based evaluation is biased against schools that serve the disadvantaged and this has the potential of undermining the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) goal of reducing racial/ethnic and socio-economic gaps in performance. Another model is used in the UK and its focus is on mechanisms of adding value to the quality of the education system through assessments provided and hence its name, the value-added approach.

2.2.1.2 School performance in terms of model 2 (value-added approach)

Clarke (2005) argues that this model takes into account pupils' starting points and tries to identify the contributions schools make to their pupils' progress over time. This is the reason why this study is proposing a consideration of the school improvement (SI) theory as a model to be tried by the Eastern Cape Department of Education because the SI focuses on the journey to success and the necessary conditions to support successful change. What this means, in a nutshell, is that model 2 considers the social context of the school and other factors known to affect pupil progress, and all these are built into the analysis which aims at creating as close a series of comparisons between schools serving 'similar' pupil populations as possible. The argument advanced by Clarke in relation to this model is one that suggests that any attempt to improve achievement levels in low-performing schools, must take into account the contextual factors affecting the schools if they are to succeed. According to Downey *et al* (2008) schools that serve children with initially high achievement would be challenged to raise students' performance even further, while schools that serve disadvantaged students could be deemed "effective" if the students made substantial progress from an initially low achievement level, even if their final achievement level was still low. This argument is trying to strengthen the position that there is no way by which context of schools could be ignored when implementing either school improvement (SI) or school effectiveness theories (SE).

According to Downey *et al*, it is attractive to hold schools accountable for their performance, but it must also be noted that schools that fall into the category of "failing" cannot simply be evaluated equitably with successful schools because children's cognitive development is a function of exposure to multiple social contexts (*ibid*). The same goes with the two intervention strategies, namely MIP and LAIS, that for them to be successful the achievement levels of learners in different schools must be taken into account together with the context of schools.

Presently, in the Eastern Cape, all schools that have an overall pass percentage of below 60% are categorised as under-performing and they become subjected to compulsory

common examinations as part of the implementation of the two departmental matric intervention strategies. The contextual factors that might have led to the decline in school performance are not considered (Eastern Cape Department of Education, 2006). If the performance of South African schools were to be judged by the value-added approach, schools situated in more affluent areas (ex-model C) would write a separate exam than the one set for rural and township schools as an acknowledgement of the disparities that exist which were caused by different departments that were there before democratic rule. According to the SADTU (2012), the South African Democratic Teachers' Union (SADTU) argued that it would oppose any evaluation contracts for principals and teachers until such time that schools were at an equal level and properly resourced.

2.2.2 South African perspective of school performance

The South African approach to school performance appears to be influenced by a combination of ideas from model 1 and model 2. This combination can be seen analytically in terms of a continuum. On the one hand, there are standard-based reforms like compulsory examinations for all MIP schools and, on the other hand, there are strategies that are in place to add value to the quality of results at matric level and this is a feature of the value-added approach. However, South Africa appears to be influenced by ideas from model 1 (standard-based approach) because school performance country-wide is based on the acquisition of a National Senior Certificate (NSC) at matric level and this, in simple terms, means that matric results are used as a yardstick for determining school performance. In South Africa, school performance is judged by learner achievement in public examinations such as the matric. According to the Government Gazette of the Republic of South Africa, number 27819 (2005), promotion and certification requirements for NSC are based on internal assessment, which counts 25% of the continuous assessment (CASS), and on external assessment which counts for 75%, and a promotion mark out of 100% is then calculated. In terms of this Gazette, a learner must register for a minimum of seven subjects, and obtain 40% in three subjects, one of which must be a mother tongue language, and obtain 30% in four other subjects. The performance of schools is then determined by the overall percentage received by the school in the matric

examinations. Under-achieving schools are those that obtain an aggregate percentage of below 60%. The national levels of achievement used in the Further Education and Training (FET) band are shown in table 2.1 below.

Table 2.1: National levels of achievement for grade 10-12 (Source): Assessment instruction 13 of 2010

Percentage	Level\achievement rating
0-29 %	L1 (not achieved)
30-39 %	L2 (elementary achievement)
40-49 %	L3 (moderate achievement)
50-59 %	L4 (adequate achievement)
60-69 %	L5 (substantial achievement)
70-79 %	L6 (meritorious achievement)
80-89 %	L7 (outstanding achievement)

These levels of performance are determined by 'UMALUSI', an examining body in South Africa, which also qualifies learners for certification. This model of exam scores does not take into account the context of schools in difficult circumstances. In this sense, it seems to be informed by the standard-based approach. A learner who obtains a below level 2 rating is considered not to have achieved the required outcome in a particular subject, not allowing him\her to proceed to the next grade. School performance, on the other hand, is judged by the schools' aggregate percentage. Schools that struggle to obtain the 60% rubricon in their matric results are considered to be 'under-performing' and those that obtain 60% and above are considered to be performing.

The similarity between this yardstick of determining school performance and that of the UK is that the South African barometer also does not take into account the context and background of schools. What this implies is that, if learners perform poorly in the achievement tests, their schools are labelled as failing or under-performing. Downey *et al* (2008) argue in this regard that achievement based evaluation underestimates the effectiveness of schools that serve disadvantaged populations.

The disparities in school performance have gone to the extent of associating any form of under-performance with township and rural schools and the public perception is that only ex-model C schools offer quality education. This is, perhaps, the reason why Downey *et al* (2008) argue that, when schools are evaluated with respect to achievement, schools that serve disadvantaged students are disproportionately likely to be labelled as failing. The continued under-performance of the Eastern Cape Province in matric exams resulted in two strategies, namely, the Learner Attainment and Improvement Strategy (LAIS) and the Matric Intervention Programme (MIP), being introduced as intervention measures to bail out the under-performing schools of the morass of poor matric results.

In terms of the standard-based model with special reference to MIP and LAIS, provinces and district offices are required to set some performance standards which must be met by all schools under their jurisdiction (Ministry of Education, 2002). These standard-based reforms could take the form of the provision of common pace-setters, common work schedules which are curriculum delivery tools for ensuring that the syllabi are completed by all schools at the same time. As a consequence of the above standard-based reforms, there are common exams for grades 3,6, 9 and 12 which were introduced when LAIS came into existence as an amendment of MIP. These intervention strategies led to the introduction of panels for the setting of provincial examination papers for grade 11 and 12 for all schools in the Eastern Cape Province so that the performance of all schools could be judged from the outcome of these common and compulsory exams. The sad part with this standard-based approach is that the rural nature of this province is not considered because some schools, especially ex-model C schools, are much better resourced than township and rural schools but the expectation is that they must perform as though they are on par with each other in terms of the provision of quality teaching and learning.

The focus of these common exams written monthly, quarterly and termly is on the improvement of grade 12 results in rural and township schools which have a high number of under-performing schools (Eastern Cape Department of Education, 2006). As a result of this standard-based approach, all educators of MIP schools were supplied with provincially

designed work schedules compiled by subject planners with specified topics which needed to be covered within a specified period of time for the writing of common papers, (*ibid*). According to Clarke (2005) the problem with schools in disadvantaged areas is that they face a myriad of problems in simply getting to the starting line for improvement. This comment in a nutshell explains the point that schools differ in terms of degrees of learner under-achievement and thus different strategies are necessary to deal with different problems and each strategy must be tailor-made to suit each individual school. The UK standard-based approach assumes that schools are on par with each other in terms of their levels of school performance, as if there are no contextual factors that affect them differently.

Rich, J., Sauer, J. and Sikrweqe, M. (2006) argue that the use of grade 12 examinations as a uniform assessment in all schools has acquired great significance as the most visible benchmark or barometer of schools' performance. According to the Department of Education in RSA (2005), a learner who qualifies to get a bachelors degree, previously known as an exemption, must pass four subjects by 50%, which is equivalent to level 4 as this requirement serves as an entry to the university. The justification given by the Department of Education (2007) for the use of examinations as a yardstick of determining school performance is that external examinations provide reliable and fair measures of achievement of learners across the country in the subjects offered. It is on the basis of these achievement measures that the schools' pass rate is determined at matric level. The following sub-section focuses on the theoretical framework that guides this study for a better understanding of the phenomenon of school performance and reference is made to the school effectiveness (SE) and school improvement (SI) approaches.

2.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Apart from the models discussed above, a deeper understanding of school performance can be attained by drawing on insights from theoretical frameworks and research informed by them. Two main frameworks are used in this study namely School Effectiveness (SE) and School Improvement (SI)

2.3.1 School effectiveness (SE)

According to Collins (2007), school effectiveness (SE) and school improvement (SI) have been linked together not without reason, except that SI is a slow and continuous process whose goal is to enhance learning outcomes. This view is also confirmed by Wringley, (2006) when he argues that SE and SI are intimately related except that SE has an element of measurement of learning outcomes. Scheerens (2000) has noted that in SE research not only are differences in overall performance of schools assessed, but the additional question of causality is raised. At the heart of SE is an explanation of the impact of relevant input characteristics on output and to 'break open' the black box in order to show which process or throughput factors 'work', as well as the impact of contextual conditions (*ibid*). Part of the process variables in the black box are the educators' perceptions of these strategies and this is the focus of this study. This study must, therefore, be seen as giving educators a voice in terms of how they perceive the impact of the two departmental matric intervention strategies in helping to raise the under-performing schools from the quagmire of bad matric results in the Eastern Cape Province. It is hoped that the effectiveness of these strategies will be investigated by this study in terms of whether or not they help to break open the black box, the area where teaching and learning takes place. A model by Scheerens is presented in figure 2.1 to show the relationship between inputs and throughputs and how they impact on outputs.

2.3.1.1 Theoretical Model by Scheerens

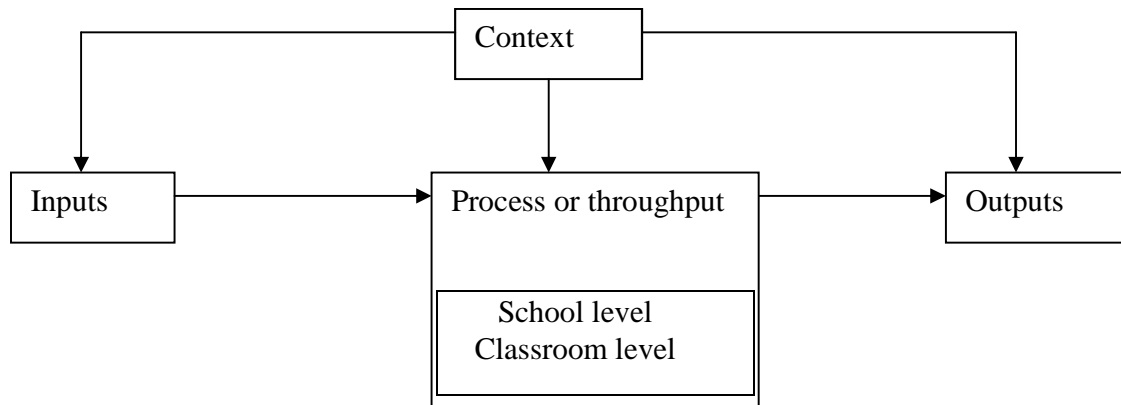


Figure 2.1: An association between outputs (outcomes) of schooling and inputs, as well as process or throughput - Scheerens (2000)

According to Scheerens (2000), research in educational effectiveness varies according to the emphasis placed on the various antecedent conditions of educational outputs. He further argues that he has observed their similarity in terms of associating outputs or outcomes of schooling with antecedent conditions (inputs, processes or contextual factors). In terms of this model, the major task of school effectiveness is to reveal the impact of relevant input characteristics and contextual conditions on output and how they can be used to ‘break open’ the black box in order to show which processes or throughput factors ‘work’ (*ibid*). The picture being drawn by this model is one that stresses the selection of appropriate inputs that can increase outputs or, rather, how the inputs can be manipulated to effect a change in outputs or outcomes. Sun *et al* (2007) supports this view by saying “the touchstone for effective schools is the impact on students’ educational outcomes.” It does appear from the studies of school effectiveness that the central issue in all is the ‘context’ in which teaching and learning is being conducted because contextual factors are important determinants of ‘what works’ (*ibid*).

Scheerens (2000) identifies the following factors as components of the 14 effectiveness – enhancing factors, namely: achievement, orientation towards high expectations; educational leadership; consensus and cohesion among staff; curriculum quality or opportunity to learn; school climate in terms of orderly atmosphere and good internal relations among stakeholders; evaluative potential; parental involvement; classroom climate and effective learning time. In essence, this suggests that the context in which teaching and learning takes place is somewhat influenced by these 14 effectiveness–enhancing factors and this boils down to one thing, that an atmosphere conducive to teaching and learning must be created in schools as the first step towards raising output measures or outcomes. The context will then filter down into inputs, process or throughput and outputs where the school is conceived as a ‘black box’ in effective school research.

According to Scheerens (2000:43) “The most distinguishing feature of effective-schools research is the fact that it has attempted to break open the ‘black box’ of the school by studying characteristics related to organization, form and content of schools.” This research gave rise to the ‘five-factor model of SE’ as descriptive of effective schools, viz:

- Strong educational leadership
- Emphasis on the acquiring of basic skills
- An orderly and secure environment
- High expectations of pupil attainment
- Frequent assessment of pupil progress

(ibid).

The rationale behind the use of the term ‘black box’ to describe the school is because this is the area where change needs to be effected by a manager with strong educational leadership qualities, someone who knows which inputs will ‘break open’ the black box and cause a positive impact on outputs. In terms of this model by Scheerens, the area of process or throughput is the classroom and the school. Collins (2007:118) argues that “Research at classroom level has suggested that certain factors go a long way towards enhancing student outcomes, such as authentic relationships, planning for teaching,

teaching repertoire, pedagogic partnerships, and the conditions for positive outcomes at pupil level which include orientation to learning, independent learning, learning repertoire and affinity to teacher.” In this regard, Collins proposes the use of resource-based learning (RBL) which is a process approach that focuses on how information is acquired, as well as on results.

Inputs referred to in this model can be in the form of resources and SE emphasises the selection of relevant malleable inputs, which can increase outputs. According to Hanushek(1997) as cited in Scheerens (2000), when classroom resources were compared to determine their impact on student performance, variables that showed the highest proportion of positive effects were teacher experience and per-pupil expenditure in relation to the teacher\pupil ratio; teacher education and financial aggregates (*ibid*). With regard to the school level of the process or throughput, Scheerens has identified the following effectiveness–enhancing conditions of schooling obtained from five studies, namely, achievement oriented policy; co-operative atmosphere, orderly climate; clear goals on basic skills; frequent evaluation; in- service training\staff development; strong leadership; time on task, reinforcement, streaming and high expectations of pupils’ progress. These are the factors that are thought to have the potential to break open the black box and impact positively on the output of schools or school outcomes.

2.3.1.2 Relevance of the model by Scheerens to the Learner Attainment and Improvement Strategy (LAIS)

According to the Eastern Cape Department of Education (2008), LAIS is an intervention strategy that was designed to address the problem of school under-performance which, characterizes most of the rural and township schools in this province. There are eleven pillars underpinning this intervention strategy, which will be discussed in detail at a later stage. The relevance of this strategy to the model by Scheerens is that its aim is to raise learner achievement (output) by focusing on schools (process or throughput). There is a special budget called the LAIS budget which comes from the provincial office to all 23 Districts and is meant to ensure effective implementation of this strategy in all schools

characterized by under-performance as reflected in their matric results. According to Scheerens (2000), 'inputs' can take the form of pupils with certain characteristics and financial and material aids, whereas 'outputs' include pupil attainment at the end of schooling. The ultimate goal of LAIS, according to the Eastern Cape Department of Education (2008), is to make schools effective institutions for teaching and learning. What remains unknown is whether these inputs that go to the under-performing schools are indeed assisting in 'breaking open' what Scheerens terms the "black box". Through this strategy, the Eastern Cape Department of Education hopes to mobilise its forces by utilising its resources in a well-calculated way in pursuit of clear targets in the short, medium and long term.

Scheerens (2000) also mentions the issue of clear goals as one of the effectiveness-enhancing conditions of schooling. These goals must be clearly formulated so that they can lead to the acquisition of skills by the learners at the end of their schooling. Most of the 11 pillars of the LAIS plan are somewhat similar in terms of purpose to the components of the 14 effectiveness-enhancing factors discussed in this model by Scheerens. A pillar is, in my view, something very strong that provides support to a very heavy object so that it does not fall. The Eastern Cape Department of Education (2010) has this envisaged idea that a successful implementation of the LAIS pillars by all districts and schools would eventually make all underperforming schools achieve and sustain good performance. These would, of course, require the National Department of Education to enforce strong accountability measures on managers of under-performing schools and continually to evaluate their performance so that they do not slip backward again. Accordingly, Sun *et al* (2007) argue that school effectiveness (SE) emphasises the setting of national goals in terms of student outcomes and strong central control that calls for an implementation, evaluation, feedback, and reinforcement cycle. According to the Eastern Cape Department of Education (2006), some standard-based intervention strategies were introduced as part of the LAIS programme, which involved the writing of common exams and the provision of common pace-setters and common work schedules for all under-performing schools. The assumption was that educators would be compelled and committed to complete syllabi in time and to do revision so that, in the end, there is an increase in learner attainment levels

in various learning areas. The creation of effective schools and effective classrooms depends largely on an effective education system that places value on the society at large and on the teaching profession in general (*ibid*). Scheerens (2000) argues that the implications of the model discussed above for educational planners are to caution them to identify from the onset what works at school level and ensure that the malleable conditions closer to the primary process of instruction and learning have a more substantial impact in raising outputs and in improving conditions for effectiveness within schools. The focus point of school effectiveness is to make schools effective centres for effective teaching and learning by creating a particular ethos so that improvement of learner attainment can be guaranteed and hence forth an understanding of school improvement is necessary to explain the journey to success.

2.3.2 School improvement (SI)

According to Acosta (2006), schools are social institutions of teaching and learning whose pedagogical aim is to transmit knowledge and skills to learners. It is for this reason that we find schools continually subjected to the public eye so as to monitor their success (pedagogy) in the delivery of this service. In examining schools, Acosta raises this question, How can we think about success in situations of failure?. This study proposes a consideration of school improvement (SI) because this strategy focuses on the management of educational change with a view to enhancing learner outcomes and the capacity of schools to manage improvement initiatives Collins (2007). Hopkins *et al* (1997) as cited in Collins (2007) found that school improvement is about raising student achievement by focusing on the teaching\learning process and those conditions which support it. Sun *et al* (2007) contend that school improvement (SI) is a specific branch of the study of educational change, which focuses on the journey to success and the necessary conditions to support successful change. Sun *et al* argue that SI emphasises the context in which issues like teaching, learning processes and student outcomes are conducted. This would be in line with the value-added approach used in the UK which considers the context of schools in the determination of achievement levels of learners; especially those coming from schools in disadvantaged areas (refer to figure1 below). In terms of this theory, the

roles of pressure and support (MIP & LAIS) for evaluation; networking; professional development; and expectations for accountability, are regarded as catalysts for the engagement of teachers found in successful schools. According to the Eastern Cape Department of Education (2006), one of the priority areas of the MIP programme is to ensure that all under-performing schools in this programme have a full complement of properly qualified educators. In terms of this strategy, the national goal of raising student outcomes requires the integration and interaction of pressure and support at all levels of the education system to ensure its successful implementation (Sun *et al*,2007).

The main focus of school improvement theories is on how to strengthen the capacity of schools to manage their improvement initiatives so that they are sustainable over the years (Collins, 2007). The starting point should, of course, be an enhancement of educator competence and confidence as a strategy for improving the achievement levels of learners, judged by means of value-added approaches.

2.3.2.1 Theoretical Model by Sun *et al* (2007)

National Goals
(e.g. levels of achievement in matric, including standard-based & value-added' approaches)

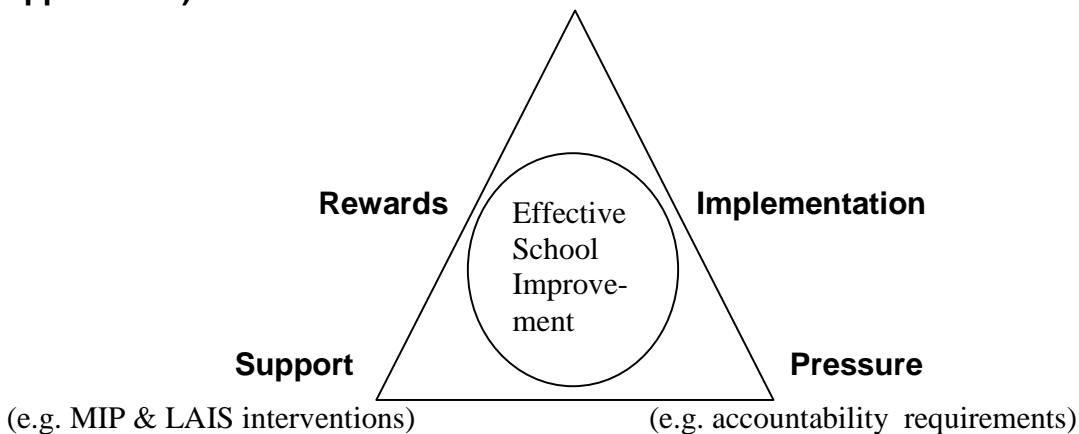


Figure 2.2: Relationship between elements of school improvement (adapted from Sun *et al* (2007))

Sun *et al* (2007) depict the conceptual framework for school improvement (SI) as a triangular set of interrelated elements as shown in figure 2.2. In terms of this model, effective school improvement (ESI) is firmly embedded in its national context and a triangle is chosen because it is a stable framework that symbolizes the relationship amongst the three elements: goals, pressure, and support.

According to this study, under-achievement arises when learners do not perform according to acceptable benchmarks in terms of their matric results. In terms of the triangle in figure 2.2, the realisation of the national goals (student outcomes) requires strong support from the local District Office of the Department of Education. The support can be in the form of provision of adequate resources to under-performing schools and assisting them in creating a culture conducive for effective teaching and learning to take place. The resources provided must address the 'black box', i.e. the level where teaching and learning processes take place and their impact must be to enhance student performance. Rich *et al* (2006) confirms this view by saying most of the strategies have predominantly focused on organising supplementary extra classes during the winter and spring vacations and on Saturdays, but most alarming is the fact that there has been no attempt to formally assess the impact of these strategies or to externally evaluate their efficacy, despite them using considerable funds.

According to Sun *et al* (2007) effective support may consist of strong central empowering of ESI from the National Department of Education by creating teacher awards for ESI champions in the public media and encouraging the involvement of parents in the education of their children. These national awards have the potential for raising teacher morale in dysfunctional schools. In terms of the triangle shown above, part of the support is in the form of Matric Intervention Strategies, namely, the Matric Intervention Programme (MIP) and the Learner Attainment and Improvement Strategy (LAIS). During the provision of this support, care should be taken to grant schools some degree of autonomy, particularly in respect of school decisions concerning personnel, pedagogic issues, finance, management of staff development programmes which adapt to the requirements of ESI, and engendering a culture of support of ESI. Sun *et al* further contend that support without pressure tends to

be a waste of resources. Rich *et al* (2006) argue that it was rather alarming to find a poor rate of return on investment even when allowances are made to redress disparities in under-performing schools in poor communities.

This pressure can take the form of accountability requirements, monitoring and evaluation by Matric Intervention Officers (MIO) to ensure effective school improvement. Sun *et al* argue that effective evaluation depends on frequent, regular feedback and timely reinforcement. As a way of ensuring that schools improve, national standardized and quarterly examinations could be introduced and this should be done with regular feedback to monitor student outcomes. According to Clarke (2005) accountability measures in the UK are so strong that school managers are granted autonomy to decide who they want to employ and they also have the right to fire teachers. This view is supported by Sun *et al* (2007:116) when they argue that “As long as schools have no autonomy with regard to personnel, they can have very limited impact on those teachers who lack intrinsic motivation.” This is, perhaps, the reason why UK case studies found that appointing “superstar head teachers” to struggling/failing schools seems quite effective for ESI .

In terms of this model, pressure exerted and support given re-inforce the realisation of the National goals, i.e. student outcomes as determined by either standard-based or value-added approaches. In this way, schools can be asked to draw up their own school improvement plans (SIP) with measurable success goals and also network with successful schools.

2.3.2.2 Relevance of the model by Sun *et al* to MIP

The goal-pressure-support model that is being proposed for consideration in this study has a particular significance for the MIP because this strategy was designed as an attempt to improve learner performance at matric level in the Eastern Cape Province. The initial plan of the MIP was that all centres where tutoring takes place would be adequately resourced with the people and materials to support educators in making teaching and learning effective and henceforth ‘support’ is put on the left side of the triangle, as shown in figure 1

above. Once resources have been put into the centres, accountability measures by the district officials must follow so that there is a good rate of return on this investment. According to the Eastern Cape Directorate for Assessment and Examinations (2007), much as the programme has been running for a number of years, its effectiveness needed to be revisited by adopting a different style to obtaining improved results. This to me is a clear admission that the MIP has failed to produce the desired outcomes, hence I am proposing a refocus towards this model by Sun *et al.*

The primary concern about MIP as an intervention strategy is that it was conceptualised and implemented in a top down approach with no monitoring mechanisms at all from the National Department of Education. This is confirmed by the Eastern Cape Directorate in its critique of MIP for having failed to provide some monitoring and accountability measures of holding schools responsible for shoddy performance shown in each subject; henceforth, another strategy was adopted to amend MIP. It is also apparent from the way in which the MIP was implemented that there was no central government control over this programme because in Chapter one it was revealed that the management of extra classes in the form of summer, winter and Saturday classes was in the hands of Centre Managers. Rich *et al* (2006) argue that it was very alarming to note that there has never been an attempt by the Department of Education to assess the impact of these strategies to evaluate their efficacy, yet they draw considerable funds from the State. According to Sun *et al* (2007:117), "Effective School Improvement (ESI) requires SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time-constrained) goal-setting with effective pressure (e.g. accountability), as well as empowering support at the local contextual level, the school level, and the classroom level. I assume that centre managers who were managing the MIP were not necessarily the managers of under-performing schools who needed to account for failure to improve achievement levels of learners in view of the support given because in Chapter one it was revealed that some stipends were paid to tutors by the Eastern Cape Department of Education.

This model is proposing an approach where pressure should be exerted on failing schools to initiate some changes at schools that would guarantee student success, guided by clear

and measurable goals. In this way pressure and support (MIP) as an intervention strategy and the supply of resources can be applied to re-inforce the realisation of the national goals. For purposes of ensuring that there are common criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of the MIP, standard-based or value-added approaches could be used to determine achievement levels at the matric stage. Once again, schools showing some degree of improvement should be rewarded and attempts should be made to make these schools exhibit the characteristics of effective schools and in this, they will be able to manage and sustain their change Collins (2007).

There are key insights that can be drawn from the two frameworks that include, among others, the fact that both frameworks seem to emphasize that the realisation of the national goals (student outcomes or outputs) depends on the nature of support (inputs) given to under-performing schools by the district or provincial office. These student outcomes can be determined by means of either standard-based approaches or value-added approaches but the important point that comes from the two frameworks is that relevant inputs must be established so that they can have a positive impact on output measures. This requires a thorough understanding of the context of schools that need the support in order to improve their performance, and this support must go together with accountability measures by all role players. The other point raised by the two frameworks is that relevant input characteristics must be galvanized in such a manner that they make an impact in the classroom (the black box) which is the area where teaching and learning takes place. This view broadens the point that any strategy that is designed to improve school under-performance must have an in-built mechanism for dealing with a variety of factors which negatively impact on school performance. The following paragraph discusses a variety of strategies employed by different countries in dealing with school under-performance.

2.4 INTERVENTION STRATEGIES FOR DEALING WITH SCHOOL UNDER-PERFORMANCE

Strategies to address school under-performance draw on a number of models and theories as discussed above. Research has shown that countries like England, Canada and the United States have been successful in their attempts to address school under-performance using the models and theories cited above. Various countries have employed different strategies for addressing school under-performance which are influenced by either standard-based or value-added approaches for determining school performance. The very concept of under-performance has also been the subject of debate in terms of what exactly constitutes it. Most studies consider under-performance of schools as caused by learners who do not reach the benchmark standards of achievement for whatever reasons, leading to the overall performance of schools declining or dropping drastically. According to West and Pennell (2003), under-achievement in schools is not a simple issue and the way in which the term is used varies and what is considered to be under-achievement also varies. This challenge calls for new solutions and reforms to be introduced in the entire system of education with a view to raising the attainment levels of learners in order to improve the performance of schools. West and Pennell (2003), further highlight that the school system itself must be considered when addressing under-achievement to see if schools are as 'effective' as they should be in maximising the educational outcomes and also establish the factors that are associated with under-achievement.

In the UK, for example, low performance of schools is a subject that has drawn a high profile from policy makers in central and local government, teachers, academics and all those with an interest in education (*ibid*). Ward (2004:70), on the other hand, argues that "Low performing schools should be viewed as basic industries that have the potential to impact negatively on the community's overall development and economy." This is perhaps the reason why different countries have adopted different strategies for dealing with under-performing schools and numerous attempts have been made to turn the situation around.

2.4.1 Perspectives from the United States (California)

The problem of school underperformance has been the subject of a variety of interventions aimed at turning around the situation. Ward (2004) cites some initiatives in the United States, California, where an organisation called Compton Unified School District was charged with the responsibility for instituting and documenting successful reform practices that would address multiple challenges facing low-performing schools. This was to be done by developing and implementing appropriate action plans that reach and exceed a school's required growth results.

Here follows some highlights of steps followed in implementing strategies to address under-performance in schools in California.

Step 1: creation of a school culture that would support school site leadership and empower school leadership to build relationships with diverse stakeholders.

Step 2: district office administrators team up with school principals for the common good of all students.

Step 3: school principals and teacher-leaders develop actions plans and specific lessons that can have a direct impact on classroom instruction, teacher recruitment, staff development and results-based teacher evaluations.

Step 4: establishment of motivational attendance programmes, accelerated learning programmes, extended school year programmes and a curriculum alignment back loading process.

Step 5: parents and community join hands in supporting low performing schools and districts.

Step 6: effective business practices developed for use by districts and schools to effectively leverage adequate resources for diverse students needs Ward.

(2004:viii-ix)

2.4.2 Perspectives from England and Canada

Various other strategies were used in countries such as Canada and England to raise the performance of 'schools facing challenging circumstances' (SFCC). These strategies included the following: increased resources; staff developmental programmes; developing school improvement plans; re-alignment of education by introducing some reforms; establishing the effectiveness of intervention strategies using pilot schools; Government initiatives to help schools in poorer areas; creative and innovative teaching methods established; developing curriculums that focus on the skills required by the country rather than using examination results; establishing a school ethos, use of short term improvement strategies with some targets, identification of learning barriers in low performing learners; inspection system to enforce quality education; determining attitudes of teachers towards change; evaluation of models used to determine school performance with a focus on school contexts; focus on teaching, learning and leadership; monitoring schools that show some degree of improvement to ensure sustainability; head teacher collaboration to share best practices as well as mentoring (Clarke 2005).

Clarke (2005) further outlines steps that were taken in England to help seriously under-performing schools that were in need of particular improvement and support strategies. The programme, according to the report, was designed for a group of eight senior secondary schools called the 'Octet group' located in the greatest 'category' of challenge in the English education system i.e. in areas where communities were experiencing the most difficult economic and social challenges. In the planning process, a series of seminars and meetings for head teachers and other senior managers in the schools were held to update them on 'what might work' and to provide systems of mutual support that would generate increased 'educational resilience' in practitioners exposed to multiple stresses. The programme was given a period of two to three years in these schools and all improvement strategies were tailored to suite the situations of these eight schools.

The first phase was designed to put emphasis on organisational change, school self-evaluation and the 'ownership of change' by individual schools and teachers. In the second phase the guidelines for the school improvement strategy were beginning to take shape in the classroom by introducing some educational changes. Approaches to staff development based upon partnership teaching and designs for development planning that focused upon learning outcomes that linked organisational and classroom change were introduced. The third phase of school improvement included a wide range of national educational reforms produced in various countries, together with contributions from school improvement communities of many countries. Some lessons were learnt from the strategies adopted by other countries, like Canada and the Netherlands, to draw from previous and existing improvement and reform agendas. The findings obtained from these various improvement strategies, when they were compared, revealed the following:

- There has been an enhanced focus upon the importance of pupil outcomes.
- The learning level and the instructional behaviours of teachers were also targeted.
- There has also been the creation of an infrastructure to enable the knowledge base, both 'best practises' and research findings, to be utilized.
- There has also been an increasing consciousness of the importance of 'capacity building'.
- An audit of existing classroom and, school processes and outcomes was also undertaken.
- A careful balance was made between 'vision building' and the adapting of structures to support those aspirations.
- An increased concern was raised to ensure that the improvement programmes relate to, and impact upon, practitioners and practices through using increasingly sophisticated training, coaching and development programmes

(ibid).

The impact of these intervention measures, according to Clarke, is that results rose steadily, but the gap between schools in disadvantaged areas and those in more affluent areas remained large, and on some measures grew even larger. The policy shift was accelerated in every part of the system through a raft of administrative threats and

incentives. There were frequent and often threatening inspections, assessment 'league tables', performance-related pay, and the threat of closure or privatization. Clarke further argues that the research conducted on these eight schools found out that these schools had the potential to improve levels of student performance and achievement. However, in order to achieve and sustain improvement, such schools must exceed what might be termed as 'normal efforts' as success can be short-lived and fragile in difficult circumstances.

Another strategy that was employed in England for schools that were seen to be the cause of concern was 'Fresh Start'. This approach was modelled on ideas imported from USA and it placed particular emphasis on the role of the head teacher as key and one that provides strategic direction. The particular US scheme on which Fresh Start was based was called 'school reconstitution' and its underlying idea was to jump start dysfunctional schools, many of them in poor urban areas. In terms of this scheme, fresh and new committed staff was brought in as a drastic intervention which was like trying to rebuild a rapidly deteriorating train as you run down the tracks. The affected schools were given additional funding and other resources, as well as staff development programmes. Nevertheless, in England, some reconstituted schools showed marked improvements; others appeared to be mired in the same or worse difficulties as before reconstitution (*ibid*).

2.4.3 Perspective from South Africa

The system of education in South Africa has for many years been characterized by consistent under-performance of schools, particularly township and rural schools. According to Masitsa (2004) this problem was caused by many visible inequalities and inadequacies in terms of facilities and resources over many years, such as shortages of schools, textbooks and well qualified educators, particularly in the erstwhile departments of education for black people in South Africa. He further argues that in the township secondary schools, underachievement of learners was found to be mainly due to the medium of instruction, overcrowding, truancy and shortage of textbooks. "In an effort to address this problem of high failure rate among township matriculants, the Department of Education introduced

various interventions over time” (Masitsa, 2004:216). Among the intervention measures that were put in place was the restoration of a culture of teaching and learning which was found to be lacking, as well as the extension of working hours to ensure the timeous completion of the syllabi and that is why we see MIP as a strategy advocating the use of Saturdays and Sundays as extended teaching hours for under-performing schools. In addition, since 2001, the grade 12 examination results have included an innovative 25% continuous assessment (CASS) component comprising non-standardised test marks (*ibid*).

According to the Department of Education, RSA (2007), the following systemic priorities were identified as needing urgent intervention and include, among others, recruitment and retention of teachers by providing bursaries and incentives; training and development of teachers together with support; time spent teaching or time on task; targeting the 20% lowest performing schools and Districts in the senior certificate examinations; and monthly monitoring and reporting of teachers in the classroom, as well as to link the National Strategy for Learner Attainment (NSLA) with the General Education and Training (GET) National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy.

2.4.3.1 National Strategy for Learner Attainment

The Department of Education, RSA (2007), depicts the National Strategy for Learner Attainment with its broad impact areas to be in the form of a triangle as shown in **figure 2.3** below.

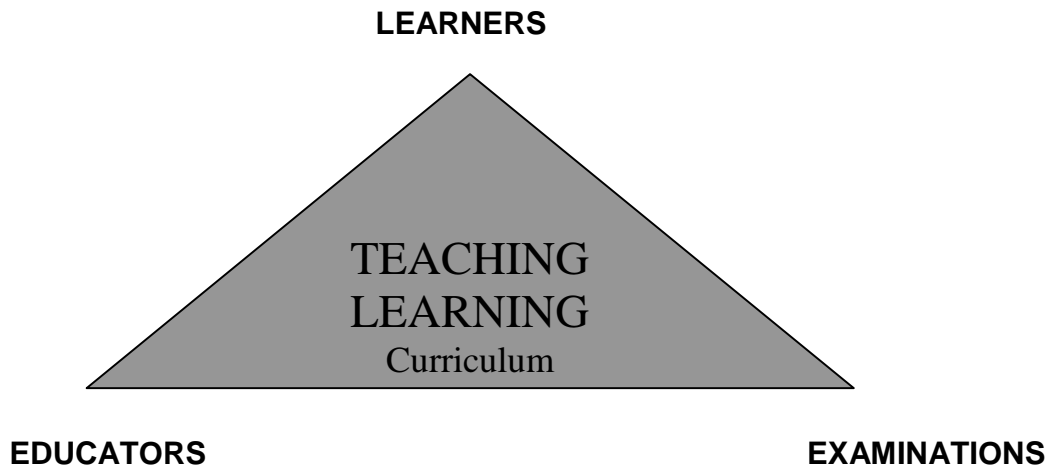


Figure 2.3: National Strategy for Learner Attainment showing broad impact areas

Source: National Strategy for Learner Attainment (NSLA), Johannesburg, RSA, 14 March 2007

According to NSLA (2007), all under-performing districts were compelled to follow a special programme as an attempt to raise the performance of learners by adopting the following curriculum interventions which needed to be implemented, namely, weekend classes to be explored to maximize teaching time; winter and spring schools for grade 11 & 12 with a special focus on maths, science and English; common mid-year examinations for grades 10-12; on-site assistance to be done by Learning Area Managers, Circuit Managers, District Support Teams; targeted interventions in schools with a matric pass rate below 70%; assistance to specific schools in under-performing subjects; educator training sessions specifically for teachers experiencing content gaps in their various learning areas; various programmes for learners like motivational talks and study-skills related programmes. The Department of Education in the RSA believes that under-performance in South African schools can be addressed if different strategies and approaches are employed for different learners. The National Ministry further argues that all learners can learn and can achieve at varied levels if special or specific interventions that are remedial and corrective are employed.

2.4.4 Eastern Cape perspectives of raising school performance

According to the statistics provided by the Department of Education, RSA (2007), the Eastern Cape Province is one of the provinces with the highest number of under-performing schools. In 2005, this province had 419 high schools which obtained below 50% and in 2006 the number dropped slightly to 345. In 2009, the number went up again to 496 suggesting that there is a problem experienced in raising school performance. Two Matric Intervention Strategies (MIS) are currently in place in this province, namely, the Matric Intervention Programme (MIP) and the Learner Attainment and Improvement Strategy (LAIS) (Eastern Cape Department of Education, 2007). According to the Eastern Cape Department of Education (2006), all MIP schools were provided with pace-setters and common work schedules at the beginning of the year to enable them to write mandatory common examinations which were part of the standards set by the province to assess performance of schools under this extended programme called LAIS. The introduction of this programme in the Eastern Cape Province was a response to the call by the then Minister of Education, Naledi Pandor, who complained about the poor state of the district offices in providing adequate support to under-performing schools. This is the reason we see figure 3 focusing on three main components, i.e. examinations, learners and educators, all of which need to reinforce each other to ensure an increase in output measures (pass rate by learners).

The South African context regarding these turn-around strategies is slightly different from that in the UK, Canada and California in that strategies are developed and tailor-made to suite the context and situation of a particular province(s) where under-performance is detected, unlike in the USA, Canada and England where these strategies were centrally developed by the state. As there could be bias in funding towards schools in poorer areas, South Africa has a decentralised approach which differs from one province to the other. Their implementation at provincial and district level is left in the hands of politicians who themselves have their hands full of other political activities. Sometimes you find Education Development Officers (EDOs) who are in charge of whole school development being assigned with this task of helping under-performing schools to improve. The very

assistance given by EDOs is somewhat restricted due to strong Union involvement in educational matters. But, on the whole, South Africa believes in focussing on 'critical subjects' like maths, physics, accounting, agricultural science, life sciences and English, which are assumed to be the cause of under-performance in schools, coupled with the lack of qualified teaching personnel for these 'killer' subjects (Eastern Cape Department of Education, 2010).

2.4.4.1 The Matric Intervention Programme (MIP) : The case of the Eastern Cape

Turning to strategies in the Eastern Cape Province, over and above National Departmental initiatives, two major strategies have been established to raise achievement levels of learners in under-performing schools, namely, the Matric Intervention Programme (MIP) and the Learner Attainment and Improvement Strategy (LAIS). The Matric Intervention Programme discussed in this study came about as a response to a Quality Learning and Teaching Campaign (QLTC), which was launched by the then Minister of Education, Naledi Pandor, on 09 October 2008, (Argus, 2008). The issue of under-performance in the Eastern Cape Province had long prevailed such that a 'Master Plan' had to be developed to raise learner attainment and improve matric results (Eastern Cape Department of Education, 2010:2). Since the focus of improving under-performance was on matric, the first strategy that was developed was the Matric Intervention Programme (MIP), which was later amended and gave rise to the Learner Attainment and Improvement Strategy (LAIS).

According to the Eastern Cape Department of Education (2003:2-4), "the Matric Intervention Programme, popularly known in the Eastern Cape as MIP, was meant or designed to be a turn-around strategy for schools that were having a below 50% pass rate in terms of matric performance." It was an intervention programme engineered by the Department of Education to bail out the schools from the quagmire of bad matric results. The purpose of this strategy was to maximise teaching time to enable educators in all schools to complete syllabi in time and to do revision, and hence the idea of winter and spring schools (*ibid*). This view is confirmed by the Eastern Cape Department of Education

(2006) when it argues that the focus of this strategy from inception was on organizing supplementary extra classes during the winter and spring vacations and on Saturdays,.

According to the Eastern Cape Department of Education (2007), the MIP had been in place for a number of years as an attempt to improve learner performance in the Province for Senior Certificate. This is confirmed by the Eastern Cape Education Department (2011:2) when it argues that, "Since 1996 the Eastern Cape Department of Education has annually tried to address the poor pass rates at grade 12 level through emergency intervention measures and learner support programmes which have usually not been properly evaluated for impact and which have had varying degrees of success."

This programme was located mainly at the Head Office in Bhisho and it had its own Provincial Co-ordinator (Mr Major Man) whose duty was to liaise with the district offices to get the programme going. This Provincial Co-ordinator was to spearhead this programme in conjunction with the District Co-ordinators of the MIP. District Co-ordinators were also appointed to help in the implementation of this programme in all circuits and schools affected by school under-performance. According to the Eastern Cape Department of Education (2008), all managers of under-performing schools were mandated to put in place an MIP in their annual school plans and indicate areas of intervention in various subjects where under-achievement is identified. This was an elaborate programme for assisting the schools engineer a turn around. Centres were set up in certain strategic schools to serve a certain area comprising a number of under-performing schools to benefit from these programmes. Teacher unions and educators were not involved in the process of developing this strategy and, as a result, there were disruptions of MIP classes by SADTU due to the lack of consultation by the Department of Education on certain matters like appointment of tutors and centre managers.

There were also Centre Managers who were appointed to manage these centres and to ensure their smooth running, as well as to compile reports on the effectiveness of the programme (Eastern Cape Department of Education, 2003). In return, Centre Managers were given the prerogative to appoint tutors for subjects identified by the Provincial Office

as 'killer subjects' or 'critical subjects' (*ibid*). These were the learning areas that were to receive priority from the Department as these were identified as problematic subjects which included maths, physics, agricultural science, accounting, life sciences, English, geography and history. It was believed that if the issue of these subjects could be adequately addressed by a battery of interventions, the poor matric performance would be a thing of the past and this was contained in the Provincial Memo that was sent to all schools by the Eastern Cape Department of Education. Allied to this was the concept of 'guest teaching' for sharing of best practices among educators and among schools and this is what generated a lot of enthusiasm among educators. Certain 'expert teachers' who had acquired a reputation in their disciplines or subjects were identified within the district for various subjects to teach during these extended classes.

The function of the Department was to plough massive funds into this programme to generate learner and teacher support material like study guides, pace-setters, work sheets and exam question papers modelled on the end of the year examination papers. Funding was also used to pay the teachers who were running these classes as an incentive. This was not to be so as the later events were to show. This is confirmed by the report of the Department of Education in the Eastern Cape (2006) which states that teachers who regularly produced extremely poor results were being paid extra money to teach in these winter and summer vacation schools, something which undermined quality assurance of this programme. According to the report, these extra classes resulted in an increased quantity of poor quality teaching, something which did not improve the performance of schools affected (*ibid*). In the end the Eastern Cape Department of Education (2007) decided to revisit the effectiveness of this programme by adopting a different approach to obtaining improved results and thus LAIS came into being.

2.4.4.2 Learner Attainment and Improvement Strategy (LAIS): The case of the Eastern Cape

In spite of the introduction of the MIP strategy discussed above as a turnaround strategy aimed at bailing schools out of the quagmire of bad results, the matric results, particularly in the Eastern Cape, continued to present the Department of Education with a massive

headache every time the matric results were released by the National Ministry for Education. According to the Eastern Cape Department of Education (2008), the Provincial Learner Attainment and Improvement Strategy (LAIS) came into being in January 2007 as a response to the national call from the Ministry of Education which ordered that all provinces should devise means of implementing the National Strategy for Learner Attainment (NSLA). The Eastern Cape Department of Education considered LAIS to be an expanded strategy to the existing MIP programme, which was limited to matric students only. This meant that all MIP schools had to write compulsory common examinations in March, June and September (Eastern Cape Department of Education, 2007).

According to the MEC for Education in the Eastern Cape (2010), LAIS was a Provincial LAIS strategy engineered to cover the entire schooling system from grades R to 12 as well as Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) and Further Education and Training (FET) . As part of its implementation programme, an action plan was designed for total learner performance; education service delivery improvement; school management renewal and professional development of education managers and educators in the Province of the Eastern Cape. The strategy was to focus on early commencement of academic activities; fortnightly syllabus coverage reports; quarterly analysis of results and performance festivals; use of subject advisors as mentors and school resources; accountability of Circuit Managers; integrated planning and co-ordination of activities within districts; curtailment of workshops; common examinations for grades 3, 6, and 9; staff development; stabilising of the schooling system; quality learning and teaching campaign; competency testing of officials; learner welfare; and access to schools (ibid:2010). This strategy was to be complemented by the development of school improvement plans by each manager of the under-performing schools and submitted to the District Office for approval and rectification. All twenty three districts in the Province, Colleges and ABET centres and schools were mandated to develop their LAIS plans, incorporating all the 11 pillars underpinning the Provincial LAIS plan (Eastern Cape Department of Education, 2008).

According to the Eastern Cape Department of Education (2008), these 11 fundamental pillars underpinning the LAIS programme are listed and discussed below:

1. Organize schools for optimal enrolment and size to ensure viable operation. This pillar was to be achieved by the introduction of national norms for school alignment which include rationalization of schools with small enrolments.
2. Provide adequate physical infrastructure for optimal learning and teaching. This pillar called for verification of physical resource needs of schools for provision of water, sanitation, secure fencing and safe classrooms.
3. Provide, maintain and develop adequate human resources to ensure optimal performance of schools. The plan here was to ensure that there are quarterly bulletins for filling of all vacancies with incentives to attract quality staff to rural and remote areas for scarce and critical subjects.
4. Provide essential resources and materials for effective teaching and learning. In terms of this pillar, all schools were to be supplied with sufficient LTSM and furniture.
5. Administer and manage teaching, learning and assessment to effectively support learner attainment. This pillar called for training of SMT members on assessment policies, moderation practices and promotion requirements through on-site support and monitoring by EDOs and subject advisors.
6. Ensure that all teaching accurately addresses curriculum requirements. Schools were to be guided on appropriate curricular offerings based on accurate situational analysis and provision of a programme of intensive on-site support poorer performing educators.
7. Use prescribed instructional time to the maximum advantage of learners. This pillar called for enforcement of compliance with 27.5 hrs in a week in senior and FET schools and effective management of leaves.
8. Ensure that learners' and educators' attendance in class is at optimal levels. This pillar called for effective management of absenteeism by learners and educators and establishing trends of absenteeism.
9. Provide optimal motivation and support for learners to learn and achieve at school. This was to be achieved through the establishment of district support teams to back up school teams responsible for organising specialists for motivational talks and guidance support at schools.
10. Mobilize local and school communities to support the management and governance of schools for optimal performance. This meant that schools should have functioning SGBs to provide governance support to the district office so that communities could take a lead in school projects.
11. Put in place structures and processes to co-ordinate and implement intervention efforts at

schools that need them most. The objective of this pillar was to agree on the nature and location of responsibility for the management and oversight of LAIS.

Eastern Cape Department of Education (2008: 2).

It was felt that “The concentration of LAIS exclusively on grade 12 has not yielded the positive results that were hoped for, instead it is both short sighted and unproductive.” (Eastern Cape Department of Education, 2010:5). As a consequence of the above, some monitoring instruments were designed for teachers, school management, the region/district and the Provincial Education Department (Eastern Cape Department of Education, 2008). The action plan of the Province articulates how planning across all levels of the system will be conducted, how the achievement of the set objectives will be monitored, and how accountability at all levels will be ensured (Eastern Cape Department of Education, 2010). According to the Eastern Cape Department of Education (2008) one of the aspects of the LAIS plan is the MIP which targets under-performing schools which are categorized as those obtaining less than a 60% pass rate in their Senior Certificate Examinations. This suggests that the MIP has not been completely abandoned by the Provincial LAIS plan. The impact of the LAIS strategy saw the district pass percentage in matric results rising from 58,38% obtained in 2006 to 63,6% in 2007 and only to drop to 56,93% in 2008 and further down to 42,25% in 2009. The number of MIP schools also rose from 13 recorded in 2007 to 21 in 2008 and up again to 26 in 2009,(Queenstown District analysis, 2009).

In terms of the background given above regarding the two strategies, MIP has been in existence for a number of years and its aim was to maximise teaching time to enable educators to complete syllabi in time. This measure was aimed at improving matric performance in schools that obtained a pass rate of 50%. After numerous attempts to improve school under-performance without success, the strategy was amended and it gave rise to LAIS. The focus of LAIS was to improve school performance right from grade R. Both strategies (LAIS and MIP) did not yield the results that were anticipated in terms of adequately addressing the problem of school under-performance as reflected by the statistics given above. The report indicates that the Queenstown district does not have a

clear monitoring measure regarding the implementation of these strategies at school level and, as a result, the strategies have degenerated into money making schemes for certain educators and district officials. It is on that score that this study seeks to establish the efficacy of the two strategies in bailing out under-performing schools of the morass of bad matric results from the perspective of educators in charge of the delivery of teaching and learning in our schools. The following section provides a superficial report of the evaluation of the two departmental matric intervention strategies which was done by the Education Leadership Institute in East London. This report is superficial in that it talks about under-performance in a more general way without providing specifics instead it acknowledges the problems causing under-performance in some township schools..

2.4.4.3 Evaluation of the Matric Intervention Strategies

An evaluation of the two departmental matric intervention strategies (MIP and LAIS) by the Eastern Cape Department of Education's Leadership Institute in 2006 revealed that there are a number of factors that negatively impact on learner attainment, of which some are learner related and others are school and educator related. This research was initiated by the then MEC for Education in the Eastern Cape Province which had the highest number of high schools with pass rates below 20% in the final Senior Certificate Examinations for 2005. The Education Leadership Institute was asked to design and implement a short-term intervention support project on 45 high schools that produced the worst results in the 2005 Senior Certificate examinations. The objective of this project was to establish and investigate factors that impact on learner attainment in schools in the Eastern Cape Province and the performance of these worst performing schools was compared with a sample of high performing high schools. This comparison was done to establish several school-based factors yielding insight into some critical differences around enrolment and infrastructure. The authors of this report used four remedial strategies in the target schools, namely, supplementary study guides, study groups, mentors and motivational speakers, and their impact was assessed.

The report will be presented under the following aspects: grade 12 examination results and Eastern Cape schools, project background and scope, key findings and lessons learned, and conclusions. The purpose of this report is to check if its findings will be confirmed by the respondents during data analysis in Chapter 4 of this study.

With regard to grade 12 examination results and Eastern Cape schools, according to Rich *et al* (2006), the Eastern Cape Province has the largest number of schools than any other province in South Africa. The statistics in the NSLA strategy of the Department of Education, RSA (2007) shows that the number of grade 12 entries in 2004 was 33 915 and in 2005, it went up to 39 597 and in 2006, it climbed up again to 41 268. Grade 12 examinations lead to the award of the Senior Certificate (Rich *et al*, 2006). In South Africa, the use of examinations at matric level to assess learner achievement is regarded as the benchmark or barometer of schools' performance. The economic and social consequences for the individual learner who fails to obtain the Senior Certificate are far-reaching and onerous. Since 1997 there have been attempts carried out in the Eastern Cape Province to intervene in schools in ways that were aimed at improving the grade 12 pass rate. Their impact has been very limited due to the focus on grade 12 only and their focus on organizing supplementary extra classes during winter and spring vacation and on Saturdays. Most alarmingly of all is the fact that there has been no attempt to formally assess the impact of these strategies or to externally evaluate their efficacy despite their using considerable funds.

Project background and scope: According to Rich *et al* (2006), the category of 0-20% underperforming schools that participated in this project was singled out by the then Minister of Education, Naledi Pandor, as needing urgent attention. The strategic imperatives of the project were to support and motivate poorly performing schools to strengthen the MIP that had routinely targeted schools with a Senior Certificate pass rate below 50%. During the visit of these schools by the team, it was discovered that their principals needed some professional development. The team also found that the MIP was not sufficiently effective to address the particular challenge presented by the weakest schools. Rich *et al* further point to the issue of resistance by the officials responsible for the

MIP who demanded to know the objectives of the project since it was somewhat overlapping with theirs. There were initially 46 schools and one school called Jojweni was subsequently closed down leaving 45 schools and all of them were public schools. The scope of work covered the following issues, viz:

- To assess problems encountered at schools that militate against better performance.
- To provide additional support to principals of schools through mentoring.
- To provide support to the community via motivational speakers to deliver their best in the quest for improved results.
- To supply additional resources for learners and educators.

(ibid)

The major objective of the project was to instil a culture of excellence in the target schools and to improve the grade 12 pass rate. The project envisaged two sets of outcomes and objectives, viz:

- Product outcomes relating to the schools.
- Process outcomes relating the generic operations of the Education Department with regard to project management.

(ibid: 2006)

Rich *et al* (2006) identified the following findings in the superficial evaluation that he conducted together with his partners and some lessons can be learned from the report for further research. Schools producing the poorest grade 12 results were found to be receiving significantly more state funding per school and per learner than productive schools. This raises a concern on the poor rate of return on investment even when allowance is made for redress. District offices were found to be least effective and not equipped to serve as distribution points for anything other than letters. This again raises another concern about the existence of district offices and the support that they ought to give to under-performing

schools by virtue of them being the closest departmental centres to the schools under their jurisdiction. District MIP co-ordinators appeared to be ignorant of decisions taken at meetings attended by the Provincial MIP co-ordinator. From this statement we can clearly read that there is no co-ordination of intervention strategies between the provincial office and the district offices and this again strengthens the point that there will be problems at school level where these intervention measures are implemented. The purpose of any meeting is to ensure that decisions that are made are carried forward and implemented. The report also found out that there was a significant poor participation of Circuit Managers compared to other groups. Circuit managers are the officials to whom school principals account and, if this is the case with the Eastern Cape, then the whole issue of roles and accountability measures needs to be reviewed.

Some socio-economic challenges were strongly highlighted by a majority of participants as having a significant negative impact on learner attendance and performance at grade 12 level. The major concern is the amount of lost time due to these factors and the adverse effect this has on learner achievement. The factors are as follows: learner pregnancies; social grant payments; drug abuse; customary rites; poverty; and households without adult breadwinners. These factors could not, however, be addressed by the project as they fell beyond its scope and called, rather, for an interdepartmental strategy to deal with them. Based on these factors, it is not surprising to note that the collapse of the MIP was also due to poor attendance of classes by learners in certain schools. Insufficient educators per post establishment was also raised as a major concern for many schools, especially the difficulty of attracting educators to teach in rural schools. The team suggested that re-alignment of schools was necessary, something that would lead to the closure of certain schools due to fewer learner numbers.

The other issue is the one that relates to time on task and several schools complained about the educators who are continually absent from school without approved leave. The labour relations section at district level was asked to address this problem. The impact of educator unions was also found to be another contributory factor in disrupting teaching and learning to a lesser or greater extent in more than a quarter of the target schools. The team

also noted that most of the educators are organized at the micro level and readily abuse the notion of union membership to condone misconduct and neglect of responsibility. This again shows the problem faced by the Eastern Cape Department of Education of allowing unions to run the Department and dictate terms for the very employer suggesting that there is a professional gap between the employer and its employees. The high drop-out rate of learners was also highlighted by the team suggesting that the pass rates of these schools would have been even lower had these learners stayed at school. Drop-out rate is the consequence of socio-economic problems that exist in some communities. On travelling distance to school, the report found that large numbers of learners lived far from the schools suggesting the need for scholar transport. There is presently poor management of scholar transport by the Department of Education in the Eastern Cape and it is, therefore, not surprising to learn about this point. On learning and teaching support material, the report noted poor levels of asset and budget management and poor retrieval systems for textbooks. In more than 60% of reported cases there were not enough textbooks in some or all subjects for all the grade 12 learners, something which might contribute to poor learner attainment. Again here there needs to be strong measures at school level to ensure that books given to learners are returned in good order so that their life span can last for at least five years. Extra classes in the form of winter, summer and Saturday classes were found merely to increase the quantity of poor quality teaching that is not likely to better the results. What is even of more concern here, according to the report, is the fact that educators who regularly produced extremely poor results were also appointed as tutors in these extra classes, thus undermining the issue of quality assurance. This point emphasises the rationale behind this study which is to investigate the perceptions of educators regarding the impact of these departmental matric intervention strategies and their efficacy in bailing out under-performing schools. There were also incubation strategies used, similar to those of the UK's underperforming schools, which were applied as attempts to expose learners from an under-achieving school to teaching from a successful educator at a high-achieving school, either by taking learners to the other school or by bringing the educator to the under-achieving school.

Conclusions made from the findings of the project: The qualitative feedback of the project yielded many comments that indicated its significant impact on some schools in the community. The impact of the project was evaluated from the November 2006 matric results of the 45 target schools. The results showed that six of the target schools did not improve their results but the overall improvement in the target schools was so much better than the Provincial improvement of 2.6% and on that basis the project was considered a success. Some other schools in the target were found to be so problem-ridden and ineffectual that they would never become viable and needed to be closed down as part of amalgamation and rationalization process (ibid: 2006).

The evaluation given above has found district offices to be least effective and also not equipped to support under-performing schools. Teacher unions and educators were not consulted during the development of these strategies. The lack of co-ordination of the strategies by the provincial co-ordinator resulted in districts not getting some of the decisions taken at the head office and this led to lack of accountability measures by the principals of under-performing schools. The report further highlighted some socio-economic problems, such as union interference and educator and learner absenteeism, as having a negative impact on attempts to improve school under-performance with the result that the very programme collapsed. The report further reveals that educators with the poorest matric results were appointed as tutors in MIP classes. The significant gap identified by this study is that both strategies do not address the education process, teaching and learning, in terms of how to improve it to achieve the required learning outcomes (outputs). Both strategies appear to exist on paper with no proper management of their implementation at district level, leading to concern by all respondents that the strategies lack monitoring and evaluation. This point emphasises the rationale behind this study which is to investigate the perceptions of educators regarding the impact of these departmental matric intervention strategies and their efficacy in bailing out under-performing schools from the morass of poor matric results. This is confirmed by the Eastern Cape Department of Education (2010) when it argues that school under-performance in this Province has the capacity to defy all attempts that have been employed in a variety of modes.

2.5 CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has reviewed literature that addresses the phenomenon of school performance by exploring two models as well as their relevance to the South African situation. Apart from this, the chapter has also presented a theoretical framework that guides this study, based on school effectiveness and school improvement theories. The chapter ends by discussing a range of strategies that were employed by different countries in addressing school under-performance and this is followed by an evaluation of the two strategies by the Eastern Cape Institute for Leadership. The next chapter (Chapter 3) will present the research methodology that was used to gather data on what educators in the Queenstown District perceive to have been the impact of the two departmental matric intervention strategies (MIP and LAIS) in addressing under-performance of schools during the past five years.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a description of the research methodology and its appropriateness for this study. According to Babbie and Mouton (2001) research methodology refers to the methods, techniques and procedures that are employed in the process of implementing the research design or research plan. This methodology chapter is divided into five main sections. The first section addresses research orientation. The second one deals with the research design. Following that is a description of cases and ethical considerations. Lastly, there is a reflection on the methods of data collection and approaches to data collection. The chapter ends by providing some conclusions.

3.2 ORIENTATION TO THE RESEARCH

Van Rensberg (2001) defines orientation as referring to finding a particular bearing, facing in a particular direction in relation to other directions, other ways of looking at and doing research, that is, other methodologies. With regard to methodology, orientation provides the framework around which research is done and designed (*ibid*). In other words, it is a framework for methodology. Gough (2001) contends that methodology is a theory and analysis of how research should proceed. The orientation of this research is interpretivism with the corresponding ontology, epistemology and methodology as summarized in table 3.1 below. This is what led to the use of interviews, field notes and document analysis as means of gathering data for this study. According to Gray (2004), epistemology provides a philosophical background for deciding what types of knowledge are legitimate and adequate. Gray (2004) further states that the structure of the research includes the kind of evidence gathered at the place it was gathered and how it will be interpreted. It is precisely because of this background that the researcher has employed multiple data sources in order to eliminate any biased ideas and views.

Table 3.1 showing descriptions of the four paradigms of interpretivism
Source: An orientation to Research: Adapted from Van Rensberg (2001)

Ontology	Internal reality of personal, subjective experience
Epistemology	Empathic, observer inter-subjectivity
Methodology	Interactional, interpretive and qualitative
Knowledge interest	Practical

The interpretive philosophy is based on the belief that science is subjective and therefore allows alternative models of reality. In terms of the interpretivist perspective, there are factors like social interaction; influence among researchers; the idiosyncrasies of the individual researchers; and the researcher’s subjective interpretations which need to be carefully managed during data collection. Cohen *et al* (2007) contends that the problem with the interpretivist approach is that the very process whereby one interprets and defines a situation is itself a product of the circumstances in which one is placed and thus caution should be taken regarding the power of researchers to impose their own definitions of situations upon participants. The choice of this interpretivist approach is because its interpretation is based on a systematically carried out enquiry. The aim of this study is to determine the perceptions of educators regarding the efficacy of the two departmental matrix strategies, so it’s going to entail working with human behaviour and actions as opposed to working with objects. Since this study is going to employ interviews as the main data-gathering instrument, the interpretation of what respondents say is crucial in improving its validity.

Babbie and Mouton (2001) contend that the interpretivist paradigm is based on the assumption that human phenomena are fundamentally distinct from natural phenomena because human behavior creates some meaning and all human actions have an element of

historicity. This, in simple terms, implies that one aims at interpreting (hence interpretivism) or understanding human behaviour, rather than explaining or predicting. In other words, interpretive approaches focus on actions as a means of understanding or trying to ascertain the intentions of actors. This is further echoed by Cohen *et al* (2007) who argue that interpretive paradigms strive to understand and interpret the world in terms of its actors with strong emphasis on meanings and interpretations. In this study, this orientation has led to the use of interviews, field notes and document analysis as instruments of gathering data for this study in trying to ascertain educator perceptions of the impact of the Departmental matric intervention strategies in dealing with under-performance in schools in the Queenstown District.

3.2.1 Approach to the study

This is a qualitative study that employs interviews and document analysis as means of data collection. Qualitative methods have been chosen for this study because they are designed to provide an in-depth description of the practice or setting, which is 'under-performance' in this case, and 'perceptions' of educators of the Matric Intervention Strategies (MIS) as an attempt to bail out under-performing schools from the quagmire of bad results. According to Mertens (2005) qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This, in simple terms, means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. If one were to use quantitative research for this study, it would be difficult to measure the perceptions of educators because perceptions are more like feelings that individuals hold about something. The following sub-section focuses on the research design for this study.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

According to Bogdan and Biklen (2003), design is used in research to refer to the researcher's plan of how to proceed. A design is therefore a plan and structure of the investigation which is used to obtain evidence to answer research questions. In other

words, the design describes the procedures and techniques of conducting the study with a view to improving its validity in the examination of the research problem. This suggests that research design should be viewed as the “blue print” of the research project that precedes the actual research process, which involves the planning of how the research is to be undertaken. The importance of a well planned research design is to ensure that the researcher arrives at the correct destination having followed all the necessary steps like a traveller who studies the route map before undertaking a journey. The purpose of the research design is to achieve greater control of variables, thus improving the validity in the examination of the research problem. In the case of this study, a set of questions to be answered by respondents was established, guided by the purpose of the study and the strategies that will be employed in answering specific research questions. In this way the researcher is able to anticipate what the appropriate research decisions should be so as to maximize the validity of the eventual results. This is what makes this study a qualitative research which is characterized by an understanding of the perceptions of educators of the impact of the two departmental strategies in addressing under-performance of schools in the Queenstown District.

3.3.1 Case study

This research is based on a case study of two schools in the Hewu circuit of the Queenstown District which is predominantly rural in nature. According to Bogdan and Biklen (2003), a case study is a detailed examination of one setting or a single subject and case studies vary in their complexity but are easier to accomplish than multi-subject studies. According to Gillham(2000) the advantage of using a case study is that it searches for a string of evidence that will be summarized and analyzed to get the best possible answers because they employ a number of sources of evidence allowing for convergence. In this piece of research, these schools are identified as school A and school B to protect their identities. Mertens (2005) contends that case studies are interpretive in nature and involve intensive and detailed study of one individual or of a group as an entity, through observation, interviews and document and records review. The two schools have a number of common features like under-performance affecting them. According to Cozby (2007), a

case study is done when an individual or organisation has a particular rare, unusual or noteworthy condition. This unusual condition is consistent school under-performance characterizing them. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) argue that in the social sciences and human services, the case study has working parts; it is purposive and often has a self. The two further contend that a case study is both a process of inquiry about the case and the product of that inquiry (*ibid*). It is for this reason that I chose to discuss how the cases were selected and to provide description about each case as set out in paragraph 3.3.2 and 3.3.3.

3.3.2 Case selection

The two schools used in this study have been purposively selected on the grounds that both are consistent under-performers that have continually performed below the average percent of the Queenstown District during the past five years (refer to table 1.2). The rationale behind choosing two schools was not to compare their school performance, but rather to obtain “thick description” of educator perceptions of the MIS, using the interpretive research paradigm. Cohen *et al* (2007) contends that purposive sampling is a feature of qualitative research which involves researchers handpick the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of their judgement of their typicality or possession of the particular characteristics being sought. This is exactly the case with the two schools chosen in this study because both are under-performing high schools and have been performing below the Queenstown District average percent during the past five years. As the name suggests, the sample has been chosen for a specific purpose and the focus of the study will be on educators who have been exposed to the Matric Intervention Programme (MIS) for the past five years. (*ibid*:2007) further contends that, while purposive sample may satisfy the researcher’s needs to take this type of sample, it does not pretend to represent the wider population; it is deliberately and unashamedly selective and biased.

Fraenkel and Wallen (2009) contend that purposive sample is different from convenience sampling in that researchers do not simply study whoever is available but rather use their judgement to select a sample that they believe, based on prior information, will provide the

data they need. This is exactly the case with this study; its objective was to investigate the perceptions of educators of the impact of the Matric Intervention Programme (MIS) in addressing under-performance in selected high schools in the Hewu area. Clearly, not all schools in the Hewu circuit are consistent under-performers such that they can be included in this study and hence the idea of purposive sample is justified. Even at school level, not all educators of the selected schools will form part of the sample; the focus is mainly on those who have been exposed to MIS in the past five years and have been teaching in these schools. Cozby (2007) supports this view by saying the purpose of purposive sample is to obtain a sample of people who meet some predetermined criterion. Struwig and Stead (2001) have found that one strong characteristic of purposive sampling is that new sampling units can be added if the previous units provide insufficient information due to new insights or hypothesis being developed as the study progresses.

Denzin and Lincoln (2000) have found that the unique aspect of a case study in the social sciences and human services is the selection of cases to study. As a consequence of the above, this study has selected two high schools in the one Circuit of Queenstown on the basis of them experiencing the perennial problem of under-performance over five years as reflected in the District analysis. Both schools are part of the on-going supervision, monitoring and support by the Eastern Cape Department of Education through the Matric Intervention Programme (MIP) and Learner Attainment and Improvement Strategy (LAIS). The two Matric Intervention Strategies mentioned here are aimed at rescuing under-performing Eastern Cape schools with poor matric result. In spite of these two schools receiving support from the Eastern Cape Department of Education, they constantly perform below the District average percentage as shown in table 1. 2. This is the rationale behind the choice of these two schools: the researcher will be able to make better and informed generalisations about the perceptions of educators in other schools not chosen in the sample.

3.3.3 Case description

Two schools taken from the Queenstown district in the Eastern Cape were named schools A and B in order to protect their identity. The two schools chosen for this investigation are located in the Hewu circuit of the Queenstown District which is predominantly rural in nature and has a high number of under-performing high schools in the Matric Intervention Programme. Another common feature of these two schools is that both are 'no fee' schools in terms of the new and current funding norms as outlined in circular no.57 of 2009. Each school will be individually examined below.

3.3.3.1 School A

This school is deep in the rural areas of Hewu Circuit about 30km away from town on a gravel road and, because of this, the school is in quintile 2. School A had an enrolment of 135 learners for the academic year 2011. There are eight permanent teaching staff members and one temporary educator. In terms of the current staff establishment, the school qualifies to have one principal and one head of department (HOD) who should manage the three set of streams that exist in the school with different subjects or learning areas. The school is losing one educator by a process of redeployment so that the number could stay at eight for teaching staff members. The school under question also has one secretary with a computer in her office but no telephone available. According to the district analysis of the matric results which is shown in table 1.3, school A has never performed above 50% in its pass rate. During piloting, no records could be found by the researcher for analysis of results for all grades, suggesting poor record-keeping by the principal.

The school under question has a modern type of building, something which suggests that it was built in the 1980's with good sanitation and modern toilets for both staff members and learners. There are eight classrooms in the school, one science laboratory with little equipment, one library/ media centre which is being used as a book storeroom, and one cyber laboratory with 20 brand-new computers, which were donated by the Department of Education. Unfortunately, there is neither an educator specialist for computer studies nor

someone to introduce basic computer skills to all grades in the school; as a result the computers are picking up dust. Out of the eight classrooms that exist in the school, only six are being used due to declining learner numbers. The surroundings are very neat and learners are in full school uniform. The main gate is kept locked at all times and there is a general assistant who opens it for visitors.

3.3.3.2 School B

School B is also in the rural areas of Hewu Circuit about 10km from town and is placed in quintile 3 in terms of the current funding norms for public schools. The school has an enrolment of 230 learners with 16 teaching staff members and 3 Heads of Department. In terms of the current staff establishment, the school qualifies to have 10 educators, one principal and one Head of Department (HOD) who should manage three sets of different streams. The school is losing 6 educators, including two HOD's, by a process of redeployment due to declining learner numbers. There is one school secretary for the whole school with a computer, a printer, a photocopier and there is a telephone in her office.

The school has the modern type of building which is still very strong with no cracks at all and it has electricity and flushing toilet facilities. The school under question has one science laboratory with a few out-dated chemicals, and one library/media centre which is also being used as a book/storeroom. There are 20 classrooms in all excluding the laboratories and only 11 are currently being used due to declining learner numbers. There are three class groups in grades 10, 11 and 12 respectively with few learners. There is also one fully equipped laboratory which was meant for home economics/hospitality studies but is presently being used for government nutrition due to the inability to get a qualified educator for this learning area. According to the district analysis of the matric results, school B has never attained a pass percentage above 40 during the past five years.

The school is headed by the deputy principal in an acting capacity but he does not have an approval letter from the District Office of Queenstown endorsing his acting position and is also not being paid. The permanent principal was demoted by the Head Office for not

making an impact on improving school performance and was moved to another school. The consequence of this leadership crisis caused by the Queenstown District Office is that there are managerial conflicts in the school as to who should head the school. The surroundings in the school are very neat, suggesting that the school is well managed by the acting incumbent in spite of these challenges. The other thing that the researcher observed during piloting and during interviews was the high level of discipline by the learners in terms of observing all their periods under the strict supervision of the principal. The school under question has a good filing system and the school secretary appeared to know her work very well. The schools' main gate is kept locked at all times to avoid bunking of classes by learners. There is also a general assistant who opens the gate for visitors as directed by the principal and who also does tree planting in the school.

The following table shows the resource allocation for the quintiles of the two case study schools and other public ordinary schools. This is done to show the funding that goes to these schools with little or no rate of return in this investment due to their consistent under-performance in the Queenstown district.

Table 3.2: Resource allocations for public ordinary schools, including “no fee” schools with targets per learner amounts for school allocation. (Source): Circular no. 57 of 2009 on Resource allocations for Public schools.

Quintile status	Financial year 2008 \ 2009	Financial year 2009 \ 2010	Financial year 2010 \ 2011
1	R775.	R807.	R855.
2	R711.	R740.	R784.
3	R414.	R605.	R784.
4	R185.	R404.	R428.
5	R77.	R134.	147.

In terms of this table 3.2 above, the government funding that goes to school A in quintile 2 is shown for every financial year. The same goes for funding for school B in quintile 3.

3.4 PILOTING

Piloting was part of the field work done by the researcher and it was conducted two weeks before the date of interviews, after permission had been sought from the principals of the two case study schools. Piloting was done to pre-test the interview schedule and its relevance to the study and also to assess the level of co-operation of respondents. In view of the qualitative nature of this study, the researcher had to design an interview schedule with questions to be answered by respondents. The first step was to visit the two sites as part of piloting before the date of interviews to explain the purpose of the study and why certain questions had been chosen. The other reason for piloting was to select the purposive sample of 8 respondents, four in each school including the principal, so that ethical issues could be discussed only with the selected respondents. In this regard, the researcher was assisted by the principals who were also automatically part of the sample. On the day of piloting, the researcher was also able to explain to the respondents that all interviews were to be tape recorded to increase the validity of the study. The researcher also explained to the respondents that participation was voluntary. The entire process of interviews was explained by the researcher, including the probing and follow up questions that are sometimes asked to get more clarity of the issue at hand. All respondents in both schools agreed to be tape recorded and were keen to help the researcher with the information required by his study. Piloting also helped to identify rooms where interviews would be conducted and dates for interviews for each respondent in each school were also set. The need to review documents and certain records was explained on the day of piloting. The pilot study assisted the researcher in assigning some codes to the respondents and the order in which they were to be interviewed; their telephone numbers were also taken for purposes of confirming dates for the appointment. Document analysis was done on day two of pilot study to check on the availability of assessment guidelines; schedule of results for the past five years; pace setters; record of analysis of results; school improvement plan (SIP) and how it was used to turn the situation around; staff development programmes; monitoring instruments for syllabus coverage and minutes of staff meetings during the start of the year in the same sites to compare with interview results.

3.5 METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

According to Fraenkel and Wallen (2009), there are three main techniques used by qualitative researchers to collect and analyse data and these include observing people as they go about their daily activities and recording what they do; conducting in-depth interviews with people about their ideas and opinions and their experiences; and analysing documents. Data in this study was collected by means of document analysis and semi-structured and unstructured interviews. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) contend that the use of interviewing to acquire information is so extensive today that it has been said that we live in an “interview society”. Fraenkel and Wallen (2009) argue that interviewing is an important way for the researcher to check the accuracy of, or to verify or refute, the impressions he has gained through observation. This is precisely the reason why interviews have been chosen for this study.

3.5.1 Interviews as a research technique

A total of 8 educators, four from school A and another four from school B, participated in this study. All eight respondents voluntarily agreed to be interviewed and tape-recorded on different days since the distance between the two schools is very vast. It was not possible for the researcher to interview more than one respondent on each day due to the extensive nature of the interview schedule. Interviews were chosen for this study so as to adhere to qualitative requirements. Yin (2003) claims that interviews are the most vital source of case study information and they have rich data. It is for that reason that the researcher chose interviews to investigate educator perceptions of the impact of the departmental MIS on these two selected under-performing schools in the Hewu circuit of the Queenstown District.

Struwig and Stead (2001) differentiate between three common types of interviews, namely the standardised (structured), the semi-standardised (semi-structured) and the unstandardised (unstructured) interviews. This study has employed semi-structured and unstructured interviews. The former is a combination of the structured and unstructured

interviews and proceeds with a set of predetermined questions which were posed to each participant in a systematic and consistent way, but the participants were also given the opportunity to discuss issues beyond the questions' confines. This technique enabled the researcher to obtain multiple responses to set questions and allowed for detailed responses (*ibid*). All the questions that were asked in the interview schedule for principals and for educators took into consideration the existing data from the literature review. According to Kelly (2006), conducting an interview is a natural form of interacting with people and gives the researcher an opportunity to get to know people quite intimately so that he or she can really understand how they think and feel. This is the reason the researcher chose to use semi-structured interviews for this study to probe deep into the perceptions of respondents regarding the impact of the departmental Matric Intervention Strategies as a means of assisting schools with poor matric results.

Section A of the interview schedule contained the biographical data of respondents, section B dealt with the impact of MIS on school performance and section C dealt with the pedagogical and professional development roles of MIS officers. On the day of piloting, the researcher explained the information required from the respondents in each of these sections without compromising the validity of the data.

In unstructured interviews, the interviewer explains the topic to be discussed to the participants without providing leading questions. With this technique in mind, the researcher was in a position to ask follow up questions based on the answers given by the respondents and this helped to make the data richer. Bogdan and Biklen (2003) argue that interviews are used in qualitative studies to gather descriptive data in the respondents' own words so that the researcher can develop insights on how respondents interpret some piece of the world. This was particularly appropriate for a topic like one aimed at investigating the perceptions of educators about the impact of the Matric Intervention Strategies on selected high schools used in this study.

Just before the date of interviews, the respondents were orientated about the purpose and confidentiality of interviews to make them at ease and to also make them aware that their

responses would be audio-taped. This was done on the 28th and 29th July 2011. Interviews started on the 22nd August 2011 and ended on the 2nd September 2011 and all respondents co-operated very well and were willing to share with the researcher every problem that they had about the two strategies. Participants were also made comfortable and at ease and this afforded the researcher an opportunity for probing questions where necessary. During the course of interviews, some field notes were taken by the researcher as a back-up for cases of respondents who might refuse to be tape recorded but that did not happen. Field notes also helped the researcher to remember details of records seen and analyzed as well as comments made by respondents. Even in instances where probing questions were asked, the respondents did not feel intimidated; instead they responded and gave their versions of the story regarding the two departmental strategies and support from the district office. The researcher found interviewing to be a hectic exercise that required a lot of preparation before the date of interviews and after each interviewee a lot of work was done with the data collected in terms of putting it together, guided by the tape recordings. This exercise was done to ensure correct interpretation of the views of respondents in order to reduce errors that might occur during data analysis. In summary, no problems were encountered during the interviews; all the respondents were punctual for their appointments in the allocated rooms, while the researcher always arrived an hour earlier than the time of the interview with each respondent.

3.5.2 Document and records review

Another technique employed in this research is the review of documents and records. According to Bogdan and Biklen (2003), the term 'documents' refers to materials like records that can be used as supplemental information in case studies where the main source of information is participant observation or interviewing. The focus of this study was on official documents used by educators to keep a record of assessments used and accompanying schedules containing a summary of the results for each term and year in order to ascertain the performance of learners in monthly, quarterly and mid-year exams. Documents containing minutes of staff development programmes were also reviewed, together with school improvement plans and MIP and LAIS documents. According to Gray

(2004), the advantage of exploring organizational records is to improve the reliability of data and to ensure that data obtained can be compared with other sources. Findings obtained from these documents were compared with the performance of learners in the end-year exams to determine the impact of the MIS in supporting and strengthening these schools. Other documents reviewed included sets of assessment guidelines supplied by the Department of Education and their usage during teaching and learning in subjects where under-performance is detected during the analysis of the results. Mertens (2005) argues that documents and records give the researcher access to information that would otherwise have been unavailable since the researcher cannot be everywhere at all times. He further argues that documents and records enable the qualitative researcher to get the necessary background to the situation and insights into the dynamics of the everyday functioning of the organization (*ibid*). Both principals did not have a problem in making these documents available since the procedure was explained during the pilot study. In school A, not all records needed by the researcher were readily available but the researcher was able to liaise with the exam section of the District Office to get the information required since permission had already been granted.

3.5.3 Field notes

Field notes were used in this study to record details of what was observed in the sites so that the information could be remembered during data analysis. According to Gray (2004), field notes are the backbone of collecting and analyzing field data and develop out of observations whilst in the field. Field notes also help to cross-check the tape recorded information, especially if short-hand writing was used during their writing to save time. Field notes were very useful during the transcription of the data by the researcher word for word. Another advantage of field notes is to check if what was said by the respondents is supported by the information in the documents and records that were reviewed by the researcher. Field notes also helped the researcher to note the managerial conflicts that exist in school B, and they assisted with reading and understanding the comments made by some respondents during interviews. The description of the two cases would not have been

possible without field notes. Thus, note taking was done on and off the field to increase the validity of data.

3.6 RESEARCH RIGOUR

When human beings are used as participants in a scientific study, the researchers must address quite a range of ethical issues that include rights of respondents to participate voluntarily in the study and to pull out at any given time (Polit and Beck, 2008). In other words, research rigour is about the promotion of good conduct by researchers during research by following generally accepted norms and values of scientific research whilst searching for truth but not at the expense of the participants or the violation of scientific rules.

3.6.1 Ethical measures

Struwig and Stead (2001) contend that conducting research is an ethical enterprise and they further define ethics as 'a system of morals, rules of behaviour'. This code of moral behaviour seeks to prevent researchers from engaging in scientific misconduct, such as distorting and inventing data, plagiarising the work of others, re-publishing their data as an original contribution without proper acknowledgement, failing to maintain the confidentiality and privacy of research participants, not executing the study properly and reporting results falsely (*ibid*). Fraenkel and Wallen (2009) contend that ethics refers to questions of right or wrong and being able to conform to the standards of conduct of a given profession or group, and what is ethical is a matter of agreement among researchers. Mertens (2005) supports this view by saying that ethical guidelines in research are needed to guard against obvious atrocities like deception and invasion of privacy. Proper citation was also observed as required by the University of Fort Hare.

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000) the code of ethics in scientific research has more to do with informed consent, accuracy, privacy and confidentiality. As a consequence of the above, permission to conduct this study was sought and obtained from the Superintendent

General for Education in the Eastern Cape Province (see annexure1). A copy of the interview schedule is also attached (see annexure 7). Permission was also obtained from the District Office of Queenstown as well as from the principals of the participating schools (see annexure 2). The rights of participants were protected throughout and all of them were informed that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any given time should they so wish without giving reasons. Participants' identities were also protected and all data obtained from them was treated with confidentiality. Since interviews were used in this study, the respondents' privacy and anonymity were assured. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) further contend that data obtained from the respondents must be accurately recorded and interpreted to prevent omissions and contrivances which are both non-scientific and unethical. Privacy and anonymity of respondents were ensured throughout and the information supplied by them was treated with a great deal of confidentiality. The following sub-section discusses a few of these ethical measures.

3.6.2 Measures to ensure trustworthiness

- **Credibility**

According to Streubert and Carpenter (2007) credibility denotes the belief and confidence that those who read the report will have and accept the research findings as true. Struwig and Stead (2001), on the other hand, argue that conducting research is an ethical enterprise. Credibility requires on the part of researchers to uphold the standards of their profession and accept responsibility for their actions in terms of ensuring that the study can be used as a source of reference for further research. Credibility can be enhanced by ensuring that results from data obtained are correctly and accurately interpreted during analysis. Babbie and Mouton (2001) contend that data obtained must 'ring true', meaning it must be credible, and this can be achieved by, among other things, 'member checks' suggesting that data must be double checked against its source to make sure that it has been correctly interpreted. The very topic that is being researched must contribute and add value to the body of knowledge that exists in our libraries by addressing gaps that exist. The instruments used to collect data were also relevant and appropriate to the study topic. Fraenkel and Wallen (2009) contend that instruments used to collect data must give an

assurance that the information obtained will enable the researcher to draw correct conclusions about educator perceptions. Another way of maximising credibility of the study is by acknowledging references properly and avoiding plagiarism so that readers can trust what has been written in a particular piece of study. All the precautions given above were followed and observed to make this study credible.

- **Transferability**

Transferability, according to Streubert and Carpenter (2007), refers to the possibility that research findings can be meaningful to others in similar situations. It is also referred to as “fittingness”. “Fittingness” lies with those who will use the findings of the study and not with the researcher (*ibid*). Babbie and Mouton (2001) define transferability as the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied in other contexts or with other respondents. The two further contend that this can be achieved through ‘thick description of data’ and ‘purposive sampling’. This is further echoed by Mertens (2005) who defines ‘thick description’ as extensive and careful description of the time, place, context and culture which enables the reader to make judgements to assess the degree of similarity between the study site and the receiving context. This is precisely the reason why multiple methods were used to collect rich and credible data. According to Cary (1988) naturalistic research assumes that the end products of its enquiry will only be working hypotheses for other researchers at other times and in other contexts. Cary further argues that transferability is a matter of ascertaining the degree of similarity between the original context and the context targeted for possible application of the results. Transferability can be enhanced by ensuring that rich or thick data is obtained during data collection. Thick description of data, according to Cary, could also mean purposive sampling which is discussed under case description in this document. This can only be possible if the data obtained shows some variation to increase the level of trustworthiness of the study.

- **Dependability**

Streubert and Carpenter (2007) contend that dependability of the qualitative data refers to the stability of data over time and over conditions. Dependability follows after the researcher has demonstrated the credibility of the research findings (*ibid*). Mertens (2005) has identified dependability as the qualitative parallel to reliability, something which calls for an audit to attest to the appropriateness of the inquiry. In this study the data set has been attached (see annexure 6) so as to compare findings with raw data. Cary contends that dependability is an inquiry done to ascertain whether the results of the study can be accepted and how the findings have been reported and the degree of accuracy of data interpretation. In evaluating this study, the data obtained was accurately interpreted and cross-checked with the respondents before final conclusions were made.

- **Confirmability**

According to Babbie and Mouton (2001) confirmability is the degree to which the findings of one study are the product of the focus of the inquiry and not of the biases of the researcher. This view is confirmed by Streubert and Carpenter (2007) when they argue that confirmability relates to the recording of the findings and activities over time that are so clear that another person can follow. Guba and Lincoln (1989) as cited by Mertens (2005) have identified confirmability as the qualitative parallel to objectivity which means that the influence of the researcher's judgement is minimized. This means that the data and its interpretation are not figments of the researcher's imagination. This is about ensuring that the results of the study can be confirmed by others due to the high degree of its correctness in the interpretation of results. This has to do with issues of validity which means accurate representation of information. It must also be borne in mind that naturalistic approaches are open ended and qualitative researchers, being concerned with context, believe that first hand observation of the phenomenon in its natural setting provides its greatest understanding. Information gained in this way leaves very little room for doubt by

consumers of this study. This is what led to the use of multiple data sources in order to eliminate any biased views by the researcher.

3.6.3 Ensuring validity

According to Fraenkel and Wallen (2009: 147), validity refers to the appropriateness, meaningfulness, correctness and usefulness of the inferences a researcher makes. What this means is that the quality of instruments used must at all times promote the validity of the research so that all conclusions that are arrived at could be the ones based on the information obtained using these instruments. This helps to avoid distorting the information obtained from the participants. Cozby (2007: 86) defines validity as the “true” and accurate representation of information. Struwig and Stead (2001) contend that validity is the extent to which a research design is scientifically sound or appropriately conducted. In other words, validity is the extent to which an instrument measures what it is intended to measure and this is what led to the choice of interviews as instruments for gathering data.

Struwig and Stead argue that validation in qualitative research, as in this study, refers to the degree to which people can rely on the concepts, methods and inferences of a study, or tradition of inquiry, as the basis for our own theorizing and empirical research. It is against this background that the concept of triangulation was employed in this research to promote validity by using interviews and document analysis as instruments of gathering data from the two schools selected. As a consequence of the above, because qualitative data techniques were employed in this study, the findings emanating from the interviews were first discussed with respondents before the final results were compiled to ensure that their views had been interpreted accurately and correctly, thus improving the validity and reliability of the results.

Cozby (2007) distinguishes between two types of validity, namely, internal and external validity. According to Cozby, internal validity refers to the ability to draw conclusions about causal relationships from the data, especially when strong inferences can be made that one variable caused change in the other variable. External validity, on the other hand, is the

extent to which the results can be generalized to other populations and settings (*ibid*). Mertens (2005) confirms this point by saying internal validity means that the changes observed in the dependent variable are due to the effect of the independent variable, not to some other unintended variables. Mertens further contends that external validity is the extent to which findings in one study can be applied to another situation. Struwig and Stead (2001) define external validity as the extent to which one can generalise the results of a study to other populations. According to Cohen *et al* (2007), internal validity seeks to demonstrate that the explanation of a particular event, issue or set of data which a piece of research provides can actually be sustained by the data and this requires some accuracy in the interpretation of the views of the respondents. Fraenkel and Wallen (2009) also link the term reliability to validity and contend that reliability is the consistency of answers from one administration of an instrument to another, and from one set of items to another.

3.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter has discussed the orientation to the research and the approach guiding this study. The research design and methodology used have also been discussed. This chapter has also given a detailed description of the two case studies involved in this research. Piloting and methods of data collection have been discussed in this chapter too. The chapter also outlined how research quality was achieved, covering issues of measures of trustworthiness and ethics. The next chapter proceeds with data presentation and analysis.

CHAPTER 4

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to present data that was obtained from the interviews that the researcher conducted with principals and subject teachers of two under-performing high schools in the Queenstown District regarding their perceptions of the impact of the Departmental Matric Intervention Strategies (MIP and LAIS) in improving school under-performance in these schools. This chapter is divided into three sections, profile of respondents thematic analysis and conclusions.

4.1 PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

A total of 8 educators participated in this study. Their distribution by years of experience at their current school as well as in education is shown in tables 4.1(a) and 4.1(b).

Table 4.1 (a) Distribution of participants by years of teaching experience at current school

Years Teaching Experience	Number of Teachers		
	School A	School B	Total
0 – 5	0	1	1
6 – 10	0	1	1
11 – 15	2	0	2
16 – 20	1	1	2
Over 20	1	1	2
Total	4	4	8

It can be seen from the table that school A has more experienced teachers than school B as most of the teachers in school A have over 11 years of teaching, whereas school B has

two teachers below 10 years of teaching. On the whole, both schools have teachers with the necessary number of years of service to have experienced MIP and LAIS as Matric Intervention Strategies aimed at supporting such schools. It can also be seen from the table that both schools have been in existence for the past twenty years because each school has one respondent with over 20 years of teaching experience. The assumption is that teachers in both schools tried to adapt well to the interventions made by the Department of Education which are aimed at improving their school performances.

Table 4.1 (b) Distribution of participants by total years of teaching experience in education

Total Years Teaching Experience	<u>Number of Teachers</u>		
	School A	School B	Total
0 – 10	0	0	0
11 – 15	2	0	2
16 – 20	1	2	3
Over 20	1	2	3
Total	4	4	8

In terms of this table, both school A and B do not have teachers with total years of teaching experience of less than ten years. School A has only two teachers in the 11–15 year category whereas school B has more experienced teachers than school A. On the whole, both schools have teachers with the necessary experience to effect a change in school performance.

Table 4.2 Distribution of principals by years experience as principal

Number of Principals

Experience as Principal (Years)	School A	School B	Total
0-5	1	1	2
6-10	0	0	0
11-15	0	0	0
Over 15	0	0	0

In terms of this table, both respondents have a total experience of between 0 – 5 years as principals and they need maximum support from the District Office to empower them with the skills to develop genuine school improvement plans.

Table 4.3 (a) Distribution of respondents by highest level of academic qualifications

Number of Educators

Respondent	Highest Qualification	School A	School B	Total
A1	HDE	1	0	1
A2	ACE Hon.	1	0	1
A3	B Tech	1	0	1
A4	B Ed	1	0	1
B1	M Sc	0	1	1
B2	MPA	0	1	1
B3	B A Hon.	0	1	1
B4	B Ed Hon.	0	1	1
Total		4	4	8

In terms of this table, school A has one respondent with an academic degree

(BTech), which is not relevant to the teaching profession. In school B, there is one respondent with Masters in Public Administration (MPA) which is yet another academic degree that has nothing to do with the teaching profession; instead it qualifies one to lecture at tertiary institutions. There is no Public Administration as a subject at GET and FET bands in our schooling system. According to Taylor *et al* (2003), one of the factors that contribute to a good matric pass rate is the academic competence and proficiency of educators to teach matric students. The human resource management (HRM) of the Department of education has a responsibility to make an audit of the profile of all its employees to assess the relevance of qualifications so that employees can be deployed in areas of their specialisation. Educators must also be advised to register for courses that will make an impact on the teaching profession as a whole, rather than merely accumulating certificates. Allocation of subjects to teachers is determined to a great extent by the qualifications of teachers and their major subjects; consequently, MPA and BTech do not have major subjects that have a direct bearing on the school curriculum. On the whole, school B has more properly qualified teachers than school A to effect a change in school performance.

Table 4.3 (b) Distribution of respondents according to grades teaching and learning areas

Table 4.3(b) Distribution of respondents according to grades currently teaching

Respondent	Grades Teaching	Currently Learning Areas
A1	8,9&10	EMS 8 & 9 Eng 8 & 9 Agric 10
A2	8 – 12	SS 8 & 9 IsiXhosa 10-12
A3	8 – 12	English and Lo
A4	11 – 12	Agric. Science
B1	12	Life Sciences
B2	12	English
B3	8, 11 & 12	IsiXhosa and LO
B4	10 – 12	Accounting

In table 4.3 (b), respondent A1 teaches three different subjects, two in the GET band and another one in the FET band, meaning three different preparations in a day. To make it worse, respondent A1 has questionable credibility to handle a science subject with a HDE which is rather a generalist professional qualification. The same goes for respondent A2 who also has two different subjects in different grades, one in the GET band and one in the FET band, meaning five different preparations in a day. With this heavy workload sitting on the shoulders of this teacher, no justice can be done to learners in terms of providing quality teaching and learning. Again, in school A you have respondent A3 who teaches English and LO from grade 8 to 12 meaning ten different preparations in a day, with a Bachelor of Technology to crown it all. Effective teaching and learning can never be possible under these circumstances because what we are seeing in school A is a picture of multi-grade teaching that is caused by a shortage of teachers. It is no wonder that all respondents complain about multi-grade teaching as one of the factors leading to under-performance prevailing in their schools. Multi-grade teaching could be further compounded if there are two or more class groups in the General Education and Training (GET) band since they are entry levels in the school with big numbers. Again in school A we see a picture where the principal, who is identified as respondent A4, teaches two different subjects in the FET and has to do administrative work at the same time.

With regard to school B, there is one respondent who teaches isiXhosa and LO in three different grades, meaning three different preparations in a day. The rest of the teachers in school B have either one or two different preparations in a day but in the FET band. On the whole, teachers in school A are more overworked and over loaded than those of school B, meaning that there is an acute shortage of teachers in school A. It is also interesting to note from the table that none of the eight respondents is teaching either maths or physical science, not even respondent B1 with a Masters in Science. Perhaps this suggests that the shortage of suitably qualified educators for science subjects is a problem experienced by these two schools or perhaps the schools have opted to do away completely with science teachers. If this is the case, then students who wish to do engineering courses would surely be at disadvantaged in these schools because of the limitations in the curriculum.

According to the Eastern Cape Department of Education (2011) a large number of schools in our province are small and unviable for effective schooling, which results in a situation where it is difficult to resource these schools, from a human resource, material and physical infrastructure point of view. (Ibid: 2011) goes further to say that this fragmented secondary schooling system is seen to contribute to poor learner achievements as learners from junior secondary schools are ill-prepared for the FET phase. The challenge is exacerbated by very low enrolments in most senior secondary schools in the rural areas, with concomitant low staff establishments for such schools. This problem has serious consequences in terms of teacher allocations for critical subjects like maths physics, accounting and geography, to mention but a few; otherwise the list is endless. This is why we have multi-grade teaching in the two schools used in this study and this inevitably compromises the quality of teaching and learning as educators not only deal with multi-grade teaching within one phase but across two or three phases (refer to table 4.3 (b)).

Multi-grade teaching is one of the least favoured grade arrangements in the Eastern Cape Province because it involves a combination of two or more grade levels. It is common in small rural and farm schools where learner numbers are small, resulting in teacher shortages. The danger with multi-grade teaching is that it leads to a situation where teachers are overworked, especially if they do not even receive professional development on how to manage a multi-grade arrangement. All eight respondents complained about multi-grade teaching as impacting negatively on their attempts to improve school performance. According to data in this chapter, respondents argued that multi-grade teaching has the potential to render them ineffective, especially if they also have to teach subjects or learning areas for which they are not qualified. This problem is further aggravated by the apathy among educators to teach in rural and remote schools and failure by the DoE to provide rural incentives to attract qualified educators.

Table 4.4 Distribution according to learner enrolment, number of educators and SMT members.

Learner enrolment, educators and SMT			
	School A	School B	Total
Learners	135	300	435
Educators	9	16	25
SMT	3	4	7

Table 4.4 depicts a picture of 435 learner enrolment for both schools, 25 educators and 7 SMTs. In terms of this table, school A has 135 learners and school B has 300 learners, making an enrolment total of 435, which is too low given that it comes from two schools. According to the Eastern Cape Department of Education (2011), the post distribution model is based on the principle that available posts are distributed to schools proportionally to their number of weighted learners, taking into consideration factors like maximum ideal class size applicable to a specific learning area or phase, and the size of the school. As a consequence of this model, school A has 9 educators and 3 SMT members whereas school B has 16 educators and 4 SMT members. These two schools are classified as low enrolment schools in terms of learner numbers meaning that these schools have to increase learner enrolments in order to qualify for additional posts in their establishments or will have to sit with the problem of multi-grade teaching forever. The rural nature of these schools could also be a problem in attracting qualified educators, unless incentives are used by the Department of Education, which is not the case now.

Table 4.5 Distribution of respondents according to age

Distribution of respondents according to Age			
Age	School A	School B	Total
Below 20	0	0	0
21 – 30	0	0	0
31 – 40	0	0	0
Above 40	4	4	8
Total	4	4	8

Table 4.5 shows that all eight respondents are above forty years of age something, which suggests that they are well acquainted with the demands of their profession like provision of quality teaching and learning as well as dynamics of the profession like improvising under difficult circumstances. This age coupled with their wide teaching experience could also mean that these respondents are familiar with challenges experienced by their schools like problems that lead to under-achievement of learners and how to adjust their teaching styles to suite different situations. It is no wonder that all eight respondents have been at these two schools in the past five years and have been exposed to the two Departmental Matric Intervention Strategies namely MIP and LAIS.

4.2 THEMATIC ANALYSIS

4.2.1 Feelings of respondents about the performance of their schools in the 2010 matric examinations:

The general feeling of respondents (see data set 1) was that they were very disappointed with the matric results of 2010, as shown by respondent **ER3/B**,

20.3% for 2010 is very bad and it's lowering the image of the school and this means that we are dropping every year. Since 2007, we have been dropping every year...

It does appear from the responses that both schools had a target of 50% or 60% for 2010 and it just happened that they scored far below their target. One respondent had this to say in this regard,

They are an embarrassment to get below 50%. It gives a bad image about the school to the DoE, community and other schools.

(ER2/A)

This theme also reveals that there is a desire by educators of both schools to move out of the MIP programme, not only to avoid embarrassment from other schools,

I do not like it, its not a true reflection of our performance. Moving from 5.7% to 22% is a remarkable improvement but not our main goal. We will be happy if we move out of MIP.

(ER3/A)

It also became apparent from all eight respondents that numerous attempts are made each year to break the 60% rubricon required by the Department of Education but things just do not work in their favour. One respondent said,

It is very bad, its below target of 60% and for now its disappointing...This percentage is still putting learners at a disadvantage as too many of them fail to secure a pass.

(PR4/B)

4.2.2 Underlying causes cited by respondents for school under-performance

This theme came about as a justification for the consistent under-performance experienced by these two schools and almost all respondents cited a number of causes of shoddy performance. They also described the challenges experienced by managers of these schools to provide a real turn-around strategy for the improvement of school under-performance. These are printed below.

4.2.2.1 Problems related to educators

Data shows that there are five sets of problems that they see as contributing to under-performance. All are linked to the way educators operate.

4.2.2.1.1 Inadequate number of educators per post establishment:

Both schools experience an acute problem of teaching personnel, especially for maths and science subjects, something which leads to them having to cope with temporary educators to fill substantive vacant posts. One respondent had this to say in this regard,

Fortunately, we have a teacher periodically who is handling this maths. We do have teachers although like in 2010 Jan-March there was no teacher for maths and we secured one in April and he resigned before the end of the year. Now we have a new teacher who is a temporary teacher though.

(ER1/A)

The problem major problem with the post distribution model that was highlighted by respondents is the fact that it does not take into account the nine learning areas that are done in the General Education and Training (GET) band, especially in schools where the senior phase (grades 7, 8 and 9) is attached to the senior secondary phase (grades 10, 11 and 12). As a consequence of the above, some schools resort to using available teachers to teach learning areas or subjects that they are not qualified to teach, as stated by respondent **PR4/B**,

Revise staff establishment to cater for more relevant teachers for science subjects, presently, most of the teachers in certain subjects are not relevant people and hence there are gaps, some lack even the methodology of teaching

Another one said,

Our major problem is the staff establishment which does not address our curricular needs. We went as far as reducing the streams according to the number of teachers available and even ignoring their skills but simply attaching a subject to a teacher.

(ER1/A)

The educators in School B felt that they should at least be allocated educators to cover various learning areas as stated by PR4/B,

Clearly, you cannot expect a big improvement in a school where the manager teaches 4 classes and still be expected to do administrative work including supervision of teacher's work in the classes.

Another participant also said,

Life sciences, geo, maths, maths .literacy and agric are performing poorly but we do not have solutions for some of the problems due to multi-grade teaching. This impacts

negatively on teacher performance because we cannot even rotate teachers who have low pass rates because we do not have sufficient staff.

(PR4/A)

The problem with the two schools is that they have small enrolments such that they do not qualify for an adequate post establishment to suit their needs. According to the Eastern Cape Department of Education (2010), schools in the Eastern Cape Province are also faced with the problem of vacancies which are not being filled by the Department of Education, resulting in school managers having to opt for temporary educators whose contracts need to be renewed after every three months. It is possible under these circumstances that learners can sit for months without an educator for a specific learning area or learning areas. All four respondents in school A complained about not having an educator for their maths classes such that from January until March 2010, and even presently, they are coping with a temporary educator. One respondent said,

We do have teachers although like in 2010 Jan-March there was no teacher for maths and we secured one in April and he resigned before the end of the year. Now we have a new teacher who is a temporary teacher though.

(ER1/A)

Another one said,

Our focus changes every year, if its Geo this year by example, then next year it's another subject. Teachers complain about multi-grade teaching as the reason.

(ER1/A)

All eight respondents in both schools complained about substantive vacant posts that are not being filled by the Eastern Cape Department of Education and these impact negatively on their attempts to improve school under-performance. One respondent had this to say about this matter,

The DoE must release bulletins quarterly to fill all vacant posts and provide more qualified personnel for all subjects instead of using temporary teachers on contract basis.

(PR4/B)

Another respondent said,

...but we do not have solutions for some of the problems due to vacant teaching posts that are not being filled by the DoE.

(PR4/A)

As a consequence of the above, the principal of school A is a full time teacher in charge of agricultural science in grades 11 and 12, while that of school B is in charge of accounting in grades 10, 11 and 12, and both principals have little or no time to do administrative work. This problem is further compounded by the fact that both schools operate from grades 8 to 12 and have small enrolments but in grades 8 and 9 there are nine learning areas that are taught. The problem is so rife that most of the educators have irrelevant qualifications for the subjects that they are teaching, as echoed by respondent **PR4/B**,

...They must provide qualified personnel for all subjects and must be relevant to the subjects they teach.

(PR4/B)

One respondent commented that these schools experience a problem in recruiting qualified educators, especially in maths and science subjects, because of their rural nature. The Department of Maths, Science and Technology was singled out by all respondents in both schools as the one that is causing the school performance to collapse every year due to a shortage of suitably qualified educators. (See data set)

4.2.2.1.2 Educator absenteeism:

This theme emerged when respondents were asked about the nature of support given to under-performing schools by the Department and they cited it as one of the reasons their

schools continue to under-perform. This is confirmed by data obtained in research conducted by a team commissioned by the Basic Education Minister, Angie Motshekga, which found that 10,5% of teachers, i.e. one in 10, were absent at Eastern Cape schools annually and it further rated the Eastern Cape as having the highest teacher absenteeism rate in the country (Daily Dispatch, April 30, 2012). During interviews, one respondent had this to say,

Endemic problems exist in the school-regular absenteeism of teachers and learners. Syllabus completion is not possible under these conditions.

(ER2H/B)

Another one said,

The DoE does not care about us the case of the history teacher was reported to the DoE long time ago, no action was taken...attendance register also does not help the DoE to take action against teachers who do not attend school regularly.

(ER3/B)

The Department of Education expects educators to spend at least seven hours per day including contact time in school with the learners but it does appear that this is not the case in some institutions. According to Dr Ken Alston quoted by the Daily Dispatch, teacher absenteeism could be worse than reported and he blamed school principals for refusing to comply with legislation by not reporting teacher absenteeism at schools, especially on Fridays and pay days (*ibid*). The problem is further aggravated by the fact that the District Office of Queenstown does not seem to be assisting school managers in their attempts to root out this problem, as can be seen from the three respondents cited in this theme. Other angry respondents had this to say about teacher absenteeism,

DoE must really support school managers and root out lay teachers who are untouchable and stop siding with perpetrators...they must assist me in dealing with absenteeism of teachers and implement leave without pay when I apply for it.

(PR4/B)

Another educator said,

...absenteeism by teachers is affecting us and only pitch up on the pay day.

(ER3/B)

Yet, another respondent said this about educator absenteeism,

Absenteeism by teachers is rife especially in history which got 12% and the teacher has since the 31st August 11 resigned, this is affecting school performance.

(ER2H/B)

4.2.2.1.3 Impact of educator unions:

Only school B seems to be affected by this problem. It consists of disruptions by unions like SADTU when they organise meetings for members early in the morning such that lazy teachers prefer not to report to school at all citing transport problems. One respondent commented like this,

Stop Unions from interfering with tuition time by calling meetings for members and go to an extent of preventing officials from monitoring teacher's work.

(PR4/B)

It became apparent during the interviews that there is some interference by some members of the South African Democratic Teachers' Union (SADTU) in the day to day management of schools and this accounts for a very high rate of absenteeism from school, especially those members who hold high positions in the offices of SADTU, either at regional, branch or site level. One respondent said this,

Presently, teachers have too much rights, my geography teacher is a unionist who is too busy to be in the class, such that we decided to phase out geography at all and we now have economics in its place.

(PR4/B)

Another respondent commented that,

...even in areas where we identify teacher gaps because teachers bring in the whole issue and call SADTU. Our hands are tight because SADTU does not want us to do class visits to identify gaps for development as HOD's and teachers are taking advantage of this and in the process, they do not get the necessary help because they prefer to wear the SADTU mask.

(ER2H/B)

Even in school A the principal commented about general meetings and memorial services that are organised by SADTU branch officials during school hours, resulting in some educators not completing their work. Under these circumstances, there is a need for educators to strike a balance between school work and union work so that learners do not have to suffer unnecessarily.

Union interference is further compounded by the fact that in some sites these office bearers are untouchables and they hardly complete the syllabus because they claim to have the right to time off for ten days annually to do union activities, as stipulated by the South African Schools' Act 84 of 1996. Another respondent even cited SADTU meetings and memorial services that are deliberately held during tuition time by union office-bearers to target managers who do not comply with this order so that they could face the full might of the union. Educators have a right to be unionised to protect them against unfair labour practices by the employer but, in exercising this right, due consideration must be taken not to violate the rights of learners to quality education. It is true that education is political in far more dynamic ways than is made out to be. Its political nature does not entail overt political activism, which encompasses strikes or protests, especially during tuition time as reported above.

4.2.2.1.4 Content gaps experienced by some educators:

With regard to content gaps experienced by some educators, both managers of schools A and B were unanimous in acknowledging the existence of this problem and further argued that some educators in their schools have inadequate knowledge to handle certain subjects or learning areas. Both managers cited the following as causes of these content gaps, namely, unqualified and under-qualified educators appointed, inability to attract qualified

educators for science subjects, curriculum changes which are on-going with little or no training by the DoE, irrelevant qualifications possessed by certain educators in relation to the curricular needs.

Both managers indicated that there were content gaps, which, according to them, are revealed by the analysis of results at the end of each term as well as at the end of the year when matric results come out and this is what each one said when asked about the existence of content gaps,

Yes, when we do analysis of results and this is also confirmed by teachers. We went as far as suggesting that MIP and LAIS should address the areas of concern.

(PR4/A)

According to this respondent, the areas of concern refer to insufficient knowledge possessed by certain educators to teach certain subjects, even their majors in grade 12, due to the ever-changing curriculum, and operating with unqualified and under-qualified educators, especially in science subjects.

Another respondent said this,

Yes, in science subjects, although teachers deny this but the results are telling us that there are gaps, science Department is one that is pulling us down every year.

(PR4/B)

The same respondent also said this,

Maths students have been coming to me complaining about their maths teacher and when I visit the class, SADTU site committee confronts me and say this is not allowed. What I saw was that the teacher brings a worked example to teach learners.

(PR4/B)

This was further confirmed by another respondent from school B who is a member of the School Management Team (SMT) who commented about educators who like to shift the

blame for shoddy performance to learners even when they are also guilty of the same offence. According to the Eastern Cape Department of Education (2010) the positive influence of highly motivated teachers, who have mastered their subject matter and have adequate pedagogic experience and insight, far outweighs the shortfalls in teaching resources and the socio-economic obstacles often present.

Clearly, the improvement of results is not likely to happen in an environment where the very educators are de-motivated and experience content gaps. Mcebisi Jonas, the MEC for Economic Affairs as quoted in the Daily Dispatch (October 21, 2011) supports this view by saying that the Eastern Cape Department of Education has failed completely to develop the kinds of teachers needed to revolutionise education due to lack of teacher development. The respondents were defensive enough to link the issue of content gaps with the lack of support from the Department of Education. Both respondents of school A and B attest to the existence of this problem and go further in arguing that subject advisors must be visible in under-performing schools and do on-site support to educators with some barriers in the delivery of quality teaching. Presently, subject advisors spend most of their time on the management of CASS and other curriculum training workshops, which prevents them from visiting struggling schools. The finding here is that there is a need for the professional development of educators by the Department of Education to address content gaps experienced by some educators more, so that there are changes in the curricular every year which necessitate that educators must at all times be abreast of these changes.

In both schools A and B respondents (PR4/A) and (PR4/B), unanimously agreed that there are some educators who experience content gaps but the problem is that educators wear a SADTU mask to block any attempt by the principal to do class visits aimed at evaluating their performance so as to initiate staff development programmes that would address these challenges. This is perhaps the why there are no staff development programmes that are in place in both schools, as alleged by all eight respondents. This view was further confirmed by another respondent from school B who happens to be in the Senior Management Team (SMT) of the school who argued that,

I even asked the DoE at the beginning of the year why do these subjects continue to perform like this, is the problem not with teachers? The problem of under-achievement cannot be attributed to learners only.

(ER2H/B)

It is also worth noting that all eight respondents indicated that they need maximum support from the Subject Advisors in order to address content gaps experienced by educators in certain subjects, especially the frequent changes in the curriculum occurring almost every year. These changes necessitate the need for on-going workshops organized by the Department of Education to keep educators abreast of changes in the curriculum.

4.2.2.1.5 Lack of support from the Department of Education:

There was general consensus from all eight respondents about the lack of support from the Department of Education in general. Respondents complained about the lack of visibility and on-site support by Subject Advisors in the schools under the MIP programme, in spite of them having subsidized vehicles. These are the words of one respondent,

They come for CASS moderation, I do not even know a thing about on-site support, even when you are de-motivated, they just drag you down without appreciating even the little effort that I have put.

(ER1/A)

Another respondent said,

There is no on-site support because they do not come, Xhosa as we speak has not been moderated the subject advisor said he cannot come for one teacher for orals.

(ER2H/B)

The complaints of respondents are somewhat justified because subject advisors ought to spend a lot of time in schools that have poor results. One respondent said,

They do not come to crisis schools. We do not even mind if they can come everyday. They do not give us assistance instead they ask for challenges and ask for school stamp to indicate that they were here and no follow up is made.

(ER1/A)

Another one said,

Subject advisors must develop us and not inspect us. If I identify a chapter needing their help they do not come and I end up sitting with the problem.

(ER1/A)

Two other respondents had this to say about subject advisors and their lack of support to schools,

Subject advisors must do more frequent visits to under-performing schools and arrange meetings for subjects with low pass rate and discuss and address problems and challenges experienced.

(ER2H/B)

Another said,

Nothing because they do not help us to improve our school performance. Even teachers complain that the subject advisors do not want to assist them in the classrooms when they are here just to demonstrate how lessons should be presented.

(PR4/A)

There are, however, some isolated cases where two respondents out of eight indicated that in two subjects in the District Subject Advisors are doing their utmost to empower educators by arranging some training workshops to address gaps in the new sections of the curriculum. One respondent commented and said,

But in my subject English they are visible and supportive, but I can't talk for other subjects but if they were coming I would be knowing because I am here.

(ER3/B)

Another one said,

There is no on-site support given except in maths where the subject advisor pitches up sometimes.

(PR4/A)

This lack of support by the District Office of Queenstown went so far as to affect even the capacity of school managers of under-performing schools to raise their school performance. Both respondents from the two schools indicated that they were not empowered enough together with staff to raise school performance, in spite of them being part of the MIP and LAIS programme initiated by the Eastern Cape Department of Education to help under-performing schools. Both respondents complained about not receiving support from the Department of Education and also cited lack of co-ordination of the two Departmental Matric Intervention Strategies by the Queenstown District Office and this is what one said when asked whether he or she had the capacity to raise school performance,

No, because the two strategies are not properly co-ordinated and monitored by the DoE. I am also not getting enough support from the DoE because Matric Intervention Officers come in January and we discuss and identify problems and they go forever. Even when the District comes, the officials come for fault finding rather than to support me.

(PR4/A)

What emerges from this theme is an acknowledgement by the two respondents that the District Office of Queenstown is failing to provide capacity programmes aimed at assisting managers of under-performing schools to initiate changes that would lead to the improvement of school performance. It goes without saying that, if principals lack this fuel for the improvement process, any attempt to raise school performance is doomed to fail. On the basis of the above testimony, I was left with no option but to conclude that the

successful implementation of MIP and LAIS in the Queenstown schools cannot be fully guaranteed.

4.2.2.2 Problems related to learners

According to data obtained, a number of learner-related factors were mentioned by respondents as having a negative impact on learner achievement and school performance, most of which are socio-economic problems with cause and effect relationships. Some of the problems are not of their own making but they have some negative effects on the schools. In the next paragraph four major factors are discussed.

4.2.2.2.1 Learner absenteeism:

All respondents had a lot to say about learner absenteeism and cited it as the most worrying factor in all their attempts to improve school under-performance and one respondent even said, when asked whether educators have the capacity to improve school performance,

Yes, if students can attend school regularly and do their work, this situation would change. The problem lies with the students.

(ER1H/B)

Although the reasons for learner absenteeism vary from one school to the other, there were common ones like child-headed homes, drug abuse, parenting commitments, lack of scholar transport, poverty and lack of motivation. Some of these were cited by respondent ER1H/B and this is what he said,

Well, performance by students was not good and there are many reasons, the most is the lack of involvement by students. They are not showing any interest in studying, they are also not coming to school everyday, and there is no parental involvement and support. So 2010 results did not come as a surprise.

(ER1H/B)

Another respondent said this when asked about attempts made by the school to improve school performance and challenges encountered,

Yes, we have our challenge, with MIP is the attendance of learners which is not pleasing.

(ER1/A)

4.2.2.2.2 Problems around scholar transport:

This theme was also revealed by all respondents to the extent that it has a negative impact on the two strategies, namely MIP and LAIS, which require learners to be transported from their schools to MIP centres where tutoring is taking place. Some of the learners have to walk more than ten kilometres from their homes to get to school and sometimes end up being late for tuition. This problem has far-reaching implications for learner attendance and in the Eastern Cape Province this has been further compounded by the suspension of scholar transport by the Eastern Cape Department of Education at the beginning of the 2011 academic year, something which left most of the learners stranded, thus impacting negatively on the enrolments of these two schools. One respondent had this to say in this regard,

Even in this spring classes, transport did not pitch up and the management did not take the matter up, I had to personally phone the owner whom I know to fetch our learners.

(ER2/A)

4.2.2.2.3 Lack of interest in education and setting of goals:

This theme came up very strongly from all respondents as the major cause of low learner achievement in these two schools. All respondents complained about learners who show no interest in their studies; some do not attend certain classes even if they happen to be at school for the day and end up missing the entire work for the day. The illiteracy problem and the poverty experienced by communities where these two schools are situated appeared to have a bearing on the lack of interest in education by learners of these schools.

Well, the performance by students was not good and there are many reasons, the most is the lack of involvement by students. They are not showing any interest in studying, they are also not coming to school everyday, and there is no parental involvement and support.

(ER1H/B)

Another responded even highlighted the need for motivational talks to boost the morale of students so that they could develop long-term visions about their lives. Another way of dealing with this problem would be to arrange counselling sessions with learners to explain opportunities that are available for needy students to access funds that would enable them to further their studies. Lack of vision could also be caused by the poverty experienced by most black communities, resulting in learners not having an interest in education because they know that, after all, there is not going to be money at home for them to go further with their studies. Some respondents had this to say in this regard,

Since 2007, we have been dropping every year. There is a problem of learners which do not care to study, and do not even care about their books and parents which do not involve themselves in the learning of their children.

(ER3/B)

Learners should be motivated, co-operative. More studies.

(ER1H/B)

4.2.2.2.4 Impact of socio-economic problems on learner performance:

This theme emerged from all respondents as one of the major challenges facing these two under-performing schools, one which also accounts for low learner achievement levels. These socio-economic problems range from the use of drugs by learners to selling of these drugs by some community members, to orphans, and households without adult breadwinners to poverty - the list is endless. All respondents pointed out the need for the Department of Education to ensure that the school nutrition programme is not discontinued in the schools because it is also encouraging learners to attend school regularly. The use of drugs was raised as the number one problem that leads to other problems like crime and misconduct. It is also equally important to note that the schools highlighted the need for the Department of Social Development to forge links with the Department of Education to address these socio-economic problems experienced by schools. Masitsa (2004) also acknowledges that other factors may contribute to under-achievement, including socio-economic factors; lack of parental encouragement and support; teacher absenteeism,, inexperience and low morale; change overload; and lack of learner and teacher commitment and attitude. One respondent said this,

Use of drugs is rampant in this school. Most learners are staying on their own without guardians. We need support from Social Dept. to deal with socio-economic issues.

(ER3/A)

Another respondent said this about socio-economic problems,

The problem of drugs in our community and child headed families are a problem. The problem of orphans and (ndakhendaziqokelelangomnyeunyaka).

(ER1/A)

All eight respondents were unanimous in raising learner absenteeism, lack of scholar transport and lack of interest in education, as well as the impact of socio-economic factors as challenges facing the two schools in their attempts to raise school performance. Both

schools appear to have strong systems in the form of attendance registers to monitor learner attendance but the problem is that some of the learners come from child-headed families, something which makes it difficult to make an intervention which would need calling a parent. One respondent had this to say,

I have raised the problem of drugs and learners staying alone to the EDO but no feedback has ever come forth.

(PR4/A)

Respondents reported that even learners who pass matric are loitering in the village and are unable to further their studies because of the poverty experienced by their parents. It became clear from the research that parents of these schools do not know about loans and bursaries that can be accessed from financial institutions to help learners complete their studies in tertiary institutions. It is recommended that schools should take the initiative in arranging motivational talks for learners that will address some of these problems, even if it means forging links with technicians and universities. It does seem that the problem of learner under-achievement facing the two schools can never be adequately addressed in an environment where learners use drugs because this is going to lead to ill-discipline. West and Pennell (2005) argue that there are higher teenage pregnancy rates, higher levels of crime and drug abuse, and more health problems that tend to be higher in areas of social deprivation, which all account for the under-achievement of learners.

4.2.3 Leadership and Management Problems:

Data also revealed some problems faced by the two under-performing schools used in the study which have something to do with the day-to-day administration and management of the schools. Data identified three of these problems which seem to hinder attempts made by these schools to improve their school performance.

4.2.3.1 Managerial problems and conflicts within management:

This theme highlighted the plight that some school principals find themselves in, due to problems caused by the Department of Education by not dealing with issues of vacancies and demotions in a proper manner. One angry respondent said this during the interviews,

I'm just the acting principal for almost three years without any acting allowance and no documentation has been sent to school to legitimise my acting status. Sometimes teachers do not want to carry out instructions from me because they say as far as they know, the school has no headmaster.

(PR4/B)

My assessment of the situation in school B where there is an acting principal was that there are internal squabbles within the management around the post of permanent principal presently occupied by deputy on an acting capacity and some are of the view that it should have been given to Mr Z and not Mr Y. I also observed some divisions and tensions during interviews in the manner in which offices are occupied by School Management Teams (SMT) and the fact that they kept on addressing the acting principal as deputy principal. This made me to believe that the acting principal is, in fact, the permanent deputy of the school. When I followed up this matter with other respondents who raised this point in their closing remarks, they said the acting principal knows his job very well and he has changed the ethos of the school into a better one, and learner discipline has improved a lot under his leadership. Their major concern was the failure of the District Office to make his acting status legitimate by putting it in writing to clear the cost. This assertion is based on the field notes compiled during site visits as well as on the days scheduled for interviews.

Two respondents out of eight, mainly from school B, indicated that at times there are conflicts within the management, which also have a negative impact on school performance and one respondent had this to say in this regard,

Conflict by management affects our performance but its only now that there is some normality in the management... Lack of respect by teachers who do not want to recognise our acting principal as the legitimate head because of the DoE not being supportive to us.(ER3/B)

It became apparent from these two respondents that there are educators and some members of the School Management Team (SMT) in their school who do not want to recognise their acting principal as the legitimate head of the school and further contend that there has never been an official word or document from the District Office to say that Mr “Y” is the acting principal after the demotion of their principal for continued failure to improve school performance. My assessment regarding this theme was that some principals in certain schools do not have the requisite authority to run their schools. Their authority is undermined and assailed from left, right and centre by educators who do not want to heed their authority, with the result that principals spend an inordinate amount of time trying to assert their authority instead of focusing on the core business of managing their schools. In some schools, it is not inconceivable to find perpetual resistance in one form or the other as seems to be the case in school B. This problem manifests itself in a number of ways, one of which is the lack of respect by certain educators towards the acting incumbent and sometimes not even taking instructions from him, according to the two respondents. I presume that the reason why the two other respondents from school B did not mention the existence of this problem is due to the fact that they are part of the School Management Team (SMT). In one of the offices of these respondents there was a school stamp, and when I asked whether he has the authority to use it to stamp permission slips for learners, the response was that they do not have a principal at their school. I suspected this Mr Z to be the one who is behind the war against the current acting incumbent. I observed, however, that school B is better managed than school A in spite of these tensions.

4.2.3.2 Lack of management and administrative skills:

Only two respondents out of eight, both from school A, commented about the lack of management and administrative skills. I also noticed the same problem in my first visit to the school and, as such, I struggled to get an appointment date with the principal and the record system was so poor that I could not get an analysis of results for the past five years but, fortunately for me, I had copies from the District Office. This is possible given that the principal of school A has four years of experience in this top post in a school that is battling

with the problem of improving school performance. This what one respondent said about this problem,

(Thina apha esikolweni asinaladership kwaphela, sithundeza ubhityo) and this is the reason why we are not innovative in coming up with new suggestions of improving performance in our school.

(ER1/A)

One way of dealing with this problem would be to make District Directors organise workshops for new principals to empower them about management skills by taking them through various pieces of legislation that are crucial for the day-to-day running of schools. It is equally important to note that in school B where there is no legitimate head, as reported by the respondents, there is no mention of lack of administrative and management skills; instead there is good leadership. All educational programmes that are implemented at school level must be backed up by a strong administration system for them to succeed. According to the document on Strategies for Improving Schools (2004), leadership has constantly been shown as the key factor in determining the success of a school. Even in the field notes that I compiled, I noted that there was complete order at school B every day I visited the school, and the principal had a good filing system which impressed me a lot. This highlights the importance of the kind of maximum support needed by school managers from the District Office to ensure that they are able to carry out their day-to-day duties under strict monitoring mechanisms, even if it means arranging mentorship programmes for principals of under-performing schools. If MIP and LAIS are to succeed as intervention strategies, they must be supported by good management at school level.

According to Clarke (2005), one of the strategies used in England to help seriously under-performing schools was to arrange seminars and meetings for head teachers and other senior managers to discuss 'what might work' and to provide systems of mutual support. It is for this reason that this study is proposing a model based on school improvement theories, which suggests that strong support and pressure be given to schools in order to create conditions for effective teaching and learning to take place as an attempt to raise student outcomes.

4.2.4 Interventions made by schools to improve their school performance

Data revealed that there were some interventions made by the two schools to improve their school performance and all these interventions take the form of increasing tuition time by arranging extra classes during weekends and also during winter and summer holidays. There are also morning and afternoon classes arranged. Data showed, too, that at times there are incubation classes organised by the Department of Education for top students and they also take place during weekends. The debate that follows is to show how twinning and extra classes were used by the two schools to raise their performance.

4.2.4.1 Extra-classes and incubation classes

All eight respondents indicated that there were interventions made by their schools to improve school performance other than the Departmental Matric Intervention Strategies. All eight respondents were positive about the impact of extra-classes as a means of raising learner achievement in content subjects where they experience low pass rates. One respondent said,

Extra-classes are in place, content subjects, which have high failure rate, are being prioritised but teachers and learners do not take them seriously. Some teachers come from Queenstown ad sacrifice and only to find that learners are few who have attended.

(ER2H/B)

The respondents went further to say that these extra-classes are internally organized as strategies to address under-performance and also to engage learners fully so that they do not have time to do crime. All respondents attest to the fact that these extra-classes in the form of Saturday and Sunday morning and afternoon classes have helped them a lot in making the little improvement shown by the 2010matric results and this was confirmed by the following respondents,

After school learners remain behind for afternoon studies which start from 14h30 to 17h00. There are also Saturday and Sunday classes and learners go to Maria Louw for MIP classes and we have our own attendance register to monitor the attendance of our learners to these classes.

(PR4/B)

The conclusion that one can make regarding the above statement is that generally, learners are not committed to their studies in the MIP schools in the Queenstown District and hence all respondents complained about poor attendance of MIP classes by learners. This compromises all attempts made by the under-performing schools to improve school performance and thus the very strategies become ineffective from the onset.

Another said,

Yes, we do have strategies although they are not new. We engage learners in afternoon and morning classes, maths has Saturday and Sunday classes because its percentage was zero in 2010.

(ER1/A)

There was also uniformity observed during interviews in that these extra-classes are monitored by educators and are voluntary and priority is given to science subjects, which continue to drag down the performance of the school every year and this was confirmed by respondent ER3/B who said,

After school classes at 14h30 to 17h00 and they are monitored so that learners can learn their books. We also have morning and Saturday classes by some teachers, and focus is on physics and economics.

(ER3/B)

On the issue of incubation classes which are part of the LAIS programme, respondents highlighted the need for an increase in the number of learners attending these classes because they are very good and have yielded positive results ever since they were introduced by the Department of Education and they offer learners with more career

opportunities. The focus of these incubation classes is on maths and science and tuition in these classes is provided by the so-called experts in these subjects who come from other schools. One respondent said,

Yes, Saturday and Sunday we have incubation classes and only two students are part of the LAIS programme and we need more students.

(ER1H/B)

4.2.4.2 Twinning with other schools which perform better

Twinning is a concept that derives its meaning from the fact that schools are specifically places for acquiring certain kinds of knowledge and that they differ in terms of how they transmit these kinds of knowledge (Acosta, 2006). Twinning can be made more effective if it is co-ordinated by principals of schools so that there are very clear terms and areas where twinning is needed and to enable monitoring of the impact of twinning. It does appear from one respondent in school B that two educators who happen to be friends and are teaching the same subject in different schools thought about this idea of twinning to improve learner achievement in physical science. The disturbing part here is that both educators, according to the respondent, have a problem of not coming to school regularly and both have poor results in this subject and their schools are under-performing.

Our physical science teacher is twinning with another teacher from around school B and both have poor results and I doubt if they are going to improve because the other teacher also has a problem of not attending school regularly and the school also has bad results.

(ER3/B)

Clearly, this is not the kind of twinning that is being proposed in this study; twinning must be initiated and co-ordinated by the management of the school after a careful consideration of lessons to be learnt from the performing school which must be emulated by the under-performing school and its educators.

4.2.5 Perceptions of educators about MIP and LAIS to address under-performance in their schools

This theme formed part of the main research question for this study and the data that was obtained was based on two aspects, namely, attitude of educators towards these strategies and their impact on improving school performance. Data showed varying degrees of educator perceptions around the effectiveness of these strategies and these are discussed below.

4.2.5.1 Attitude of educators towards these strategies:

This theme is right at the core of this study and three respondents out of eight showed some optimism about the strategies in the near future if proper monitoring of their implementation could be addressed. In cases where there was a slight improvement in school performance, the three respondents attributed this to the internally devised strategies together with the Departmental ones and this is what they said,

There is a slight improvement meaning that they are working. If it were not because of poor co-ordination and monitoring by the DoE, our school would have done better.

(PR4/A)

The remaining five respondents had a contrary view in that they were saying that the strategies are not helping them in improving school under-performance; instead, they attributed the slight improvement to their own efforts of organising extra-classes. This is confirmed by the following respondent who said that,

The little effort is because of our own efforts, and that is why we are not making a significant improvement.

(ER3/B)

The same sentiments were echoed by other respondents who indicated that these strategies are not working at all, and went further to say if they were effective, they would

not be classified as under-performing schools in the District and two respondents had this to say about these strategies,

They are not effective at all, for now they are a real joke and waste of money in our District. There are no follow ups by the DoE on challenges experienced by MIP schools which they identify in January of each year even if there are good ideas that they bring sometimes which can be tried.

(PR4/B)

Another respondent said this regarding these strategies and the change in school performance,

Nothing has changed for the better our performance moves in a descending order.

(ER2H/B)

Both schools had respondents who did not want to agree that their schools were part of these strategies because they see themselves as being treated just like performing schools in terms of support coming from the Department of Education, which, according to them, leaves much to be desired and this is what two respondents said when they were asked as to whether their schools were part of the on-going MIP and LAIS programmes. One respondent said,

In my view, the DoE looks at schools with good results, we have to be given priority as an under-performing school.

(ER3/B)

This point again emphasises the statements made earlier on that the Queenstown District Office does not have a plan to visit and monitor under-performing schools. Under these circumstances, no official would try to make principals of under-performing schools account for shoddy performance. The mere declaration of schools as under-performing does not assist in enhancing learner outcomes, especially if there are no monitoring and accountability measures in place accompanied by on-going support. In another instance, the respondent cited below was not even sure if they are an MIP school because of them

not being visited by subject advisors and Matric Intervention Officers to establish the causes of their continued under-performance. This respondent had this to say in this regard,

Partly, because the DoE does not adhere to its promises and we do not see us as being granted status of an MIP and LAIS school.

(PR4/B)

These are some of the views that came from some of the respondents when asked whether they were part of the on-going MIP and LAIS programme,

Not really, because in one instance our learners in June 2011 were not fetched by the transport to the place of MIP programme where tutoring was taking place... We are not being accorded status of an MIP school and in Jan, good ideas were raised but after that no follow up made on progress.

(ER3/B)

4.2.5.2 Impact of these strategies on dealing with under-performance:

During interviews, some mixed feelings emerged from the respondents about the impact and effectiveness of the MIP and the LAIS as Departmental intervention strategies for dealing with under-performing schools. During data analysis, a number of weaknesses regarding these strategies were highlighted and they include, among others, the following: poor co-ordination, late planning by DoE, nepotism practised in the appointment of tutors, lack of consultation with teachers of MIP school in identifying topics to be tackled, lack of feedback to teachers of MIP schools, no monitoring of learners who must attend MIP classes, focus on so called critical subjects, neglect of the GET band and focus on grade 12 (see data set for details). There was, however, general agreement and consensus by all respondents that the two strategies are not properly implemented at schools by the DoE and they all pointed to the lack of management and monitoring of the strategies which should be addressed by the DoE and their responses are given below,

The strategies are not working properly because school visits are done only in January to check on school readiness and the DoE officials go for ever... After these visits no feedback and no learner material, the school has to foot any bill of buying study aids.

(ER2H/B)

This does not come as a surprise because already five respondents out of eight have shown a very pessimistic attitude towards the Departmental Matric Intervention strategies in the paragraphs above. The enforcement of common exams in all under-performing schools is not likely to yield good results if the implementation of the strategies is not monitored at school level. If these common exams are, indeed, written by under-performing schools, they do so merely as a compliance measure and this is what makes these strategies appear a sheer waste of taxpayers' money. One respondent argues like this,

They are not effective at all, for now they are a real joke and waste of money in our District.

(PR4/B)

Another respondent commented on the neglect of other grades in the implementation of these strategies, and this is what he said about the effectiveness of these strategies,

Not quite effective, because these strategies focus on grade 12 learners only.

(ER3/A)

The problem in assessing whether these strategies have an impact on school performance is because even the extra classes organised by the school have the same form as the Departmental strategies. Nevertheless, only three respondents out of eight were optimistic that, if the strategies could be co-ordinated properly by the Department, they would be effective and this what one said,

Yes, they have an impact, but it is just too little (incinci). Teachers complain about recruitment of tutors without any mention of areas that they are good at and where they have been recruited and what are their strong points. The tutor who has been identified hardly arranges time to be with me to discuss areas of focus and concern, so MIP is not helping us, this is what teachers are saying.

(ER1/A)

All eight respondents pointed out that there is a need for a review of the appointment of tutors for the MIP programme to make this strategy effective. The remaining five respondents were very quick to say that the strategies are not effective at all because they do not offer anything different from what they are already doing at school. Instead, there are corrupt practises that occur during the appointment of tutors and some views of respondents regarding this are given below,

Tutors who do not even teach the subjects in grade 12 are appointed, friends are appointed.

(ER3/B)

It is rather worrying to note that the very educators who have a bad track record in their matric results are given an opportunity to teach in the MIP classes because of favouritism practised at district level. This bad practise is reducing these strategies into money-making schemes for certain educators and district officials. One respondent said,

MIP –selection of tutors is done on the basis whether you are known at the office. Favouritism is not helping rather percentage of the teacher in the subject applied for must be considered because money is there.

(ER2H/B)

Rich *et al* (2006) argues that extra-classes are likely to have a beneficial effect only if they also provide something significantly different to what is already available during the normal school day, and merely increasing the quantity of poor teaching is not likely to lead to better results. Data revealed the following as strengths of these two strategies: nutrition attached to MIP encourages attendance, LAIS gives a better view of performance of learners by enforcing analysis of results by schools, strong focus on syllabus coverage, and incubation classes increase attainment levels of learners (see data set for details).

4.2.6 Attitude of respondents on school visits by Matric Intervention Officers

This theme formed part of the sub-research questions and data obtained was based on two aspects, namely, the purpose and benefits of the visits by Matric Intervention Officers (MIO) and the nature of support given during these visits. The views of respondents are cited and discussed below.

4.2.6.1 The effectiveness of the school visits:

Regarding this theme, there was general consensus by all respondents that there is a need for Matric Intervention Officers to continually visit under-performing schools in order to support them on challenges that they experience, even if it means they must organise workshops to empower educators and school managers to deal effectively with their under-performance. This was, however, not the case with these two under-performing schools in the Queenstown District because all respondents indicated that they get visited once or twice a year by the subject advisors. One respondent said,

No, nothing, most of the time these visits are just a waste of our teaching time because they do not make follow- ups about things that we all identify as causing poor performance.

(PR4/B)

What emerges from the above statement is that under-performing schools get visited once by Matric Intervention Officers (MIO) and possibly with a team of politicians and unionists at the beginning of the year when grade 12 results have been released. The major cry here is that resolutions are taken during these visits but there is no follow up on the problems identified as causing these schools to under-perform. It seems as if the visits are done as a mere compliance measure to check school readiness and functionality of the schools.

Another one said,

Nothing because they do not help us to improve our school performance. Even teachers complain that the subject advisors do not want to assist them in the classrooms when they are here just to demonstrate how lessons should be presented.

(PR4/A)

Respondents were also quick to say that even instances where subject advisors visit schools, their focus is on the moderation of continuous assessment (CASS) such that of late, even that is also being neglected by some officials. Six respondents out of eight indicated that, as of now, they do not benefit at all from these visits; instead they are just a waste of time and this is what they said in addition to what others said in the paragraph above,

No benefit as such because they come for faults.

(ER2/A)

Another one said,

Nothing, the might be effective if the officials of the DoE could be consistent and continuous in terms of starting where you ended last year and monitor progress. We end up somewhere and start somewhere so that challenges could be addressed.

(ER1/A)

Two respondents said there are benefits from the visits in their subjects like question papers and answers but complained that the subject advisors do not visit them regularly and this is what they said about the benefits of the visits,

Yes, more information, more support materials in the form of question papers and answers. Yes I feel empowered by these visits.

(ER1H/B)

Another one said,

If the subject advisor comes, we discuss challenges that I experience but I cannot speak for other subjects. One time Ms X (subject advisor) was impressed by my lesson on poetry.

(ER2H/B)

The respondents of both schools went as far as to suggest areas of focus for the subject advisors in these visits like, support on curriculum matters, especially new aspects within learning areas or subjects; curriculum training workshops to close content gaps; assessment guidelines; best practises on difficult topics; and time tabling, to mention but a few. It is clear from these respondents that the Queenstown District has a responsibility to make support visits by subject advisors a priority intervention especially in under-performing schools so that there could also be proper monitoring and evaluation of programmes aimed at improving school performance.

4.2.6.2 Lack of support given by Subject Advisors and MIO:

Six respondents out of eight complained about not being supported by subject advisors; instead, they concentrate on CASS moderation. Two respondents said this about support,

...no on-site support for my subject.

(ER2/A)

Another one said,

...No on-site support given. They just listen to us when we present challenges and they go and never come back.

(ER3/A)

Respondents indicated their frustrations around this theme and suggested that subject advisors should make more frequent visits to schools and conduct genuine on-site support for educators. During interviews all respondents indicated that if there could be more support coming from the subject advisors, under-performance would be a thing of the past because educators would feel empowered to tackle even difficult areas in the syllabus by organising workshops to share best practices. This is what one said,

Workshops from the writers of books especially poetry to give background about the poem. Subject advisors must start their programme beginning of the year and not in May or June. Planning starts in November for the following year. They must focus on staff development rather than looking for faults.

(ER2/A)

Another one said,

Subject Advisors must do more frequent visits to under-performing schools and arrange meetings for subjects with low pass rate and discuss and address problems and challenges experienced. More workshops must be organised beginning of the year and quarterly to address content gaps experienced by teachers.

(ER2H/B)

4.2.7 DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

The researcher noted excellent record keeping of documents by the manager of school B. Schedules for the previous years were easily assessable and used during the development of school improvement plan (SIP) and this was commendable. The programme of assessment for all grades was also available and nicely filed including the assessment guidelines supplied by the DoE. In school A, the analysis of grade 12 results was not readily available and the researcher had to obtain data with schools' performance from the district office. School A had a poor record keeping of documents than school A, suggesting that indeed there were managerial problems in the school but results are analysed quarterly.

4.3 CONCLUSION

Perceptions of educators in the case study schools of the impact of the Departmental Matric Intervention Strategies reveal a schooling system beset by a myriad of problems that contribute to poor performance. The educators' views raise serious questions about the nature of the strategies and their ability to address the problem of under-performance in schools in the Eastern Cape Province. The next chapter discusses findings that emerged from the study and their implications for future action and research.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to present a discussion of issues arising from the main findings of this study. It uses conceptual and theoretical lenses developed in Chapter 2 and covers issues relating to: the standard versus value-added approach in MIP and LAIS; capacity problems at district and school level; educator absenteeism and time on task; impact of educator union activities; lack of parental involvement in schools and it ends by interrogating interventions that appear to be informed by a 'quick fix' perspective to address the problem of school under-performance.

5.2 STANDARD-BASED VERSUS VALUE-ADDED APPROACH IN MIP AND LAIS

The issue of standards in education is highly contested. The contestations revolve around their definitions and how they are measured. Martin and Stella (2011:16) have defined standards as a measure to which one conforms (or should conform) and by which one's quality is judged. The authors go further to say that standards could also mean a degree of excellence required for a particular purpose, and a thing recognized as a model for imitation.

In education, performance standards, such as matric pass rates, are often used to judge the quality of education. Schools which underperform, that is, those with lower pass rates, are seen as delivering poor quality education. By the same token, schools that perform well in their matric pass rates, are seen as productive schools that deliver quality education. Konold *et al* (2008) contend that there is scant empirical data in support of the proposition that teachers who produce pupil learning, as measured by standardized academic achievement tests, are said to 'add value' to schools. The matric standards of achievement, as Clark (2005) (c.f. Chapter 2) has pointed out, are usually applied across the board

without taking into account specific contextual issues and local conditions. The schools which participated in this study reported a myriad of school level and out of school conditions (c.f. Chapter 4) which were seen to be undermining efforts to achieve pass rates considered acceptable. It can be argued that, unless these conditions are addressed, it is difficult to see how MIP strategies which only focus on a narrow set of school-level factors can help raise the level of performance to an expected standard.

Standards, however, have some advantages. It can be argued that common measures of performance such as matric examinations can serve as a motivator and a tool for comparison. The pressure of externally set, standardized examinations can motivate learners to be more committed to their work. The results obtained from these common exams, which are part of the LAIS programme, could also be used by the learners to bench-mark themselves on whether they are meeting the required levels of achievement depending, of course, on the standard of these examinations. The assumption here is that these common exams would add value to the student learning outcomes. Clarke (2005) (c.f. Chapter 2), however, warns that the significant weakness of examination scores as an evaluating instrument is that views of performance tend to be restricted to a single standard which does not take into account the value-added meaning to the learner by virtue of having gone through a programme of study, regardless of whether or not he or she has reached the expected level of performance in matric examinations.

The assumption underlying the value-added approach is that it seeks to identify the contributions made by the schools to their learners' progress over time. In other words, it monitors the impact of the input measures on student outcomes in terms of whether they add any value in raising student outcomes. Ready (2012:114) argues that considering the value-added approaches have the "...potential to highlight the learning that occurs in otherwise low-performing schools... ." In other words, a school may be categorized as low performing in terms of matric pass rates yet, from where the learners start, they may have made significant gains in learning. Their teachers may have added value to their learning.

A value-added perspective is also useful in assessing and supporting the work of teachers in MIP schools. It was reported in the case study schools that the Matric Intervention Officers were perceived as not adding value in terms of assisting teachers in MIP schools to develop the necessary capacity to raise the performance of learners in their schools. If the interventions of the MIP strategy are to be successful, value adding must start on the side of teachers. Studies by Konold *et al* (2008) have shown that pedagogical preparation of teachers adds value to a school in terms of pupil academic learning.

If the value-added approach is used to inform Eastern Cape MIP strategies, it is important that care must be taken not to over-emphasize the issue of 'standards' or 'league tables' of grading student achievement but, rather, what students learn, even in low performing schools, is what adds value to their success. This view is shared by Adua-Damoah (2009) who argues that the MIP has no effect on the matric pass rate of a school but the matric pass rate rather depends, instead, on the seriousness that a particular group of learners attach to their studies, and, one might add, the value that the school adds.

In Chapter 2, two theoretical models were discussed and these are school effectiveness (SE) and school improvement (SI). According to Scheerens (2000), the major task of SE is to reveal the impact of relevant input characteristics and contextual conditions on output and how these can be used to break open 'the black box' in order to show which processes or throughput factors 'work' for teaching and learning. In other words, SE theories do not concern themselves with value-adding of input measures; instead, they judge success by means of standardized measures in matric pass rates. Well-performing schools, as determined by matric pass rates, are effective regardless of what value that they add in the teaching and learning process.

School Improvement (SI) theories, on the other hand, attach more meaning to value-adding of student learning, even if the school is at the bottom level in terms of matric pass rates or league tables of performance. It is for this reason that Sun *et al* (2007) argue that the SI is a specific branch of the study of educational change which focuses on the journey to success and the necessary conditions needed to support successful change. The central point of the

SI is the single improvement made by the school even if it is still under-performing when judged by means of standardized scores in the matric results.

Regardless of the perspective that informs practice, whether standards are met or value is added in the teaching and learning situation, a key to the achievement of desired levels of performance ultimately rests on the capacity of schools and districts to deliver services.

5.3 CAPACITY PROBLEMS AT DISTRICT AND SCHOOL LEVELS

Implementing an intervention strategy aimed at turning around the situation of poor performance in schools cannot succeed unless there is capacity at district level, to assist schools. One of the main findings of this study is that there were capacity problems at district level. These ranged from shortage of Matric Intervention Officers (MIOs) who are meant to visit schools to lack of competency on the part of MIO's to provide genuine monitoring and support to poor co-ordination of intervention strategies (MIP & LAIS).

5.3.1 Shortage of Matric Intervention Officers (MIO):

The role of departmental officials in ensuring successful and effective implementation of turnaround strategies at schools cannot be overemphasized. Subject advisors, education developmental officers and other MIOs have a responsibility to support schools effectively by organizing workshops for teacher development and by addressing content gaps experienced by teachers given the changes in the curriculum of our country. One of the findings of this study was about lack of support from MIO's which is largely due to a shortage of subject advisors for specific subjects because of the moratorium placed by the Eastern Cape Department of Education on their appointment. The Queenstown District was described by respondents as one that was hard hit by this moratorium and this impacts negatively on the effective implementation of MIP and LAIS at schools. This is confirmed by the Department of Basic Education (2012) when it argues that some districts are operating with few staff members such that service delivery by many district offices falls far too short of what the institutions and the public expect.

It is also important that under-performing schools should always be under constant supervision to monitor and support the teachers. However, such constant visits should be managed in such a way that does not create dependency but in a way that builds capacity on the part of teachers to improve their performance and that of learners.

5.3.2 Lack of competency of MIO's in supporting and monitoring schools

Lack of competency of MIO's in providing genuine support and monitoring to under-performing schools has the potential of causing MIP and LAIS to degenerate into a mockery and joke instead of supporting schools to improve their performance and to sustain every single improvement achieved. The idea of supporting schools is to ensure that they become effective and reliable institutions when it comes to teaching and learning and are able to sustain their improvement trends over a period of time.

The implementation of MIP and LAIS at school level requires competent officials in their various specialization areas so that support can be genuine and effective. Case study schools reported that MIOs did not appear to be competent in what they do. Questions about the competency of MIOs were raised by Richet *al* (2006) when they argue that district offices were found to be ineffective in providing support to under-performing schools, except serving as distribution points for correspondence going to the schools.

There is also no monitoring of the intervention strategies in under-performing schools because officials complain about transport problems. Schools, on the other hand, complain about lack of visibility of subject advisors in their schools and many schools in the Queenstown District are operating with temporary educators who sometimes do not have the necessary qualifications to teach certain subjects. With the type of capacity problems identified in this study, the issue raises doubt about the potential of the strategies to turn around the situation.

5.3.3 Poor co-ordination of MIP and LAIS

One of the findings of this study was around poor co-ordination of the two departmental strategies, namely MIP and LAIS, by the Queenstown District Office, thus making them ineffective in dealing with school under-performance. According to the respondents, the Queenstown District does not seem to have somebody at the Office to plan future implementation of these two strategies in time and to inform under-performing schools about the programme for winter and spring schools, as well as Saturday classes. This is confirmed by the Eastern Cape Department of Education (2011) which argues that the winter school could not run in the Queenstown District that same year due to strategic issues around planning, resulting in 550 learners being sent home as there were no funds allocated for the programme. The report goes further to say that even in cases where the MIP was running, monitors could not get documented lesson plans from the appointed tutors for all the days they were monitored, such that in one district it was reported that the meeting to finalize arrangements was held on the last Friday prior to the winter schools which were due to start the following Monday (*ibid*).

Needless to say, if a programme of intervention is poorly co-ordinated, it is difficult to see how resources meant for the programme can be channelled to where they are needed and be put to good use.

5.4 EDUCATOR ABSENTEEISM AND TIME ON TASK

Whatever MIP and LAIS inputs are channelled to poorly performing schools, they are not likely to work if teachers who are meant to be developed and capacitated are not available in the classrooms doing the expected teaching. High absenteeism among teachers of the MIP schools was reported in this study as one of the great concerns. The implications of teacher absenteeism are many. Some of the main ones include: the strategies will be rendered ineffective, learners will have low morale, no learning will take place if teachers are not at school, pass rate of learners will not improve, discipline problems will occur often,

learners will not have interest in education, learner absenteeism will be high, and the career path of learners will be compromised.

On the basis of these factors, it can be argued that teacher absenteeism has a direct bearing on the delivery of teaching and learning as it reduces time-on-task. According to Bloch (2012), priority should be given to what happens at the coalface of interaction between teacher and the learner because this is the “black box” where teaching and learning occurs. In terms of the national policy called the Employment of Educators’ Act number 138 (1994), all educators are obliged to be on duty for 27.5 hours per week in the senior and FET phases and they must be in class on time teaching, but in the Eastern Cape Province this is not happening due to an alarming rate of educator absenteeism which was revealed by data from this study. Given these circumstances, it becomes important to ask if LAIS and MIP have any in-built mechanism for dealing with educator absenteeism. The strategies may have been designed on the assumption that educators in MIP schools are committed to teaching effectively, being fully prepared and observing the prescribed instructional time to the maximum advantage of learners. Bloch (2009) has warned that the trouble with South Africa’s education system is that there are not enough inspired, knowledgeable, dedicated and committed teachers to staff the schools.

During the time of conducting interviews, three respondents out of four, mainly from school B, were unanimous in highlighting the problem of educator absenteeism and time-on-task to the extent that streams for learners had to be changed so that there could be fewer learners with educators who do not attend school regularly. If the rate of educator absenteeism could go this far in the Eastern Cape, then there is reason to believe that there is no rate of return between salaries paid to educators and the time they spend in the class teaching. One angry respondent (PR4/B) complained about abuse of sick leave by educators who are too lazy to teach and the fact that the DoE seems to speak with a forked tongue when school managers apply for leave without pay in cases of abuse of incapacity leave. Effective teaching and learning is what guarantees the success of learners but, if educators are not committed to their duty as civil servants, any attempt to raise attainment levels of learners is likely to fail. According to West and Pennel (2003), the educators’ moral

responsibility and commitment to teaching has a positive influence on learner performance. The same view is shared by Letseka, M., Bantwini, B. and King-McKenzie, E (2012) who argue that several decades of pedagogical research shows that what teachers do in the classroom is undoubtedly the key educational determinant in student learning and achievement. Letseka *et al* (2012) go further to say that, ironically, this is not possible because South African teachers generally spend very little time in class teaching.

Data in this study also revealed that principals no longer have control over educator absenteeism in spite of them having proper records of those who were absent at any given stage. It was reported that lack of control by principals is caused by failure on the part of the District Office to implement leave without pay when it is applied for by the principals. This is confirmed by Rich *et al* (2006) in their report where they argue that several under-performing schools that they visited complained about the frustration of having reported educators who are chronically absent from school without leave only to find that nothing was ever done about it by the Department of Education at District level. In some instances, the District does not keep records of leave applications and this results in the culprits challenging any attempt by the District to enforce leave without pay.

It was also reported that even when educators are at school, some arrive late and are not prompt in honouring their periods and thus do not teach effectively by adhering to school times. According to the Eastern Cape Department of Education (2007-2009) pillar number seven of the LAIS document talks about the enforcement of the prescribed instructional time to the maximum advantage of learners. If the trend continues like this, the elimination of under-performing schools in the system of education in the Eastern Cape will be difficult. Matsitsa (2004) agrees with this sentiment when he identified what he termed “critical causes of under-achievement of learners”. They include, among others, lack of learner and teacher commitment, low teacher morale, teacher absenteeism and the general teacher attitude towards work.

5.5 THE IMPACT OF THE ACTIVITIES OF EDUCATOR UNIONS

Teacher unionization can be seen as enhancing the democratic rights of educators to bargain for their interests but this has to be balanced with the need to accommodate other stakeholders' interests. This is, however, not the case in South Africa because of SADTU's political links with government, notwithstanding the fact that the two are often at loggerheads over labour issues. This marriage of convenience has also led to the deepening crisis in education in South Africa as a whole. This is confirmed by Letseka *et al* (2012) when they argue that SADTU tends to flex its political muscles by mobilizing teachers to strike over salary increases at the expense of teaching and learning in a country whose education system has been described as "a crisis" and "a national disaster" and whose schools are "dysfunctional". It has become common practice in most township schools to find school managers spending an inordinate amount of time trying to assert their authority which is undermined and assailed from left, right and centre by SADTU site stewards and certain members who want to co-manage the school.

It is a known fact that one of the challenges facing school managers is the management of unionized educators, especially those who are affiliated to SADTU, who are known to use their membership as a means to threaten school managers so that they remain untouchable. This problem is caused by the fact that the teaching profession in South Africa is highly unionized with SADTU boasting of 240 000 members, mostly black and African. Letseka *et al* (2012) go further to say that the DoE's failure to deliver quality education and its paralysis by teacher unions' demands, suggests that the bigger picture of educating the young people has been lost. This does not augur well for the country's competitiveness on the global market stage. It is no wonder that you find that 80% of the under-performing schools are predominantly in the black townships and rural areas, which are key political constituencies of the majority teacher union, SADTU (c.f.Chapter 2).

There is a need for a new mindset from all role players who have interest in education to begin to deliver on their distinct responsibilities, with unions in particular developing a true and honest partnership with the Department of Education in the pursuit of the

transformational agenda to make all schools in the Eastern Cape Province productive and reliable institutions of learning. Bloch (2009), on the other hand, suggests a whole package of attempts to enthuse, support, train, renew and encourage a new teaching corps, as well as to establish non-negotiables on agreed and acceptable behaviour. Hence he calls for the “reengineering” of South Africa’s education system with a total change of mindset by government, teachers, parents, learners and, most centrally, teacher unions. This is possible if teacher unions provide constructive support to the managers of schools by promoting a culture of regular school attendance by all members in order to raise the achievement levels of learners. Union membership must not be used as a licence to promote and to condone misconduct and neglect of responsibility by educators.

In this study, it was revealed that some members of the South African Democratic Teacher’s Union (SADTU), mainly from school B, have on a number of occasions been absent from school due to union work, especially those who either serve as site stewards or site secretaries. This view was supported by 75% of respondents from school B who even argued that the curriculum of the school had to be altered leading to the phasing out of geography and replacing it with economics. This is very detrimental to the future of learners and the careers that they intend taking at tertiary institutions. This report suggests that all members of SADTU who are office bearers at whatever level have license not to be at school and principals have no control over them because of provisions contained in the South Africa Schools’ Act number 84 (1996) which accommodates time off to a maximum of ten days per year. According to the data obtained in this study, the problem of disruption of classes due to SADTU activities, in particular, is so alarming as reported by respondents in school B that those concerned do not even bother to confine themselves to ten days; instead they just threaten principals by subjecting them to SADTU disciplinary mechanisms if they refuse to grant permission on the grounds that the ten days have been exceeded. The worse scenario is that even the district officials do not want to be unpopular by taking steps against culprits when incidents of this nature are reported by the principals of schools.

Apart from this absenteeism by office bearers, there are also days for go-slows by all union members; stay-aways and non-co-operation with the Department of Education; memorial

services organised early in the morning. All these activities impact negatively on tuition time and learners in public schools are the hardest hit victims. This is confirmed by Rich *et al* (2006) who argued that it is cause for concern that union activity or labour unrest actually goes so far as to disrupt teaching and learning resulting in the abuse of the notion of union membership by condoning misconduct and neglect of responsibility. Letseka *et al* (2012) argue that the destabilizing effect of teacher unions as well as the DoE's indecisiveness need a structured and concerted intervention to rescue our system of education from the crisis that it finds itself in at the moment.

If MIP and LAIS are to be effective intervention measures or strategies, the negative impact of union interference in educational matters would need to be addressed.

5.6 LACK OF PARENTAL SUPPORT

It has been argued that the problem of poor performance is multifaceted. One of the facets is parental support that is lacking in township and rural schools. It is not only school level factors that must be taken into account, because non-school factors, like child-headed families and lack of parental support, can also have a negative effect on learner achievement.

Parental support has been seen to have a significant impact on learner performance. Where this is lacking, learners tend to perform at relatively low levels of achievement due to irregular school attendance which is not monitored or the learners simply become truant at school. Parental involvement is critical to the children's education because it ensures that homework given at school is monitored and signed and, in this way, parents can also identify areas where their children are struggling so that remedial assistance can be given at once. The encouragement that children receive from their parents for good work has a stronger influence than that of educators in raising achievement levels. It is, therefore, important that parents of learners at school should be mobilized and harnessed to take ownership of schools in their communities and to drive forward the development of their schools. Parents need to be educated on their duties as overseers of their schools because

they are well positioned to deal with problems of laziness on the part of educators, absenteeism by educators and the small volume of work covered by educators. Parents need to know the critical role they have to play in the governance of their schools through policy formulation, development of the schools' code of conduct, admission and language policies, etc. They must know the concept of quality teaching time which should not be compromised by union interference at the expense of learners.

It was disturbing to note that all eight respondents in both schools complained about lack of parental involvement in the education of their children. This is in spite of the schools having mechanisms for involving parents through parental meetings to discuss problems in school performance, as well as to show them work done by their children in each term. Sadly, data shows that these meetings are always poorly attended by parents. Much as the issue of child-headed families was raised by most respondents, regular absenteeism by learners was attributed to parents who do not care about the education of their children and do not have the ambition to see them passing grade 12. Respondents also indicated that numerous attempts are made by the management of schools to call parents when their children have been found misbehaving but parents just do not arrive. In school B, the principal even resorted to suspending learners who were found not to be attending extra classes organized by the school and their re-admission was on condition that they bring their parents.

Ward (2004) argues in this regard that parents must be educated that children's school attendance is critical for academic success and that schools receive their funding from the state based on actual daily attendance. The finding here is that irregular attendance of school by learners is due to parents who show no interest in education by supporting their children at all times and this impacts negatively on their academic achievement. In order to enhance the quality of teaching and learning in our schools, it is imperative that education be seen as a foundation for all societies as it prepares our generation for a knowledge-based economy. This ideal is possible if communities take a lead in holding professionals in education accountable for the quality that they produce and, *vice versa*, educators should

also hold parents accountable for showing interest in and supporting their children's education.

5.7 BEYOND QUICK FIXES: TACKLING POOR PERFORMANCE IN SCHOOLS

It can be argued that the turn-around strategies used by the DoE for trying to fix poor performance at the grade 12 level amount to a quick fix solution. Research by Chapman and Adams (2002) has warned that there are no quick fixes when it comes to the implementation of strategies aimed at improving the quality of education. Chapman and Adams (2002) argue that

...strategies can be developed at all administrative and decision levels for the purposes of maintaining and improving educational quality...strategies may need to vary by particular social and economic context and by departmental level of targeted education institutions.

(Chapman and Adams 2002:36)

With regard to the Eastern Cape MIP strategies, it can be argued that the problem starts at lower levels. According to Letseka *et al* (2012), scores obtained by South African school learners in international tests and evaluations in literacy and numeracy are much lower than those obtained by learners in Singapore and South Korea, whose governments spend proportionately much less on schooling than South Africa does and this suggests the need for some kind of re-engineering of South Africa's education system. This comment is a wake-up call on all education experts to put together their minds and wisdom by focusing on what appears to be broken in order to fix our system of education in South Africa. Letseka *et al* (2002) further point out that South Africa's performance in the grade 6 evaluation test, conducted by the Southern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ II) in 2000, placed it in the bottom half of the 14 participating countries on both reading and mathematics. This is reason enough to believe Letseka *et al*'s call for the radical "redesign" or "re-engineering" of South Africa's education system.

On its part, the National Department of Education introduced the Annual National Assessment (ANA) to be used as a barometer of monitoring the health of the education system in terms of its performance. According to the Eastern Cape Department of Education (2011:4), ANA was introduced after the realization by the DBE that the overall learner performances in grades 3 and 6 nationally, were worryingly low, with average scores in most grades and subjects ranging around 30% and 20%. It could be argued that the use of 'quick fixes' in tackling under-performance could be avoided if the ANA results could be used to detect problems experienced by learners at an early stage so that appropriate interventions can be made before these learners get to the matric class. To avoid 'quick fixes', school authorities must, therefore, continuously monitor the entire system, using performance measures identified by ANA in order to fix problems before they become complex. If learners cannot develop age-appropriate numeracy and literacy skills by the grade 3 level, how can one expect that the same learners will perform well at the matric level? Once again, too much emphasis on grade 12 when dealing with under-performance, amounts to using 'quick fixes.'

The researcher's assessment of the current problems which bedevil the DoE is that it is about time that the health status of our primary schools was investigated so that the focus of the two strategies could start in the foundation phase. The starting point here should be to ensure that all educators, irrespective of their union affiliation, are in class, on time, teaching, with no neglect of duty until the end of the seven hour teaching time per day. It would, therefore, be better if common exams which are part of the LAIS programme are introduced at all levels in the schooling system right from the foundation phase in order to ensure commitment of all educators in all phases to want to make a change in school improvement. This will ensure that the learners in grade 3 have the necessary competencies like good literacy and numeracy. The same goes for learners in grade 6 and 9 who should by the end of the year have mastered the minimum language and mathematic competencies.

In this way, all educators at all levels of education are subjected to external evaluation of their work by subject advisors instead of the current situation where only grade 9 and 12

educators are evaluated. This proposed arrangement is to provide a holistic approach to the tackling of poor performance in schools instead of the current quick fixes which mainly focus on grade 12 with little or no impact.

The call for the re-engineering of the education system may entail a serious commitment to 'beef up' the capacity and will of districts to play a more capacity-building role in education through developing and supporting good teaching practice so that, in the end, educators can be held accountable for high standards. The eleven pillars underpinning the LAIS programme must find expression by being implemented instead of just being on paper as is now the case to monitor progress of learners from grade 3 right up to grade 12 through careful monitoring of all assessments by subject advisors attached to each under-performing school. Subject advisors should be capacitated so that they have a global district view of the comprehensive subject content coverage across various subjects and should be at the fore-front in tutor recruitment. Under-performing schools cannot be left on their own accord to explore efforts for raising learner attainment, using the MIP and LAIS as turnaround strategies, without district monitoring and proper co-ordination of the very turnaround strategies. District officials must attempt to attend to the multitude of factors associated with low levels of attainment which were raised during the interviews and avoid using quick fixes to solve these problems so that schools can sustain their improvement efforts.

5.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter discussed the main findings of the study. It examined the conceptual and theoretical bases of the intervention strategies and attempted to assess their efficacy in addressing the problem of school under-performance. The chapter concluded by making the point that the problem of school under-performance is complex and multifaceted and cannot be addressed by strategies that focus mainly on school factors. The next chapter gives a summary of findings, conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the summary of the main ideas of the study, the findings and the conclusions. It also evaluates the potential contribution of the study and ends by giving recommendations for further research and future practice in the delivery of the MIS.

6.2 SUMMARY OF MAIN IDEAS OF THE STUDY

Chapter one gave the background and context of the study. The concept of school performance was introduced with special reference to the under-performing schools in the Queenstown District over a period of five years. The chapter then outlined what motivated the study, then the research problem and research questions. This was followed by the purpose and significance of the study. The definition of key concepts, as well as an indication of methodology used in the study, was given. The chapter ended by giving the structural outline of the whole study.

In chapter 2, a detailed literature review relevant to the study was provided. Key concepts of the study and the theoretical framework then followed. Perspectives from other countries such as England, the USA and Canada were used as illustrative material. This chapter also gave a detailed outline of the Departmental Matric Intervention Strategies as used in the Eastern Cape Province.

Chapter 3 has provided the methodology used in this study together with the orientation to the study, which is interpretivism, as well as the research design. Techniques of gathering data and field work experiences were also explained with special reference to interviews as the main gathering instrument, used together with field notes and document review. The

approach used in the selection of cases has also been explained together with a detailed description of each case. Experiences learnt from conducting interviews have been explained. The chapter ends by giving an explanation of how ethical measures have been observed and applied.

Chapter 4 contains data analysis with emerging themes. The presentation and analysis drew from a full dataset which is given Annexure D. In all five main themes emerged from the data and were interpreted by reference to concepts and theoretical ideas discussed in Chapter 2.

Chapter 5 began with a discussion of the main findings organised under the over-arching issues abstracted from the main findings. These included debates concerning performance as measured by standardised criteria of pass rates that underplay the value-adding perspective of education, which judges performance in terms of value that being at school adds to learners, regardless of whether or not they achieve what is seen as acceptable pass rates in matric. The chapter also covered contextual problems that hinder the implementation of the Matric Intervention Strategies. Based on the finding that seemed to suggest that the MIS amounts to a quick fix approach to problems of under-performance, the chapter ends by reflecting on this phenomenon.

Chapter 6 describes the summary, conclusions and recommendations.

6.3 SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

The main findings are divided into five main themes and these are given below.

6.3.1 The Departmental Matric Intervention Strategies were perceived, by educators, to be ineffective in addressing the problem of under-performance in schools.

Educators felt that Departmental intervention strategies had not made any significant improvement in addressing under-performance in the two case study schools during the

past five years. They also felt bad about being labelled as under-performing schools in spite of all the attempts that they made like using their own strategies in addressing under-performance. A major concern of respondents was the top down approach that was used by the DoE in introducing the MIP strategies. Further, there was a complaint about their focus on matric results and thus ignoring the lower grades which also need to be strengthened and supported in order to produce a good foundation for grade 12. Finally, educators identified poor co-ordination, lack of planning and lack of monitoring by the DoE, and nepotism involved in the appointment of tutors as some of the weaknesses of the departmental Matric Intervention Strategies.

6.3.2 There was a myriad of factors found to be contributing to under-performance of schools and low matric pass rate.

Participants saw under-performance by schools as caused by a complex web of factors, which include those related to leadership and management at school and district levels, lack of parental involvement, educator and learner factors, and teacher union interference. They did not see MIS as being able to address the causes. The concern shown by the DoE in investing millions of rands for the improvement of performance in schools was, however, appreciated by the respondents.

6.3.3 There were capacity problems at district and schools levels which undermined the efficacy of the matric intervention strategies in schools.

According to respondents, there are some capacity problems affecting the Queenstown District and schools in general which range from educators' lacking content knowledge to inability to properly manage the LAIS budget, and poor project management skills right up to the Matric Intervention Officers' inability to fill the gap. Some capacity problems were found to be systemic and thus affected the successful implementation of the 11 pillars.

LAIS schools also identified teachers' lack of content knowledge of subjects they teach and failure of the district to recruit qualified educators for critical subjects which have low pass rates every year.

6.3.4 There was poor Implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Matric Intervention Strategies in schools

The implementation of the MIS at school level was poorly monitored by the departmental officials. It was reported that under-performing schools were hardly visited and supported by the subject advisors and MIOs. Educators perceived the role of subject advisors to be limited to CASS moderation and they did not provide any developmental support to educators experiencing content gaps. Multi-disciplinary visits which occur at the beginning of each year to check on school readiness were perceived by respondents to be merely platforms to attack educators who produce poor results in their subjects at matric level, while there was no follow-up on issues identified as challenges leading to under-performance.

6.3.5 MIP programme was commercialised to benefit district co-ordinators and educators appointed as tutors

Educators saw the MIS as a money making scheme for educators who were appointed as tutors to handle the MIP programme as well as and district officials appointed as co-ordinators of the programme. They claimed this was linked to corrupt practices during the appointment of tutors, some of whom are failures in their own schools. Teachers did not have confidence in the appointment procedures used by the district for tutors.

6.4 CONCLUSIONS

It can be concluded that the Matric Intervention Strategies in the two schools are not likely to achieve the intended results as long as educators do not think that the strategies are addressing the problems they face. Another conclusion is that the Matric Intervention Strategies are seen as 'quick fix' responses to what are actually deep-seated and systemic problems in education.

6.5 THE POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

Although this study was limited to two schools, it revealed that problems experienced at school level are not amenable to solutions developed in a top-down fashion, that is, from the province or district level to be implemented at the school level. There is a need during the development of an intervention initiative, such as the Matric Intervention Strategies, to take into account and accommodate the voices of teachers at the school level. By focussing on teacher perceptions of the impact of the provincially conceived Matric Intervention Strategies, this study seeks to give voice to teachers for whom the strategies are intended.

6.6 RECOMMENDATIONS

Two sets of recommendations, one for further research and the other for the delivery of the Matric Intervention Strategies are suggested.

6.6.1 For further research

Given the findings of this study, it is recommended that the impact of Matric Intervention Strategies be the focus of a survey research for which a probability sample must be drawn that can generate findings that are generalisable across the participating target population.

6.6.2 For the delivery of the Matric Intervention Strategies (MIS)

For the delivery of the MIS it is recommended that the weaknesses identified by educators of the two schools be further investigated so that new implementation plans can be developed.

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APPENDICES

ANNEXURE 1

21 Berry Street
Top Town
Queenstown
5320
26th January 2012

The Superintendent General
Department of Education
Eastern Cape Province

Dear SG

RE-APPLICATION FOR PERMISSION TO DO RESEARCH

I am currently completing my Master's Degree in Education (MED) in the faculty of Education at the University of Fort Hare. My research question is : "Educator perceptions of the impact of the Departmental Matric Intervention Strategies (MIP and LAIS) on two selected under-performing high schools in the Hewu circuit of the Queenstown district." To conclude my research, I need your permission to use the two high schools that I have chosen to conduct interviews with educators who have been exposed to the two Departmental Strategies referred to above and have been teaching grades 10 to 12 at these schools during the past five years. The two schools have been chosen for this study on the basis of them experiencing the perennial problem of under-performance over the past five years as reflected by the district analysis. Interviews will not exceed 15 minutes with each respondent and will also not interfere with the normal tuition time.

This letter also serves to inform you that all information gathered from the educators and school managers will be used solely for research purposes and that the anonymity of all participants is guaranteed. I also undertake to adhere to the University's code of conduct regarding informed consent and confidentiality as prescribed when dealing with data obtained from schools solely for research purposes. Presently, I am working at Nkwanca High School as its headmaster.

I trust that you will kindly grant me the consent in conducting my research.

Thanking you in anticipation.

Yours in Education

.....

AM MRALI

CELL number: 072 589 5004

Email address: amomral@gmail.com

Cc: Acting District Director for Queenstown

ANNEXURE 2

26/07/2011 08:22

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ELI

PAGE 01



Province of the
EASTERN CAPE
EDUCATION

STRATEGIC PLANNING POLICY RESEARCH AND SECRETARIAT SERVICES
Steve Vukile Tshwete Complex • Zone 6 • Zwelitsha • Eastern Cape
Private Bag X0032 • Bhalso • 5605 • REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA
Tel: +27 (0)43 702 7428 • Fax: +27 (0)43 702 7427/38 • Website: www.ecdoe.gov.za

Enquiries: Dr Heckroodt

Email: bernie@ecdoe.gov.za

11 April 2011

Amos Mzoxolo Mrali

P.O. Box 1738

QUEENSTOWN

5320


Dear Mr Mrali

PERMISSION TO UNDERTAKE RESEARCH FOR A MASTER'S THESIS: EDUCATOR PERCEPTIONS OF THE IMPACT OF THE DEPARTMENTAL MATRIC INTERVENTION STRATEGIES ON THE SELECTED UNDER-PERFORMING SCHOOLS IN THE HEWU AREA OF QUEENSTOWN DISTRICT

1. Thank you for your application to conduct research.
2. Your application to conduct the above mentioned research in A Secondary School and B High School in the Eastern Cape under the jurisdiction of the Queenstown District is hereby approved on condition that:
 - a. there will be no financial implications for the Department;
 - b. institutions and respondents must not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation;
 - c. you present a copy of the written approval letter of the Eastern Cape Department of Education (ECDoE) to the District Directors before any research is undertaken at any institutions within that particular district;
 - d. you will make all the arrangements concerning your research;



- e. the research may not be conducted during official contact time, as educators' programmes should not be interrupted;
- f. should you wish to extend the period of research after approval has been granted, an application to do this must be directed to the Director: Strategic Planning Policy Research and Secretarial Services;
- g. the research may not be conducted during the fourth school term, except in cases where a special well motivated request is received;
- h. your research will be limited to those schools or institutions for which approval has been granted;
- i. you present the Department with a copy of your final paper/report/dissertation/thesis free of charge in hard copy and electronic format. This must be accompanied by a separate synopsis (maximum 2 – 3 typed pages) of the most important findings and recommendations if it does not already contain a synopsis. This must also be in an electronic format.
- j. you are requested to provide the above to the Director: The Strategic Planning Policy Research and Secretarial Services upon completion of your research.
- k. you comply to all the requirements as completed in the Terms and Conditions to conduct Research in the ECDoE document duly completed by you.
- l. you comply with your ethical undertaking (commitment form).
- m. You submit on a six monthly basis, from the date of permission of the research, concise reports to the Director: Strategic Planning Policy Research and Secretariat Services.
3. The Department wishes you well in your undertaking. You can contact the Director, Dr. Annetia Heckroodt on 043 702 7428 or mobile number 083 271 0715 and email: annetia.heckroodt@edu.ecproy.gov.za should you need any assistance.


Advocate M. Mwanza

HEAD OF DEPARTMENT: EDUCATION



ANNEXURE 3

21 Berry Street
Top Town
Queenstown
5320
18th March11

The Principal
Department of Education
Queenstown District

Dear Sir/ Madam

RE-APPLICATION FOR PERMISSION TO DO RESEARCH

I am currently completing my Masters Degree in Education (MED) in the faculty of Education at the University of Fort Hare. My research question is : "Educator perceptions of the impact of the Departmental Matric Intervention Strategies (MIP and LAIS) as a means of improving school performance". To conclude my research findings, I need your permission to conduct interviews with educators who have been exposed to the two Departmental Strategies referred to above and have been teaching grades 10 to 12 at your school during the past five years. Interviews will not exceed 15 minutes with each respondent and will also not interfere with the normal tuition time.

This letter also serves to inform you that all information gathered from the educators and school managers will be used solely for research purposes and that the anonymity of all participants is guaranteed. I also undertake to adhere to the University's code of conduct regarding informed consent and confidentiality as prescribed when dealing with data obtained from schools solely for research purposes. Presently, I am working at Nkwanca High School as its headmaster. Included is a letter from the Superintendent General (SG) of the Eastern Cape Province granting me permission to undertake the research in the Province.

I trust that you will kindly grant me the consent in conducting my research.

Thanking you in anticipation.

Yours in Education

.....
AM MRALI
CELL: 072 589 5004

ANNEXURE 4

EDUCATOR PERCEPTIONS OF THE IMPACT OF THE DEPARTMENTAL MATRIC INTERVENTION STRATEGIES ON SELECTED UNDER-PERFORMING SCHOOLS IN THE HEWU AREA OF QUEENSTOWN DISTRICT

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

For
Educators

Respondent No

July – August 2011

INTRODUCTION:

My name is Amos Mzoxolo Mrali, a M.Ed student at the University of Fort Hare. As part of my studies I have to undertake a research project in selected schools of the Queenstown District. My research topic is 'Educator perceptions of the impact of the Departmental Matric Intervention strategies on selected under-performing schools in the Hewu Circuit of the Queenstown District'.

The purpose of the study is to assess the impact of Matric Intervention Strategies as perceived by educators of the under-performing secondary schools in the Queenstown District.

In order to capture our discussions accurately I would like to make use of a tape recorder as a back-up to ensure that your views are correctly interpreted during transcription of data. Do you have a problem with the use of the said device? You have a right to ask for a transcription to be reviewed before any use is made of it or to totally cancel it.

Please be assured that whatever you say or do or show will be treated with complete confidentiality.

Do you have any concerns that you want to raise about the purpose and use of the interview, confidentiality and anonymity or any other concern?

SECTION A: Biographical Characteristics of Respondent

1. How long have you been at this school?

2. How long have you been teaching altogether?

3. Which grade(s) are you presently teaching?

4. What learning area or subject(s) are you presently teaching?

5. Which age-group do you fall under?

Below 20 years: _____
21 to 30 years: _____
31 to 40 years: _____
Over 40 years: _____

6. Your highest qualifications?

SECTION B: Impact of MIS on school performance

1.1

1.1.1

How do you feel about the performance of your school as reflected by the 2010 matric results?

1.1.2 Are there any strategies that exist at school to improve your schools' performance? Please explain.

1.1.3 Is your school part of the on-going MIP and LAIS programme developed by the Eastern Cape Department of Education?

1.1.4 If yes, how has your school performance changed since you have been part of these two strategies? Please explain.

1.1.5 Do you feel that these strategies are effective enough in improving performance in your own subject? Please elaborate.

1.1.6 Have you ever sat down as the staff to evaluate the effectiveness of the two intervention strategies and challenges experienced in the course of implementing them? Please explain.

1.1.7 What improvements would you like to see in these strategies in the near future?

SECTION C: Pedagogical and professional development roles of MIS officers?

1.2

1.2.1 Does your school have any programme for staff development? If yes, what are its areas of focus?

1.2.2 What support do you require from the District or Provincial office in order to improve performance of learners in your subject? Please elaborate.

1.2.3 How often does your school get visited by Matric Intervention Officers?

1.2.4 Tell me about what they do each time they visit. (**Probe**, e.g., Do they come to moderate or do on-site support? What kind of support? What do they moderate, etc?)

1.2.5 What have you benefited from school visits? (**Probe**: Are the visits effective enough to empower you to perform better in your subject?)

1.2.6 What suggestions do you have about moving the school out of the MIP and LAIS programmes? Explain

1.2.7 What do you think are the strengths of (a) the MIP programme and (b) the LAIS programme?

1.2.8 What do you think are the main weaknesses of (a) the MIP programme and (b) the LAIS programme?

1.2.9 Is there any other point you would like to share about (a) learner performance in this school (b) MIP and LAIS strategies?

Thank you very much for your time.

ANNEXURE 5

RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

For

Principal of school

July – August 2011

INTRODUCTION:

My name is Amos Mzoxolo Mrali, a M.Ed student at the University of Fort Hare. As part of my studies I have to undertake research project in the selected schools of the Queenstown District. My research topic is 'Educator perceptions of the impact of the Departmental Matric Intervention strategies on selected under-performing schools in the Hewu Circuit of Queenstown District'.

The purpose of the study is to assess the impact of Matric Intervention strategies as perceived by educators of the under-performing secondary schools in the Queenstown District.

In order to capture our discussions accurately I would like to make use of a tape recorder as a back-up to ensure that your views are correctly interpreted during transcription of data. Do you have a problem with the use of the said device? You have a right to ask for a transcription to review it before any use is made of it or to totally cancel it.

Please be assured that whatever you say or do or show will be treated with complete confidentiality.

Do you have any concerns that you want to raise about the purpose and use of the interview, confidentiality and anonymity, or any other concern?

SECTION A: Biographical Characteristics of Respondent

1. How long have you been at this school?

2. How long have you been teaching altogether?

3. How long have you been a principal?

4. Which grade(s) are you presently teaching?

5. What learning area or subject(s) are you presently teaching?

6. What is the enrolment of:

Learners _____

Educators _____

SMT? _____

7. Do you have a functional School Governing Body? _____

8. Which age-group do you fall under?

Below 20 years: _____

21 to 30 years: _____

31 to 40 years: _____

Over 40 years: _____

9. Your highest qualifications?

SECTION B: Impact of MIS on school performance

1.1

1.1.1

How do you feel about the performance of your school as reflected by the 2010 Matric results?

1.1.2

Are there any strategies that exist at school to improve your schools' performance? Please explain.

1.1.3

Is your school part of the on-going MIP and LAIS programme developed by the Eastern Cape Department of Education?

1.1.4

If yes, how has your school performance changed since you have been part of these two strategies? Please explain.

1.1.5

Do you feel that these strategies are effective enough in improving performance in your school? Please elaborate.

1.1.6

Have you ever sat down as the staff to evaluate the effectiveness of the two intervention strategies and challenges experienced in the course of implementing them? Please explain.

1.1.7

Does your school have its own School Improvement Plan (SIP) or "turn-around strategy" which is tailor-made to suit your circumstances and needs?

1.1.8

Do you feel empowered enough together with your staff to raise the performance of learners in your school?

1.1.9

What improvements would you like to see in these strategies in the near future?

SECTION C: Pedagogical and professional development roles of MIS officers?

1.2

1.2.1 Does your school have any programme for staff development? If yes, what are its areas of focus?

1.2.2 Are there any significant content gaps experienced by your educators in certain subjects?

1.2.3 What support do you require from the District or Provincial office in order to improve performance of learners in your subject? Please elaborate.

1.2.4 How often does your school get visited by Matric Intervention Officers?

1.2.5 Tell me about what they do each time they visit. (**Probe**, e.g., Do they come to moderate or do on-site support?, What kind of support? What do they moderate? etc)

1.2.6 What have you benefited from school visits? (**Probe**: Are the visits effective enough to empower you to perform better in your subject?)

1.2.7 What suggestions do you have about moving the school out of the MIP and LAIS programmes? Explain

1.2.8 What do you think are the strengths of (a) the MIP programme and (b) the LAIS programme?

1.2.9 What do you think are the main weaknesses of (a) the MIP programme and (b) the LAIS programme?

1.2.10 Is there any other point you would like to share about (a) learner performance in this school (b) MIP and LAIS strategies?

Thank you very much for your time.

ANNEXURE 6

DATA SET

TITLE THEME: EDUCATOR PERCEPTIONS OF THE IMPACT OF THE DEPARTMENTAL MATRIC INTERVENTION STRATEGIES ON SELECTED UNDER-PERFORMING HIGH SCHOOLS IN THE HEWU CIRCUIT OF QUEENSTOWN DISTRICT.

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

1.1 Impact of MIS on school performance

1.1.1 Feeling about school performance in the 2010 matric results:

Well, the performance by students was not good and there are many reasons, the most is the lack of involvement by students. They are not showing any interest in studying, they are also not coming to school every day, and there is no parental involvement and support. So 2010 results did not come as a surprise. In the MIP programme that was in winter, very few attended and we suspended all those who did not attend classes. Students of this school do not do their homework and class work. (ER1H/B)

It's not good, although there are specific subjects that pull us down every year. Languages and LO do well. Subjects with few learners like Acc-0%, maths-0%, physics 0% LFSC 12% and with this reflection, the contents do not help us to lift the school performance. I even asked the DoE at the beginning of the year why do these subjects continue to perform like this, is the problem not with teachers? The problem of under-achievement cannot be attributed to learners only. The DoE did not act on my suggestions to arrange meeting with non-performing subject teachers. (ER2H/B)

20.3% for 2010 is very bad and it's lowering the image of the school and this means that we are dropping every year. Since 2007, we have been dropping every year. There is a problem of learners which do not care to study, and do not even care about their books and parents which do not involve themselves in the learning of their children. Parents are not involved at all in the education of their children. (ER3/B)

It is very bad, it's below target of 60% and for now it's disappointing. There is a slight improvement though compared with 2009. This percentage is still putting learners at a disadvantage as too many of them fail to secure a pass. (PR4/B)

I was not satisfied with 2010 results. We tried a lot of strategies to improve school performance together with the ones for the DoE. 2010 results came as a surprise to everybody. (ER1/A)

They are an embarrassment to get below 50%. It gives a bad image about the school to the DoE, community and other schools. (ER2/A)

I don't like it; it's not a true reflection of our performance. Moving from 5.7% to 22% is a remarkable improvement but not our main goal. We will be happy if we move out of MIP. (ER3/A)

It showed a slight improvement no matter how small it may be but I was not happy. My target was 50% together with the staff and we went as far as counting the learners who would assist in boosting the school performance so that we could move out of MIP, it's been time that we have been an MIP school. (PR4/A)

1.1.2 Strategies that exist at school to improve school performance:

Yes, parent's meetings, motivations by DoE, extra- classes and attendance of classes has since improved. Audio- visual aid is in the process of being installed. (ER1H/B)

Extra-classes are in place, content subjects, which have high failure rate, are being prioritised but teachers and learners do not take them seriously. Some teachers come from Queenstown and sacrifice and only to find that learners are few who have attended. Some teachers do not make even an attempt and do not cover the syllabus. Clearly, our problem of under-performance cannot be solved if teachers continue with this attitude of I do not care and simply shift the blame to learners who also have a share in this under-performance. (ER2H/B)

After school classes at 14h30 to 17h00 and they are monitored so that learners can learn their books. We also have morning and Saturday classes by some teachers, and focus is on physics and economics. Our physical science teacher is twinning with another teacher from around school B and both have poor results and I doubt if they are going to improve because the other teacher also has a problem of not attending school regularly and the school also has bad results. (ER3/B)

After school learners remain behind for afternoon studies which start from 14h30 to 17h00. There are also Saturday and Sunday classes and learners go to Maria Louw for MIP classes and we have our own attendance register to monitor the attendance of our learners to these classes. (PR4/B)

Yes, we do have strategies although they are not new. We engage learners in afternoon and morning classes, maths has Saturday and Sunday classes because its percentage was zero in 2010. Fortunately, we have a teacher periodically who is handling this maths. We do have teachers although periodically like in 2010 Jan- March there was no teacher for maths and we secured one in April and he resigned before the end of the year. Now we have a new teacher who is a temporary teacher though. (ER1/A)

Yes extra-classes monitored by me with a timetable. There are also engagement meetings with parents quarterly to give feed back to them about performance of learners and it works because I am the class teacher and I indicate failed subjects in "red" for parents to know. Enforcement of discipline is also our priority when we have meetings with parents. (ER2/A)

Extra-classes with the timetable. This year we have prioritised maths. (ER3/A)

Extra classes in the afternoon and Geography and maths have Saturday classes but now they are in the MIP programme. We have morning classes for Isixhosa. (PR4/A)

1.1.3 Is the school part of MIP and LAIS programme?

Yes, it's been more than five years that we have been part of these strategies. (ER1/A)

Yes, because of poor performance. (ER2/A)

Yes, but not all subjects are catered for. (ER3/A)

Yes, although sometimes I get disappointed in that MIP does not run as was the case in Winter –June 2011 and I was not informed that there are no funds. Sometimes learners are not fetched by the service providers due to lack of co-ordination by the DoE. (PR4/A)

Yes, Saturday and Sunday we have incubation classes and only two students are part of the LAIS programme. (ER1H/B)

Yes, but I am just not happy to be part of a losing team more so that my subject continues to produce good results. This is denting my image because I am doing my part. (ER2H/B)

Not really, because in one instance our learners in June 11 were not fetched by the transport to the place of MIP programme where tutoring was taking place. No, No, I won't say that the DoE is helping us, in Jan they come and talk and talk with us and go. In my view, the DoE looks at schools with good results; we have to be given priority as an under-performing school. We are not being accorded status of an MIP school and in Jan, good ideas were raised but after that no follow up made on progress. (ER3/B)

Partly, because the DoE does not adhere to its promises and we do not see us as being granted status of an MIP and LAIS school. The DoE does not prioritise us when it comes to attending these MIP classes such that at times our learners are not taken to venues where MIP is taking place. The DoE does not even tell us in advance that there are no funds for MIP classes so that we can continue with our own strategies. (PR4/B)

1.1.4 Change in school performance since being part of these strategies:

Our focus changes each year, if it's Geo this year by example, then next year its another subject. Teachers complain about multi-grade teaching as the reason. We also do not have support base from the parents. Last year and this year we had parents' meetings with grade 12 parents and quarterly and we analyse term results with them. The results are still below our expectations. (ER1/A)

There is an improvement based on 2009 matric results but the co-operation from community, learners and management to supervise the attendance is needed to make a significant improvement. (ER2/A)

LAIS has made a change.

MIP – Lacks monitoring measures, which are important in order to make a change. (ER3/A)

There is a slight improvement meaning that they are working. If it were not because of poor co-ordination and monitoring by the DoE, our school would have done better. (PR4/A)

Slight improvement, which is not remarkable though, and this year we are expecting improvement. (ER1H/B)

Nothing has changed for the better our performance moves in a descending order. The principal even reported to us that the Provincial Head identified us as the worst performing school in the District of Queenstown in a meeting held t Queenstown on the 14th August 2011 for analysis of grade 12 results. This does not reflect good about us as if we are not working. It was rather embarrassing to be identified as the top worst performing school in the District to the extent of saying that learners who come to our school are coming to warm their graves every day. (ER2H/B)

No, no there is no change the school is pulling alone. The little effort is because of our own efforts and that is why we are not making a significant improvement. The DoE does not care about us the case of the history teacher was reported to the DoE long time ago, no action was taken. Science subjects are pulling us down including accounting. Good performance is only in Isixhosa, English, LO and Economics. Attendance register also does not help the DoE to take action against teachers who do not attend school regularly. (ER3/B)

As I have said partly, there is no real and significant change in school performance. We can only be happy once we achieve 60%. Even the slight improvement made in 2010 is as a result of our own efforts. Clearly, you cannot expect a big improvement in a school where the manager teaches 4 classes and still be expected to do admin work including supervision of teacher's work in the classes. (PR4/B)

1.1.5 Feeling about the effectiveness of the strategies in improving performance in one's own subject:

Yes, they have an impact but it is just too little (incinci). Teachers complain about recruitment of tutors without any mention of areas that they are good at and where they have been recruited and what are their strong points. The tutor who has been identified hardly arranges time to be with me to discuss areas of focus and concern, so MIP is not helping us, this what teachers are saying. (ER1/A)

No, for my subject, Isixhosa is not even catered for in the MIP programme. There should not be weighing of subjects into critical, any examinable subject is critical. A student who fails to obtain Level 3 in Isixhosa, fails the entire examination, so why not include it in the MIP programme? (ER2/A)

Not quite effective, because these strategies focus on grade 12 learners only. (ER3/A)

Yes, to a certain degree, because our learners are now showing interest in their books and studies. In 2009, we recorded 5,71% because the two strategies did not take place due to budgetary constraints experienced by the DoE. (PR4/A)

Yes, if students can attend school regularly and do their work, this situation would change. The problem lies with the students. (ER1H/B)

The strategies are not working properly because school visits are done only in January to check on school readiness and the DoE officials go forever. Although in English we are getting learner material. After these visits no feedback and no learner material, the school has to foot the bill of buying study aids. (ER2H/B)

With my subject I do not have a problem, we help ourselves as cluster teachers since we have a bursary from the DoE to further our studies in this subject. We empower ourselves and our subject advisor is also of assistance to us and we have workshops by the DoE, which empower us a lot. (ER3/B)

They are not effective at all, for now they are a real joke and waste of money in our District. There are no follow ups by the DoE on challenges experienced by MIP schools which they identify in January of each year even if there good ideas that they bring sometimes which can be tried. No communication with MIP schools during planning for these MIP classes and LAIS programme to ensure maximum attendance by learners and areas of focus. The last time I saw them was in 2010 when we were called in Umtata for a workshop for schools below 20% and they never came back. (PR4/B)

1.1.6 Attempts by the staff to evaluate the effectiveness of the two strategies and challenges experienced in implementing them:

Yes, we have our challenge, with MIP is the attendance of learners which is not pleasing. Even with the District strategies where transport is organised 5 out of 15 attend and learners just do not attend. Only the good ones end up attending and they are rewarded sometimes. We call parents of offenders/dodgers but they just become harsh when they are with us. The major problem is the community and they do not have mentality of importance of the education of their children and this is seen even when we call parents. (ER1/A)

Not really formal after the MIP- we discovered that the chapters done are not necessarily problematic, this is what we get from learners. We also identified the need for pace setters to be used during MIP classes to guide tutors. LAIS- the memo for common papers had some gaps and how come that there could be common papers with incomplete answers meanwhile we claim to improve performance of learners. This shows that the question papers are not moderated properly before being written. (ER2/A)

Not in a formal setting especially in English. (ER3/A)

Yes, to an extent that some teachers complained that these strategies are a waste of time because the tutors deal with the same topics that we do not have problem with. Some learners chose not to attend. My teachers even felt that they would rather stick to their classes rather than taking part in MIP programme. (PR4/A)

Yes, learners not attending MIP classes were suspended and meetings with parents were held. (ER1H/B)

Yes, but we do not have regular subject meetings with the high failing subjects. Some teachers do not complete syllabus. Absenteeism by teachers rife especially in history which got 12% and the teacher has since the 31st August 11 resigned, this is affecting school performance. We have decided to advertise this post but the DoE does not prioritise us by getting a teacher, given our situation, we are just on our own. (ER2H/B)

Yes, every year, we try to boost results. Good teachers in the GET band are taken to the FET band to boost pass rate. This is how we identified the problem of poor co-ordination and monitoring of these strategies by the DoE. (ER3/B)

Yes, several occasions coming with different ideas and what is bad is that the DoE does not want us to implement our own strategies meanwhile they are unable to monitor and follow up their own strategies. Immediately they leave the gate, teachers relax due to laziness and when you say that we should devise means of implementing our own strategies and teachers will refuse to co-operate saying let's wait for the DoE. Presently, teachers have too much rights, my geography teacher is a unionist who is too busy to be in the class such that we decided to phase out geography at all and we now have economics in its place. Even when you report the matter to the DoE, no action is taken. We also decided to remove all science subjects from other classes so that they can be in one class- science class to reduce the high failure rate, such now tourism is in grade 11 and next year it will be in grade 12. (PR4/B)

1.1.7 Intended improvements in intervention strategies for the future:

We need to work hand in hand with Social Dept to deal with social issues together with SAPS due to high rate of drug abuse. Our major problem is the staff establishment which does not address our curricular needs. We went as far as reducing streams according to the number of teachers available and even ignoring their skills but simply attaching a subject to a teacher. During winter schools for MIP programme, topics to be taught should be identified by the cluster subject teachers because what we have noticed is that the appointed tutors merely teach what they like even if as the school we have dealt with the topic in details. If we meet as a cluster, we might even agree to identify problem areas where we really need help. Even when we look at learner's work after attending LAIS and MIP

programmes, we are not impressed because the tutor has focused on the same topics that I have done in details instead of tackling challenging topics. (ER1/A)

Pace setters – to be used by appointed tutors and tutors must be appointed on the basis of previous results. Interviews must be done to check depth of subject matter. Transport must be monitored to ensure its availability and this is where management needs to play a role up to the centre where tutoring occurs. Even in this Spring classes, transport did not pitch up and the management did not take the matter up, and I had to personally phone the owner whom I know to fetch our learners. (ER2/A)

LAIS- has the potential of improving school performance .

MIP- must cater for all subjects and appointment of tutors to be transparent. (ER3/A)

More competent teachers to be employed with good remuneration. Incubation classes should cater for more students. (ER1H/B)

MIP should provide study material, subject advisors are doing nothing at the office meanwhile they are needed at schools. More workshops for slow improving subjects and we expect them to go to the teachers in the classes and assist and not to police where there is a content gap meanwhile they get paid descent salaries. They must stop meeting with SMT and not interact with the teachers sitting with problems, school readiness checking does not address content gaps experienced by teachers. Taking teacher files and names does not help to solve the problem beginning of the year and it's like an empty threat because the Matric Intervention Officers never come back with findings and feedback to the teachers whose files were taken for scrutiny by the DoE. (ER2H/B)

MIP programme must involve teachers of under-performing schools for sharing of best practices. The DoE must visit MIP schools frequently with question papers and identify and develop the gaps identified. Subject advisors must monitor what has been taught by the teachers with high failure rate. The DoE must check and monitor whether we are implementing the resolutions taken in January when they visit us and assess impact of the strategies. (ER3/B)

1.1.7 Assessing whether the school has its own school improvement plan

Yes, our focus is on raising performance of learners to achieve an achieved rating (L2) in all learning areas and then raise school performance to 60%. Life Sciences, geo, maths, mat.lit and agric are performing poorly but we do not have solutions for some of the problems due to multi-grade teaching. This impacts negatively on teacher performance because we cannot even rotate teachers who have low pass rates because we do not have sufficient staff. (PR4/A)

Yes, though in most cases it is disrupted by that of the DoE which is not monitored. What is bad with them is that they do not want us to have our own strategy, they want us to stick to theirs which they do not monitor. Right now, there is an MIP programme, nobody knows what is being taught there and there is no co-ordination with the schools to check what has not been properly taught. No programme to the subject teacher to say this is what was taught in the MIP and no evaluation of feedback and learners come back without proof of assessment on the very topics that they were taught. (PR4/B)

1.1.8 Assessing whether school managers are empowered enough and their staff to raise school performance:

No, because the two strategies are not properly co-ordinated and monitored by the DoE. I am also not getting enough support from the DoE because the Matric Intervention Officers come in January and we discuss and identify problems and they go for ever. Even when the District comes , the officials come for fault finding rather than to support me. I have raised the problem of drugs and learners staying alone to the EDO but no feedback has ever come forth. (PR4/A)

Not really, because the school has no legitimate head. I'm just the acting principal for almost three years without any acting allowance and no documentation has been sent to school to legitimise my acting status. Sometimes teachers do not want to carry out instructions from me because they say as far as they know, the school has no headmaster. I am in a threat to be honest, one year a teacher came to me to sign marking forms, in 30 mins the DoE phoned me asking me to account about the matter and I said they must ask her if she was known by the officials of the school that she was there and did I refuse to sign her form. I told Mr X (Departmental official) that they must not run the school for me and we had a robus debate and I just decided to drop the phone. (PR4/B)

1.1.9 Improvements necessary to improve the two strategies in the near future:

By improving communication and o-ordination between MIP schools and DoE.

By planning for each vacation in advance and advise the school about the envisaged programme eg MIP or LAIS. Tutors appointed must liaise with teachers of MIP and be afforded opportunity to attend classes to share best practices. By appointing best tutors in the District on the basis of their experience and results. By monitoring programmes and not focus on money to be accumulated from tutoring. (PR4/A)

Better co-ordination of programmes with MIP school managers and monitoring of the strategies with feedback on whether the intended aims have been achieved. MIP is unnecessary and I do not have advices (andinabuchulebayo) because presently teachers do not work full day (7 hours) because they know that whatever backlog is there, MIP will make up for it. Ex-model C schools do not have these programmes and they believe in time on task, and they still pass. Teachers now have put aside the question of teaching and evaluation in their methodology. Feedback should be given to schools what was taught in the MIP or LAIS programme and proof must be submitted to MIP schools to check if the programme has made any significant impact in improving school performance. Teachers of MIP schools should also be there in centres to learn best practices from the appointed tutors. (PR4/B)

SECTION C: Pedagogical and professional development roles of MIS officers:

1.2

1.2.1 Assessing whether the school has any staff development in place:

No, we do not have one at school, it's been three years now that we do not have a staff development programme. We need one on areas like team building in case we also have a problem as teachers. Also programmes dealing with behavioural problems of learners, how do learners respond to different situations and be able to know why this learner is behaving like this. We once had a lady who was a volunteer some years back. (ER1/A)

No, (ER2/A)

No, but we just talk about the content gaps but not in a formal way to have a programme. (ER2/A)

No, but I must be honest that there are content gaps experienced by teachers. (PR4/A)

No, we do not have one. We once discussed it but it did not kick off the ground. We do however attend the once off workshops organised by the DoE. (ER1H/B)

No, I am honest with you although this is part of IQMS we merely do pep talk even in areas where we identify teacher gaps because teachers bring politics in the whole issue and call SADTU. Our hands are tight because SADTU does not want us to do class visits to identify gaps for development as HOD's and teachers are taking advantage of this and in the process, they do not get the necessary help because they prefer to wear the SADTU mask. (ER2H/B)

No, except for teachers who have bursaries from the DoE like my case in LO. (ER3/B)

No, IQMS would develop staff if teachers could stop attaching politics to it and just accept it. (PR4/B)

1.2.2 Support needed by educators from the District or Provincial office:

Subject advisors must develop us and not inspect us. If I identify a chapter needing their help they do not come and I end up sitting with the problem. They should also bring motivational speakers for both teachers and learners. The situation is hectic and a problem even to be called MIP school is degrading and dehumanising as if we do not care and we are a laughing stock by the very officials. (ER1/A)

Workshops from the writers of books especially poetry to give background about the poem. Subject advisors must start their programme beginning of the year and not in May or June. Planning starts in Nov for the following year. They must focus on staff development rather than looking for faults. (ER2/A)

Work schedules for topics and poems to be done early and arrive in Nov for the following year. This year for example, there was a change of poems to be done and documents arrived after June with me having taught poems of last year. Study guides to be delivered in time and on-site support in the classrooms. Cluster workshops to continue. (ER3/A)

They can come for inspection and organise more workshops and outdoor activities at the sites like Sterkfontein for evolution. (ER1H/B)

MIP must go to an extent of providing additional learner material because sometimes textbooks are not sufficient at our schools for all the learners. Subject advisors must do more frequent visits to under-performing schools and arrange meetings for subjects with low pass rate and discuss and address problems and challenges experienced. More workshops must be organised beginning of the year and quarterly to address content gaps experienced by teachers. (ER2H/B)

In my subject, I am ok with learner performance. Provincial tasks must be common in all schools as it is the case now with LO, its working. Recommend that LO be examinable with written component to make learners serious. (ER3/B)

1.2.2 Assessing whether teachers experience some content gaps:

Yes, when we do analysis of results and this is also confirmed by teachers. We went as far as suggesting that the MIP and LAIS should address the areas of concern. (PR4/A)

Yes, in Science subjects, although teachers deny this but the results are telling us that there are gaps. Science Dept is one that is pulling us down every year. Even if I want to have some sessions with teachers who experience gaps, my hands are tight because I am teaching grades 10 to 12 Acc. Maths students have been coming to me complaining about the teacher and when I visit the class, SADTU site committee confronts me and say this is not allowed. What I saw was that the teacher brings a worked example to teach learners. (PR4/B)

1.2.3 Support needed by managers of schools from the District or Provincial office:

By organising more workshops to address content gaps; by shifting the focus of the two strategies to start at GET rather than in grade 12; by frequently visiting the school to assess progress achieved and problems identified. (PR4/A)

Both offices must respect and observe that the school is an extension of the DoE even when it comes to implementing policies and not argue against the school; Stop Unions from interfering with tuition time by calling meetings for members and go to an extent of preventing officials from monitoring teacher's work, presently unions dictate terms for the employer. Revise staff establishment to cater for more relevant teachers for science subjects, presently, most of the teachers in certain subjects are not relevant people and hence there are

gaps, some lack even the methodology of teaching. At one stage the District Director of QT was forcing me to sign application form for a teacher who teaches up to grade 11 to go and mark grade 12 external. The District must implement leave without pay that I effect to deal with absenteeism. (PR4/B)

1.2.4 The number of times that the school get visited by Matric Intervention Officers:

Province comes once a year in Jan; District once per term. (PR4/A)

Sometimes once in a year after seeing results and thereafter they vanish into thin air. To be honest, the last time I met with them was in 2010 when we were called as principals of schools below 20% at Umtata, good ideas were raised and they were never followed up. Teachers by nature are very lay, but this tendency of visiting us once in a year and go is used by teachers as means of not doing anything (not innovative) but simply wait for the DoE. (PR4/B)

They come beginning of the year for analysis of results and they leave and simply ask us what are we going to do to improve. Some come during the year in the form of subject advisors. They do not come to crisis schools. We do not even mind if they can come every day. They do not give us assistance instead they ask for challenges and ask for school stamp to indicate that they were here and no follow up is made. If we fall as the school, we must fall with them. (ER1/A)

Quarterly, from Jan up until now they have come twice for motivation. (ER2/A)

Not too often, no visit this year for my subject. (ER3/A)

Once in a term, we wish there could be more frequent visits and more support. (ER1H/B)

This year they came beginning of the year not regular given the plight of our school. May be they do not bother too much because we are an MIP school. If they come during the year, they end up with either the principal or SMT just to get the challenges experienced and off they go. But in my subject English they are visible and supportive, but I can't talk for other subjects but if they were coming I would be knowing because I am here. (ER2H/B)

In Jan and mid June and thereafter they go for ever. Even now, they have not come for CASS moderation, they say it is difficult for them to come to individual schools and we end up pushing and helping ourselves. (ER3/B)

1.2.5 Purpose of visit by the officers:

Province asks us the cause of under-performance and we answer one by one and promise to come back but never. District comes for moderation of written work, CASS although English has not been moderated this year. There is no on-site support given except in maths where the subject advisor pitches up sometimes. At one stage, I asked the Province to meet with teachers but they refused. (PR4/A)

They ask for reasons for poor performance. The officials are afraid of educators and even if we indicate cases of non co-operation by certain educators, no action is taken against them. They also ask us what do we have, like do we have enough textbooks? If at all they meet teachers, teachers dictate to them what must happen. At one stage I clashed with the District Director over a teacher who was problematic and lazy meanwhile their children are in ex-model C schools. (PR4/B)

They come for moderation, I do not even know a thing about on-site support, even when you are de-motivated, they just drag you down without appreciating even the little effort that I have put. (ER1/A)

Moderate teacher files, written work, CASS and no onsite support for my subject. (ER2/A)

Moderate written work, CASS ad no on-site support given. They just listen to us when we present challenges and they go and never come back. (ER3/A)

Moderate written work of students, sometimes visit classes to give advices supplying learner support materials. (ER1H/B)

They come for CASS moderation because now SADTU did not fall in line with cluster moderation and its only now that they visit schools but not all subjects. There is no on-site support because they do not come, Xhosa as we speak has not been moderated the subject advisor said he cannot come for one teacher for orals. In English my subject for an example, marks for my learners were adjusted by 10% and I was very proud of this achievement. (ER2H/B)

Moderate written work and CASS but this year they have not come at all even for CASS claiming that they can't come for one single school and even if they come, they just ask for files and portfolios of learners. (ER3/B)

1.2.6 Assessing what managers and educators have benefited from the visits:

Nothing because they do not help us to improve our school performance. Even teachers complain that the subject advisors do not want to assist them in the classrooms when they are here just to demonstrate how lessons should be presented. (PR4/A)

No, nothing, most of the time these visits are just a waste of time because they do not make follow ups about things that we all identify as causing poor performance. At one stage I asked them to meet with the SMT and they refused, I wanted a situation where I do not interpret what they said to the SMT. In another instance they said they were going to hold me accountable and I said who am I

(ndingubanimna) I told them that I am not the legitimate head of the institution and tensions were up and one official intervened on my behalf and the meeting stopped. (PR4/B)

Nothing, the visits might be effective if the officials of the DoE could be consistent and continuous in terms of starting where you ended last year and monitor progress. We end up somewhere and start somewhere so that challenges could be addressed. (ER1/A)

No benefit as such because they come for faults. (ER2/A)

Not really, but if they could have plan for the start of the year for me to follow and then monitor and leave me with all documents needed to unpack the syllabus. (ER3/A)

Yes, more information, more support materials in the form of question papers and answers. Yes I feel empowered by these visits. (ER1H/B)

If the subject advisor comes, we discuss challenges that I experience but I cannot speak for other subjects. One time Ms X (subject advisor) was impressed by my lesson on poetry. The video that I organised myself and this is the kind of support material that we require from the officials. The problem is that the visits are not done frequently as we require and are not properly done and evaluated. (ER2H/B)

I do not think so, no empowerment but in my subject I do not have a problem, our subject advisor is helping us. (ER3/B)

1.2.7 Suggestions on how to move the school out of MIP and LAIS programmes:

Subject advisors must help teachers with content gaps; MIP and LAIS must be co-ordinated with under-performing schools so as to identify areas of focus by the tutors; tutors to be appointed on the basis of their experience and performance in the subject and school performance. (PR4/A)

DoE must really support school managers and root out lay teachers who are untouchable and stop siding with perpetrators. I however do not expect them to run the school for me but I just need their support because I regard myself as an extension of the DoE. They must assist me in dealing with absenteeism of teachers and implement leave without pay when I apply for it. They must also provide qualified personnel for all subjects and must be relevant to the subjects they teach. Otherwise I have fair commitment from the teachers. (PR4/B)

By working with parents who must play their role; by motivating teachers through staff development programmes. (ER1/A)

Engage parents to be hands-on; through regular visits by the office to develop staff; management to monitor all programmes and must have a plan; and also discipline of learners. (ER2/A)

Extra-classes if supervised and monitored by the management and scholar transport to be in place. (ER3/A)

More parental involvement; homework to be monitored by parents; presently most of them copy homework from others in the morning. Audio-visual aids to be made available. Time on task by learners and teachers and solving problems and answering questions because the school is a better environment for them than at home. (ER1H/B)

Efforts of three pillars, parents, learners and teachers. Parents do not have interest of education at heart. Parents can ask what homework have you got? Teachers have to put an extra-effort even on Saturdays. Learners must be regular at school and do their work. The District office is even more critical, they have subsidised cars, teachers are trying their best but there is no support from the office. (ER2H/B)

I wish to go now and apply to another school. All learning areas to be included in these programmes. Teachers to be developed in their various LA's with workshops to deal with content gaps. Twinning with good schools and involving MIP teachers in the centres for sharing best practices and to monitor their own attendance of learners. (ER3/B)

1.2.8 Strengths of MIP and LAIS programme:

If planning is done by DoE in advance as suggested, these strategies could be effective. If appointment of best tutors could be given priority, they could be effective. (PR4/A)

Both programmes can achieve better results if the DoE could adhere to policies like those of ex-model C schools in terms of maximum use of contact time. Ex-model C schools do not have these strategies, they teach effectively from morning to afternoon and still have high pass rates presently, these strategies are a joke, they make teachers lazy knowing that there is going to be an MIP programme to deal with the backlog. (PR4/B)

Nutrition attached to MIP has positive results in terms of school attendance and concentration. LAIS gives you a better view of the performance and areas of improvement. Syllabus coverage is its focus and this is very good although learners end up failing in spite of us having completed the syllabus. (ER1/A)

LAIS- analysis of results helps.

MIP- extra-classes are good. (ER2/A)

LAIS- NOTHING (ER3/A)

Spring school, Saturday and winter classes are good more so that learners are transported for free. LAIS has the potential of improving the attainment of learners given chance. (ER1H/B)

If they could be monitored, there could be improvement. (ER2H/B)

LAIS- tests reflect work done if questions are of good quality esp. if they are moderated. Feedback and analysis are good if they are done honestly.

MIP- is good and has helped some schools to move out of the programme, this stigma is not planted permanently into the school as a dead school. (ER3/B)

1.2.9 Weaknesses of the two strategies:

Poor co-ordination; late planning by the DoE leaving the school with no option of informing learners at a later stage that the winter programme is going to run. Lack of transparency in the appointment of tutors. (PR4/A)

Presently, they are a real joke and waste of money. Lack of co-ordinating measures from the DoE ie to link the MIP and LAIS programmes with the school regarding planning and implementation. Lack of contact with subject teachers to identify problem areas. Lack of feedback to the teachers of MIP schools with proof of assessment so as to check if the programme was effective at school level. No transparency regarding the appointment of tutors and how they get selected. No monitoring of who attends because school managers are simply told to release learners. (PR4/B)

MIP-Tutors and their identification is not transparent and we even doubt if they are really experts. Identification of topics needs to be reviewed because our killer subjects change every year.

LAIS- The fact that we do not improve, implies that we still have a challenge and hence this interview. LAIS should at GET and focus on reading, writing and arithmetic. GET does not give a foundation for FET. A child who cannot read, how can he study? Admissions at our school are done until March and we end up taking rejects, learners who have not been admitted elsewhere. Our challenges are beyond the school level. Even in Sept. we cannot finalise admissions because no learners have an interest in coming to our school. (ER1/A)

Not all subjects are catered for; pace setters are not used; tutors are appointed on the basis of friendship with officials of the District; topics to be taught are not discussed with MIP school teachers, focus for LAIS should be in grade 10. (ER2/A)

MIP - No transparency in terms of topics chosen and not just those that tutors like most; the programme does not cater for other subjects that are not identified as critical subjects; tutors and their appointment to be reviewed. (ER3/A)

Both strategies cannot control attendance of learners and enforce discipline. Selection of tutors is not transparent and qualifications and experience are not considered, we require interviews be done during selection. LAIS-learners not working during the week. (ER1H/B)

MIP-selection of tutors is done on the basis whether you are known at the office. Favouritism is not helping rather percentage of the teacher in the subject applied for must be considered because money is there. A good example I know of is that of an accounting teacher in our area who was taken to go and teach business studies- why is this the case if the teacher is not teaching the subject? In June our matrics were not collected by the DoE transport, no opportunity to go to QT schools when you are already down, you are left to remain down because you are not afraid of going down. LAIS – controlled tests must be moderated by HOD's ad DoE but teachers bypass these mechanisms and wear the SADTU face and the paper gets written without being moderated. This is compromising the quality of our question papers. (ER2H/B)

Tutors who do not even teach the subjects in grade 12 are appointed, friends are appointed. No monitoring of learners and work done at the centres and no feedback given to MIP schools. MIP is used as a money making scheme for certain teachers. (ER3/B)

1.2.10 Closing remarks on learner performance in the school and MIP and LAIS:

Teachers are over loaded and the focus by teachers is on FET and GET is neglected meanwhile this is the foundation and this is due to multi-grade teaching. Learners staying alone without parents because there is no monitoring of work done. Lack of parental support even when we report poor attendance. Use of drugs by learners. (PR4/A)

For me, poor performance is coupled with ill-discipline from both teachers and learners due to unlimited rights as per the South African School's Act. For any strategy to succeed there must be thorough monitoring and evaluation especially if money is involved. One teacher at school 0% in his subject arranged twinning with another teacher in another school who also has a poor performance in physics. (PR4/B)

The problem of drugs in our community and child headed families are a problem. The problem of orphans and ndakhe ndaziqokelela ngomnye unyaka. The strengthening of management at our school is crucial because if you are failing as a manager, then we are going to have problems. Thina apha esikolweni asina leadership kwaphela, sithundeza ubhityo and this is the reason why we are not innovative in coming up with new suggestions of improving performance in our school. (ER1/A)

The question of the exit point in grade 9 must be considered. Focus of the strategies must be in grade 10 and management must make it a habit for parents to come to school. (ER2/A)

Use of drugs is rampant in this school. Most learners are staying on their own without guardians. We need support from Social Dept. to deal with socio-economic issues. The DoE must do away with multi-grade teaching to improve results. (ER3/A)

Learners should be motivated, co-operative. More group studies. (ER1H/B)

Endemic problems exist in the school –regular absenteeism of teachers and learners. Syllabus completion is not possible under these conditions. Preparation in content subjects cannot be over-emphasised. Book reading is not effective without point identification. Teachers do not give themselves time to prepare in advance, some do not even attempt to prepare. (ER2H/B)

Lack of commitment by learners and parents; absenteeism by teachers is affecting us and only pitch up on the pay day. Conflict by management affects our performance but its only now that there is some normality in the management. Third grade learners from feeder schools are admitted and they just do not move at all because they are just pushed to move up to FET. Lack of respect by teachers who do not want to recognise our acting principal as the legitimate head because of the DoE not being supportive to us. There are subjects like physics, maths and accounting which continually pull us down. Maths has been replaced by mat.lit and learners doing accounting and mat.lit cannot do chartered Accounting at universities and we are just not going anywhere and three of our top learners are down hearted because of the frustrations by these three subjects. (ER3/B)

EXPLANATION OF CODES (for supervision purposes only)

ER1/A- Educator respondent 1 school A

ER2/A- Educator respondent 2 school A

ER3/A- Educator respondent 3 school A

PR4/A- Principal respondent 4 school A

ER1H/B- Educator respondent 1 Head of Department school B

ER2H/B- Educator respondent 2 Head of Department school B

ER3/B - Educator respondent 3 school B

PR4/B - Principal respondent 4 school B

ANNEXURE 7

SPECIMEN OF THE INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Researcher : Good afternoon Madam,
Respondent : Good afternoon Mfundisi,
Researcher : How are doing this afternoon?
Respondent : No I'm fine it's just that I am a bit tired.
Researcher : Mam, I am here for our appointment as arranged last week. My name once again is Amos Mrali, an MEd student at the University of Fort Hare. I am here for research as I said in our first meeting and the purpose of my study is to investigate the perceptions of educators regarding the impact of the Departmental Matric Intervention Strategies on selected under-performing high schools in the Hewu Circuit of the Queenstown District.
Respondent : wow, we are in the headlines about our under-performance.
Researcher : Not really Madam, I chose your school myself as I said to you in our first meeting.
Researcher : I am sorry Madam, for purposes of evidence that I conducted interviews I have to do all these formalities otherwise I know you said you do not have a problem with the use of a tape recorder. In order to capture our discussion accurately I would like to use this recording tape solely for transcription of data nothing else and our conversation is strictly confidential.
Respondent : No, no Mfundisi I do not have a problem at all you can use it.
Researcher : Let us then start with Section A with Biographical data. How long have you been at this school?
Respondent : Yhu, hey, past 19 years Mfundisi.
Researcher : But you look very young for your experience. How long have you been teaching altogether?
Respondent : 19 years is my total teaching experience.
Researcher : Oh meaning you have never been to another school?
Respondent : certainly tishala
Researcher : Which grade or grades are you teaching?
Respondent : 8 to 12 because of multi-grade teaching.
Researcher : Five preparations, are you coping? But at least you have small numbers of learners unlike our school. What learning areas or subjects are you presently teaching?
Respondent : English and LO
Researcher : A very silly question about age group. Ok just indicate from the schedule.
Respondent : Over 40 years.
Researcher : Your highest qualifications?
Respondent : B.Tech in Education Management.
Researcher : Oh, at least I'm now done with part one. Alright lets get to the actual business, the impact of the Matric Intervention Strategies (MIS) on school performance. How do you feel about the performance of your school as reflected by 2010 matric results.
Respondent : I don't like it; it's not a true reflection of our performance. Moving from 5.7% to 22% is a remarkable improvement but not our main goal. We will be happy if we move out of MIP.
Researcher : Are there any strategies that exist at school to improve your school's performance/ please explain.
Respondent : Extra-classes with the timetable. This year we have prioritised maths.
Researcher : Is your school part of the on-going MIP and LAIS programme developed by the Eastern Cape Department of Education? This question sounds obvious but I do not want to take for granted.
Respondent : Yes, but not all subjects are catered for.
Researcher : Yes I know because of this term 'critical subjects'. Ok let us proceed, how has your school performance changed since you have been part of these two strategies. Please explain.
Respondent : LAIS has made a change.
MIP – Lacks monitoring measures, which are important in order to make a change.
Researcher : Do you feel that these strategies are effective in improving performance in your own subject? Please elaborate.
Respondent : Not quite effective, because these strategies focus on grade 12 learners only.
Researcher : Have you ever sat down as the staff to evaluate the effectiveness of the two intervention strategies and challenges experienced in the course of implementing them? Please explain.
Respondent : Not in a formal setting especially in English.
Researcher : What improvements would you like to see in these strategies in the near future? Nanku u MIP no LAIS, Say kuseungu MEC what you improve?
Respondent : LAIS- has the potential of improving school performance.
MIP- must cater for all subjects and appointment of tutors to be transparent.
Researcher : Do you, ok by the way Mam singenakwi category ye Matric Intervention Officers. Does your school have any programme for staff development?
Respondent : No, Here at school we just talk about the content gaps but not in a formal way to have a programme.
Researcher : Mh..., this is strange, next question Mam, What support do you require from the District or Provincial office in order to improve performance of learners in your subject? Please elaborate.
Respondent : Work schedules for topics and poems to be done early and arrive in Nov for the following year. This year for example, there was a change of poems to be done and documents arrived after June with me having taught poems of last year. Study guides to be delivered in time and on-site support in the classrooms. Cluster workshops to continue.
Researcher : How often does your school get visited by Matric Intervention Officers?
Respondent : Not too often, no visit this year for my subject.
Researcher : Really, but you are an MIP school? Tell me what they do each time they visit? Do they come to moderate or for on-site support? What kind of support do they give and what do they moderate?
Respondent : Moderate written work, CASS ad no on-site support given. They just listen to us when we present challenges and they go and never come back.

Researcher : What have you benefited from these school visits? Are they effective enough to empower you to perform better in your subject?
 Respondent : Not really, but if they could have plan for the start of the year for me to follow and then monitor and leave me with all documents needed to unpack the syllabus.
 Researcher : What suggestions do you have about moving the school out of the MIP and LAIS programme? Explain.
 Respondent : Extra-classes if supervised and monitored by the management and scholar transport to be in place.
 Researcher : What do you think are the strengths of the MIP programme and LAIS?
 Respondent : Nothing, But they can be strong in twinning. They could be benefiting if they are monitored because they sometimes take teachers who do not even teach grade 12 to go and teach and they just take friends to go there and make money.
 Researcher : I guess part of what you said fits well in the next question on weaknesses.
 Respondent : MIP - No transparency in terms of topics chosen and not just those that tutors like most; the programme does not cater for other subjects that are not identified as critical subjects; tutors and their appointment to be reviewed.
 Researcher : Is there any other point you would like to share about learner performance in this school or MIP and LAIS which I might not have covered?
 Respondent : Use of drugs is rampant in this school. Most learners are staying on their own without guardians. We need support from Social Dept. to deal with socio-economic issues. The DoE must do away with multi-grade teaching to improve results.
 Researcher : Mam, thank you for your time we have now come to the end.
 Respondent : Yho, sesigqibile nam ndiyabulela Mfundisi.