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Educational structural support and interventions to improve academic results of secondary schools confronted with poor, inconsistent academic performance in KwaZulu-Natal.

**12/17/2015**

Supervised by: Nontobeko Buthelezi

# **DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY**

I, Sarisha Maraj declare that this thesis entitled “Educational structural support and interventions to improve academic results of secondary schools confronted with poor, inconsistent academic performance in KwaZulu-Natal” is work of my own and all sources that are used are acknowledged through referencing.

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## **ABSTRACT**

Recently, within the KwaZulu-Natal province, academic performance has been a matter of concern. Academic performance lacks consistency and fluctuates from good to poor. This study was conducted to investigate the factors contributing towards poor academic success and the strategies to overcome such factors. The sample composed of six office-based educational specialists who were selected by the technique of purposive sampling. This study used a qualitative research design and the data was collected with the use of face-to-face, open-ended interviews. These interviews were administered to office based educational specialists who are responsible for the implementation of the intervention strategies to improve academic results. The qualitative data was analysed using the method of thematic analysis. The individual interviews that were conducted culminated in findings of the challenges that contribute towards academic success and the established, revised and new strategy suggestions to enhance the academic performance of learners. Recommendations for future research are mentioned.

## **CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

Transformation of the education system has been a major concern in post-1994 South Africa. In the transition from apartheid to democracy, the democratic national government has made a great effort to redress the unjust distribution of education resources in the country. A large portion of attention has been paid to areas such as early childhood education and secondary education, particularly at grade twelve level (Department of Education, 2014). However, despite this attention, a large amount of literature has been written on the poor and inconsistent academic performance of secondary schools in recent years in South Africa and the several influential factors exacerbating the poor academic results (Themane, 1989; Saiduddin, 2003; Rammala, 2009). It can be declared that that the fluctuation in academic performance has a direct impact on the reputation of a school. Schools with inconsistent and poor academic results have a tarnished and weak reputation whereas schools with high academic results have an exceptional reputation (Hargreaves & Fink, 2000).

In recent years, the poor and inconsistent academic performance of schools in the KwaZulu-Natal province has been a matter of concern. There are numerous schools which are praised for their excellent performance one year and are shunned for performing poorly the following year. In these schools, academic performance lacks consistency and fluctuates from good to poor. This causes great concern, specifically in the KwaZulu-Natal province. The fluctuation in performance generates substantial curiosity as to why these fluctuations and poor results occur on a regular basis.

Authors such as Hargreaves and Fink (2000) and Rammala (2009) confirm that fluctuation of high academic performance to low academic performance in secondary schools impacts negatively on a school's reputation, as well as the community support given to the schools. A school that has a record of high academic performance is supported and favoured by the community. The same school can develop low academic performance years later, and is thus rejected by the community. This affects the self-esteem of teachers and learners within the same environment (Hargreaves & Fink, 2000; Rammala, 2009). Consequently, the morale of the school community is compromised (Hargreaves & Fink, 2000).

Multiple local and international studies have been conducted on the subject of poor academic performance in secondary schools (Themane, 1989; Saiduddin, 2003). It is argued that there are many reasons for poor and inconsistent academic results in schools. These reasons include violence levels (Zulu, Urbani & van de Merve, 2004), the classroom climate that teachers set (Pierce, 1994), teaching methods (Shaffer & Kipp, 2007), lack of discipline and parental involvement (Legotlo, Maaga & Sebego, 2006), teacher absenteeism from school due to illness (Hargreaves & Fink, 2000) and poor socio-economic conditions (Adell, 2002), amongst other factors.

It is important to note that education cannot be viewed in isolation; it is a reflection of the economic status, social standing and political framework of the community (Rammala, 2009). It is possible that differences in academic results occur between and among communities due to a disruption of economic, social and political factors (Engelbrecht, Kruger & Booysen, 1996), which are interlinked. Studies that attempt to explain poor academic performance mention three essential elements that are intricately involved in education. These elements are the parents, educators and learners (Rammala, 2009). Parents point toward familial issues; educators reveal academic issues and learners often reflect personal issues. (Rammala, 2009). All of these factors have a relationship with education and, therefore, the learner's academic performance and the reputation of the school.

## **1.2. THE RESEARCH PROBLEM**

This study focuses on the educational structural support and interventions required to improve academic results of secondary schools confronted with poor, inconsistent academic performance in KwaZulu-Natal. Schools that fluctuate from high to low in their academic performance over the course of a few years cause a problem. Statistics representing fluctuations of academic performance in grade twelve for individual schools in KwaZulu-Natal province is not readily available. However, it is possible to discern fluctuations in the pass rate of grade twelve learners at national and provincial levels, as shown in the table below:

Table 1

*Grade twelve results from 2003 to 2013: South African National results and KwaZulu-Natal Provincial results (Articles relating to matric results, 2014).*

<b>Year</b>	<b>National</b>	<b>KZN province</b>
2003	73.3%	77.2%
2004	70.7%	74%
2005	68.3%	70.5%
2006	66.5%	98.3%
2007	65.2%	65.2%
2008	62.7%	57.6%
2009	60.6%	61.1%
2010	67,8%	70.7%
2011	70.2%	68.1%
2012	73.9%	73.9%
2013	78.2%	77.4%

Schools are applauded for their efforts when they have a high academic performance year. This drastically changes when the school's academic results are negative. As an example, Table 2 below indicates the erratic movement of grade twelve results at Manoshi High School, located in the KwaZulu-Natal Province (Rammala, 2009).



Table 2

*Grade twelve results from 2000 to 2008: Manoshi High School: KwaZulu-Natal Province (Rammala, 2009).*

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>NO. WROTE</b>	<b>PASS RATE%</b>	<b>IMPROVED %</b>
2000	131	22.2%	–
2001	84	28.2%	5.9 (up)
2002	29	48.8%	20.6 (up)
2003	57	76.9%	28.1 (up)
2004	62	84.2%	7.3 (down)
2005	75	47.8%	37.5 (up)
2006	51	54.9%	7.1 (down)
2007	44	81.8%	26.9 (up)
2008	73	51.0%	30.8 (up)

Maintaining a consistent academic performance is complicated, in the general South African landscape and in KwaZulu-Natal schools specifically. Understanding and addressing the various factors and elements that contribute to the inconsistency is a huge challenge. Economic, social and political factors, among others, are interlinked with one another and the education process. Furthermore, principals, teachers, learners, parents and Department officials are also intricately connected in the education process. Although interventions are put in place to assist the performance in schools, academic results continue to fluctuate. Contemporary education policies highlight the inequalities of past policies that implemented segregation, as one of the main causes of the current poor performance of grade twelve learners (Rammala, 2009). However, with two decades of democracy, it is time that we begin to understand the following points better:

- i) the factors that currently contribute to the fluctuations of some of secondary schools academic performance;
- ii) challenges that confront Department of Education officials in addressing the poor and fluctuating academic performance of grade twelve learners of some schools; and
- iii) the interventions or support provided by the Department of Education officials that may contribute to the enhancement of the academic performance of grade twelve learners and the reputation of the schools.

### **1.3. MOTIVATION FOR AND RATIONALE OF THE STUDY**

Passing grade twelve is considered a critical step for the youth of South Africa. It marks an achievement in the education field and enables some young people to find paying jobs. For others, it provides entrance into university and the possibilities of higher paid positions after graduation.

As often portrayed by the media, the grade twelve or ‘matric’ year is filled with much hype, tension and stress. A very serious learning environment is created for grade twelve learners, both in most schools and homes. The commencement of the grade twelve year consists of multiple motivational talks that are targeted towards learners and teachers. Schools and students feel pressurised to perform at their optimal potential while trying to complete a volume of work that causes a great amount of stress, for both teachers and students, due to time constraints. During the latter part of the year, the stress of exams as well as the excitement and mayhem of impending results increases throughout the country.

On the one hand, where academic results are high, schools are praised for their worth by the media, communities and officials of the Department of Education (Hargreaves & Fink, 2007). This praise is associated with feelings of pride, excitement, fulfilment and an enhanced reputation of the school. On the other hand, it is safe to assume that low academic performance schools impact negatively on the self-esteem of the principals, teachers and students and the school’s reputation (Hargreaves & Fink, 2007).

The researcher was made aware of the fluctuation of results of schools within the KwaZulu-Natal province by an academic of the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN). The researcher’s personal experience of the ‘matric fever’ and fluctuating results in her district of residence on

the North Coast of the KwaZulu-Natal province and as a former matriculant informs the desire to conduct the current study.

Thus, the researcher was interested in investigating the possible factors which may be contributing towards the poor results and fluctuation of academic performance in the KwaZulu-Natal province. The intent and rationale of the study were to find out from office-based educational specialists about the factors contributing to poor, inconsistent academic performance in schools as well as possible intervention strategies or programmes to minimise or eliminate poor, inconsistent academic performance.

#### **1.4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The study asked the following questions:

- i. What are some of the factors that contribute to some secondary schools poor and inconsistent results, within the district?
- ii. What strategies do the various sectors use within the education system to assist schools towards maintaining good academic results?
- iii. What are the challenges experienced when implementing interventions of support in schools?
- iv. How can strategies be improved/utilised so that schools that have achieved poor academic results can improve their standards?

#### **1.5.AIMS OF THE STUDY**

This study aimed to:

- i) Explore factors that contribute to the fluctuating, poor performance of learners in some secondary schools in the KwaZulu-Natal province.
- ii) Investigate the strategies the various sectors in the Department of Education (KZN) utilise to assist schools towards improving and maintaining good academic results.
- iii) Explore challenges experienced by the office-based education specialists when implementing support or interventions in schools in the province of KwaZulu-Natal.
- iv) Explore possible strategies or interventions to improve the results of schools that performed poorly academically in the province of KwaZulu-Natal.

## **1.6. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

### **1.6.1. QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY**

The research adopted an interpretive paradigm and the design was exploratory and descriptive in nature. A qualitative methodology of enquiry was utilised by the researcher in an attempt to obtain a detailed understanding of the challenges that prevent schools from consistently performing well academically. Furthermore, the qualitative methodology allows for participants to offer in-depth suggestions of possible interventions to minimise challenges.

### **1.6.2 SAMPLE**

A purposive sampling method was used and the research sample for this study constituted of six office-based educational specialists employed in the Department of Education in the KwaZulu-Natal province (Norviewu-Mortty, 2012). These participants were selected from the following sectors of the Department of Education: i) the Governance and Management Sector; ii) the Special Needs Education Services, and iii) the Curriculum Advisors. These participants were selected because it was assumed that they would have the relevant knowledge regarding the challenges that prevent schools from consistently performing well academically as well as being able to provide suggestions for interventions and support to overcome the identified challenges.

### **1.6.3 DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS**

A semi-structured interview schedule was used to collect data from the sample. The schedule comprised of twelve open-ended questions that would provide answers to the research questions. Three aspects of demographic information were filled by the researcher's observations such as estimated age, gender and race. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data from which the researcher sought themes. The researcher read the data carefully and repetitively and began to identify patterns that occurred from the data. These patterns formed themes which "became the categories of analysis" (Mayaba, 2008, p.7).

## **1.7. DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS/TERMS**

It is imperative for the reader as well as the researcher to understand the essential concepts utilised in this study. Therefore, the key and related terms of this research which are relevant to this study are explained below:

### **1.7.1. Intervention**

The term intervention is defined as coming in between things to modify, settle or hinder certain actions (Webster's Universal English Dictionary, 2009; Adelman & Taylor, 1994). In terms of this research, the directorates working under the Department of Education involve themselves/intervenes in the schooling process to help the schools minimise challenges that prevent them from performing well academically and to settle concerning issues.

### **1.7.2. Improvement**

The term improvement refers to an alteration that makes something better (Webster's Universal English Dictionary, 2009). With regards to this study, directorates are trying to improve and maintain better academic results from the learners.

### **1.7.3. Poor performance**

In relation to this study, poor performance refers to schools that attain results which are 60% and below, which is below the National provincial average (Department of Education, 2015).

### **1.7.4. Inconsistent performance**

This term refers to a fluctuation of results in schools. Schools can produce high academic results one year and low results the following year. This conveys an inconsistency on academic performance and results (Hargreaves & Fink, 2000).

### **1.7.5. Secondary schools**

A secondary school is defined as a place or an institute where persons who are entering or have entered the adolescent stages of life are educated (Concise Oxford Dictionary, 1996; Louw, 1993).

### **1.7.6. Curriculum**

The curriculum refers to that which has an influence on the learners', as well as the teachers', work programme and the environment in which teaching occurs (Department of Education, 1997a).

### **1.7.7. Education**

Education is defined as a task of teaching, instructing or training by imparting knowledge to someone about a skill or assisting them to learn something (Concise Oxford Dictionary, 1996;

Webster's Universal English Dictionary, 2009). For the purpose of this study, education is viewed as imparting knowledge to learners in schools that is set out in the curriculum.

#### **1.7.8. Special needs**

'Special needs' in the education system refers to the needs of the individual or the system; these needs are to be fulfilled so that effective and efficient learning can take place within the school (Department of Education, 1997a; Baird, Simonoff, Pickles, Chandler, Loucas, Meldrum, & Charman, 2006). For example, if learners with disabilities use wheelchairs then ramps are required to accommodate these learners.

#### **1.7.9. Learners**

The definition of learners is any individual who is receiving a formal or informal education or training in something (Mayaba, 2008).

#### **1.7.10. Educator**

An educator is a person that teaches, instructs, trains, or imparts knowledge in an education institution and provides education services for others (Dictionary of South African Education and Training, 2000; Webster's Universal English Dictionary, 2009). An educator can further be defined as a person who educates or trains others in any education field, be it formal or informal (Mayaba, 2008).

#### **1.7.11. Challenges**

Challenges are defined as problems. In terms of this research, challenges refer to the problems schools face that have an effect on the poor and inconsistent results produced (Webster's Universal Dictionary, 2009).

### **1.8. VALUE OF THE STUDY**

This study is beneficial to the Department of Education (DoE) and the School Management Teams (SMTs) in the Pinetown and Pietermaritzburg (KwaZulu-Natal district). The study will benefit support structures as it will assist in finding possible solutions to the challenges that schools face. These solutions can be used by the support structures and implemented in schools. The solutions that will be suggested in this study will assist the Pinetown and Pietermaritzburg districts to improve their poor academic results.

## **1.9. DELIMITATIONS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

A delimitation is a restriction that the researcher inflicted on the study so that the scope of the study could gain more focus (Mayaba, 2008). This research was limited to directorates of the Department of Education in KwaZulu-Natal in the Pinetown and Pietermaritzburg districts. This study was also limited by the small sample size as only six voluntary participants were interviewed. This had implications for the generalisation of the findings of the study.

## **1.10. OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS**

The following chapters comprise the study report:

### **Chapter I: Introduction and Background to the study**

The chapter introduces the study topic by detailing the research problem, motivation and rationale of the study, the research questions and aims. It also introduces the research design and methodology, sample, data collection method and analysis and the definition of concepts/terms that are of importance to this study, the value of the study, and its delimitations.

### **Chapter II: Literature Review**

Chapter two highlights national and international literature that was reviewed to gain a better understanding of factors contributing to poor academic performance. These factors were classified there by the layers stated in Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory.

### **Chapter III: Research Design and Methodology**

The research design and methodology chapter includes the design that guided the research process, methodology, sample and method utilised to answer the fundamental research questions, ethical considerations and the data analysis method and interpretation.

### **Chapter IV: Findings**

This chapter presents the findings of the research and provides an analysis of the qualitative data.

### **Chapter V: Discussion of the findings**

This chapter provides an analysis of the qualitative data and consists of a discussion of the findings.

## **Chapter VI: Conclusion, Recommendations and Implications for future research**

This chapter consists of conclusions and makes recommendations based on the findings of the study and states the implications for future research.

### **1.11. CONCLUSION TO THIS CHAPTER**

This chapter has discussed the research problem and explained the aims of the study. The method of research was explained along with the imperative concepts to consider to understand better the research. A chapter outline was provided. The following chapter will focus on the review of the literature relevant to this research.



## **CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. INTRODUCTION**

This chapter consists of a review of literature that is relevant to the study. It highlights some of the factors that contribute towards poor academic performance as well as some of the weaknesses of the education and schooling system. Factors that enhance academic progress and intervention strategies that were implemented, as well as the support sectors for schools in the KwaZulu-Natal province are: the Governance and Management Sector, the National Curriculum Statement Committee and the Special Needs Education Services (SNES). Theories that provide a framework relevant to the application of the study are discussed.

### **2.2.FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TOWARD POOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS**

Studies show that there are many reasons for the fluctuation of results in schools. The factors above that contribute towards poor academic success will be discussed below.

#### ***2.2.1. Medical issues***

There is a relationship between poor health, both mental and physical, and poor academic performance (Ding, Lehrer, Rosenquist, & McGovern, 2009). A psycho-social issue that learners experience in South African schools, including the KwaZulu-Natal province, is the issue of HIV/ AIDS. Stigmatisation is closely related to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. HIV/AIDS stigmatisation is related to psychological problems such as depression and adjustment problems (Airhihenbuwa, Okoror, Shefer, Brown, Iwelunmor, Smith & Shisana, 2009; Vethe, 2011; Zhao, Li, Zhao, Zhang & Stanton, 2012).

Other medical issues that impact on learners academic results are substance abuse and teenage pregnancy. Substance abuse is a huge concern in South Africa since many schools are located close to liquor stores. Substance abuse causes learners to behave in unacceptable ways (Rammala, 2009).

#### ***2.2.2. Linguistic Challenge***

Another factor that influences poor academic performance is language. Many learners are not first-language English speakers, thus they find difficulty in understanding lessons as the primary medium of communication in South African schools is English (Sayed et al, 2007; Rammala, 2009).

### ***2.2.3. Emotional and economic instability in the home environment***

Some learners in South Africa come from homes that are emotionally and economically unstable. This instability could be a cause of abusive parents, poverty and unemployment (Rammala, 2009). Poor diet and health linked to poverty affects students psychologically, often leading to feelings of depression which impacts negatively on learners' academic performance (Munn, 1996).

### ***2.2.4. Lack of resources***

Some South African students lack resources at home and school, such as textbooks, desks, computers, internet or television. These resources are integral to students' learning. A lack of these resources slows down the learning process and, additionally, increases factors that could contribute to poor academic performance (Rammala, 2009).

### ***2.2.5. Apathy from parents***

Learners' poor academic results can also be attributed to lack of discipline and lack of parental involvement (Legotlo, Maaga & Sebege, 2002). The home environment plays an important role in supporting a child's academic performance and success. Learners look to their parents and other communities for assistance. Failure to access this assistance causes frustration and lack of interest in work, leading to poor performance (Themane, 1989; Rammala, 2009).

### ***2.2.6. Violence issues***

Violence and injuries are the second highest leading causes of mortality in the South African community (Seedat, Niekerk, Jewke, Suffla & Rafele, 2009). Studies have shown that an important reason for fluctuation of results in schools is a rise of violence. School violence is an incredibly serious social problem and is rife in schools at both primary and high school levels. The issues of violence and crime cause educators to become fearful and stressed within their working environment (Zulu et al., 2004; Li, 2006; Naidoo, 2011).

Violence seems to be a major problem in some schools, especially those located in the township areas. Non-stimulating environments and traumatic experiences are the major causes of violence in schools (Matthews, Griggs, & Caine, 1999; Zulu et al., 2004). Similarly, it was found that psychosocial problems may create a risk of unintentional or intentional physical

violence by learners in schools (Laflamme & Menckel, 2001). The results of phase 1 of Laflamme & Menckel's (2001) study on pupil injury risks indicated that those with psychosocial and physical problems felt that individual attitudes and aggressive behaviours are a major injury risk contributor. They found that high injury rates were linked to the fact that children spend long hours with a low pupil-staff ratio.

### ***2.2.7. Poor teacher-learner bonds***

Learning is cultural and emotional in nature (Hargreaves & Fink, 2000). Students must integrate their past learning with their present learning. It is vital that teachers develop meaningful emotional and cultural bonds with their learners. The teacher needs to affirm these bonds and sustain a relationship with the learner so that they can understand and cater to the emotional and cultural needs. Without this relationship, the learning standards are unlikely to improve (Hargreaves & Fink, 2000).

### ***2.2.8. Negative peer related influences***

Peer pressure impacts the learners' concentration. The youth is often fixated on impressing their friends and improving their reputation. This can lead to adopting bad attitudes and behaviour (Rammala, 2009).

### ***2.2.9. General issues affecting performance at school***

The fluctuations of academic results can also be related to the lack of dedicated leadership (Hargreaves & Fink, 2000). Newly employed teachers may not be as effective as teachers employed for a long period, therefore they would require reinforcement and smaller classrooms to commit to providing effective service delivery (Hargreaves & Fink, 2000; Rivkin, Hanushek & Kain, 2003). However, older teachers, who have worked in the same school environment for many years, may lack innovative ideas for change (Hargreaves & Fink, 2000).

The increase in classroom sizes and fewer teachers taking on larger classes results in less individual learner attention (Hargreaves & Fink, 2000). According to Shaffer & Kipp (2007) the theory of multiple intelligences states that humans have more than a single type of intelligence. Teachers cannot cater for the diverse intelligence of pupils in the classrooms (Shaffer & Kipp, 2007). This theory links the multiple intelligences to numerous methods of teaching in the education system. The document *Guidelines for Inclusive Learning*

*Programmes* shows teachers these numerous styles and methods (Department of Education, 2005e).

Gardner stated that there are nine types of intelligences, as indicated in figure 1 below (Shaffer & Kipp, 2007, p.343-345). He indicated that each of these types of intelligences are located in a specific area of the brain and that humans display only seven out of the nine intelligences.



*Figure 1:* Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligence Theory (Shaffer & Kipp, 2007).

Gardner's description (Shaffer & Kipp, 2007, p.343-345) of the different intelligences is as follows:

Linguistic intelligence is when people utilise words to learn since they are sensitive to the meanings of words, sounds of words, the structure of language and the multiple ways in which language is used. Spatial intelligence is when an individual thinks using space or visualisation. Logical-mathematical intelligence is associated with logical and systematic thinking. Musical intelligence is evident in a person that is sensitive to musical pitches, melodies, tones and rhythms. Body-kinaesthetic intelligence is the ability to use one's body to learn and has a skilful ability with objects. Interpersonal intelligence is the appropriate detection and responsiveness

to people's moods, temperaments and intentions. Intrapersonal intelligence is when one understands the self, such as recognising one's strengths and weaknesses and the ability to change and transform to information about oneself. Naturalist intelligence is sensitive to factors that are influencing or influenced by nature. Finally, spiritual or existential intelligence is when a person is sensitive to meanings of life and death and any other human conditions.

Gardner's theory indicates the multiple intelligences that human's display which highlights the fact that different teaching methods are required. However, teachers cannot cater for the various types of intelligence in the large classrooms as this is time-consuming and requires individual attention for each learner. Learners, therefore, may be taught with a teaching method that is not most suitable for their type of intelligence. Lack of acknowledgement of multiple intelligence theory could be one of the factors explaining the poor academic results.

#### ***2.2.10. Stressors on educators***

Naidoo (2011) speaks of stressors that educators may experience which could impact negatively on their performance in schools, consequently having an indirect impact on the learner's quality of education. Teachers are faced with the challenge of accommodating large numbers of learners within the classroom setting and dealing with: learners who may not be fully focused on the learning process and may lack discipline. Alongside this, they face pressurising time allocations and curriculum changes demanded by the National Curriculum Statement. This causes both learners and educators to be overwhelmed and stressed due to the heavy workload. Teachers sometimes have to tolerate poor guidance from the head of school, the restructuring of departments, changes in policies, governmental changes and low salaries. Furthermore, educators become frustrated with the lack of progression in the profession (Olivier & Venter, 2003; Bush, Joubert, Kiggundu, & van Rooyen, 2009; Naidoo, 2011).

#### ***2.2.11. Strikes***

Over many years, South African educators have expressed their dissatisfaction with the rewards offered by the Department of Education (DoE) through the process of striking (Naidoo, 2011). Striking is the act of protesting in an attempt to fight for what they value or desire. Strikes were conducted on numerous occasions by South African educators. An example is a strike that started on 19<sup>th</sup> August 2010 and continued for 67 days before the final matric examinations (Naidoo, 2011). Educators' strikes have taken place before matric examinations before, and the

time taken away from learners before this crucial time has a gravely negative impact on how learners perform.

#### ***2.2.12. Minimal or no community support***

The community support of a school is crucial for schools to improve their academic standing (Hargreaves & Fink, 2000). Communities value schools of a high academic standing and look down upon schools that achieve academically low results (Hargreaves & Fink, 2000). Communities should work in collaboration with parents to assist learning at a higher level to prevent problems and to help create a better environment for learning (Laflamme & Menckel, 2001).

#### ***2.2.13. Top down intervention processes with the government***

The South African government has made many efforts over the years to increase the rates of good academic performance. However, the efforts are not leading them to their desired end (Moloko, Mphale & Mhlauli, 2014). The reason for this may be related to the way in which the South African government has utilised their power (Ngcobo, 2008). The interventions follow a top-down process instead of a bottom-up process. Instructions are given and decisions are made by staff in formal authoritative positions rather than solutions suggested by a teacher which is then proposed to authoritative personnel for consideration (Ngcobo, 2008).

#### ***2.2.14. Non-compliance***

Another contributing factor towards poor academic performance is the non-compliance of school members. In some cases, teachers do not involve parents in any decision-making procedures of the school. This is not compliant with the standards of the Department which encourages parental involvement (Beare, 1993).

#### ***2.2.15. Teachers lack content knowledge***

There is a risk of teacher education providers merely providing trained educators with teaching methods and ignoring the important aspect of their content knowledge (Sayed, 2004). This may further contribute towards negative results in schools.

#### ***2.2.16. Learners do not learn***

The way in which learners learn does not always stimulate them enough. Therefore, learners do not enjoy the learning process and end up learning less (Barkhuizen, 1998). For example,

in Barkhuizen's study (1998) a learner indicated that he did not enjoy reading books because it made him lazy. This lack of enthusiasm to learn may impact on poor academic results.

#### ***2.2.17. Teacher Absenteeism***

Teacher absenteeism is increasing everyday within schools (Bennell, 2004). It was found that teachers are devoting less time to teaching preparation (Bennell, 2004). Therefore, this is a contributing factor towards negative results.

#### ***2.2.18. Lesson studies of the past no longer occur***

In a study carried out by Ono and Ferreira (2010), lesson studies were carried out in Mpumalanga for teacher development, especially in mathematics and science. Lesson studies are traditional development efforts carried out by the principal or Head of the Department (HOD) (Ono & Ferreira, 2010). The study showed that teachers who participated in lesson studies improved the lessons they taught the learners. Lesson studies are no longer conducted to improve teacher development. Without these lesson studies, teachers felt that they had inadequate knowledge and a lack of skill and training for the implementation of inclusive education (Swart, Engelbrecht, Eloff & Pettipher, 2002). Therefore, this could impact on the poor academic performance of learners (Ono & Ferreira, 2010).

#### ***2.2.19. Teachers lack motivation***

The majority of teachers are de-motivated, limiting their involvement in the changes made to teaching practices (Bennell & Akyeampong, 2007). Teachers have limited self-determination due to top-down policy formulation and, therefore, many teachers feel that they are being forced into implementing changes. Therefore, teachers resist change (Bennell & Akyeampong, 2007).

#### ***2.2.20 Movement of teachers***

Bennell's (2004) article stated that there are high amounts of movement due to attrition and transfers of teachers. The article further mentioned that these movements disrupt the smooth functioning of schools in Africa. Therefore, a lack of smooth functioning within the schooling system may result in the possible poor performance of learners (Bennell, 2004).

## **2.3. FACTORS THAT ENHANCE ACADEMIC PROGRESS AND INTERVENTION STRATEGIES**

As shown from the above literature there are various factors that impact on the fluctuations of learners' academic achievement. However, there are structures that facilitate support. Achievement of academic success and the reduction of the factors above relies on the development of interventions or strategies to support the management team of the school, learners and teachers (Bush et al., 2009; Rammala, 2009; Khosa, 2013). The following literature focuses on possible interventions or strategies that were put in place or should be put into place to improve the learner's academic standing.

### ***2.3.1. Life Orientation***

Life orientation was introduced nationally to the curriculum of learners in schools in KwaZulu-Natal. Life orientation was introduced to prevent and overcome medical issues such as HIV/AIDS, social issues such as teenage pregnancy and substance abuse. (Vethe, 2011). This subject assists learners with safety precautions regarding health (Vethe, 2011). Life orientation tries to assist learners in succeeding academically by assisting them with decision-making and teaching them to focus on ways of overcoming the challenges which they experience that inhibits academic performance (Vethe, 2011).

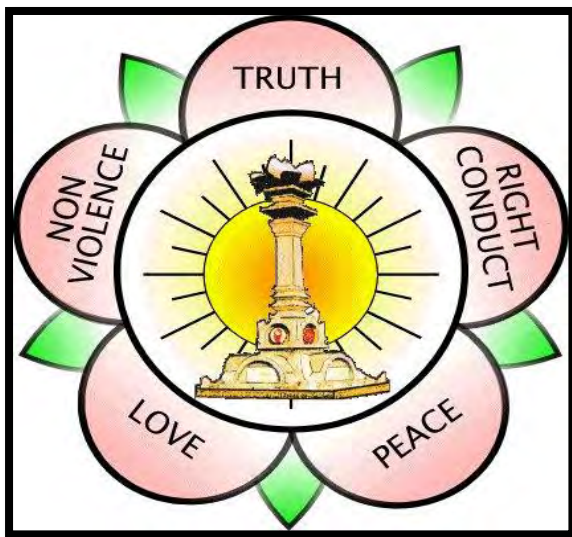
### ***2.3.2. The development of a healthy sense of self with the assistance of youth campaigns***

There is a critical need to focus not only on the extrinsic but also on the intrinsic purpose of education and the necessary support for learners to achieve a holistic education (Maistry, 2008). To some extent, life orientation, which has been introduced into school curriculums to assist and teach learners life skills, decision making, improvement of self-esteem and ways of overcoming the challenges they are experiencing, is one form of support directed towards the intrinsic function of education (Vethe, 2011). A holistic education deals with personal, social, emotional, intellectual as well as spiritual knowledge and shows how these spheres are interlinked in everyday life. Learners may enhance their academic performance and mental capacity if they have social, emotional, and spiritual well-being (Vethe, 2011). Education support also needs to consider the internal factors that influence learners' academic performance since students have a better chance of improving their results if they have a



healthy sense of self. To develop a healthy sense of self means to develop self-confidence, to think high thoughts, and to have high ideals and values (Gen & Chibber, 2013).

For a learner to develop a healthy sense of self, he or she can engage in youth based intervention programmes which are dedicated to empowering and developing the youth. There are many spiritual youth campaigns that are devoted to this goal. For example, the Sri Sathya Sai Organization, which is an international organisation, has an ongoing Education in Human Values (EHV) programme in many countries, including South Africa (Gen & Chibber, 2013). This programme teaches students five basic human values, namely; truth, righteousness, peace, love and non-violence, as shown in figure 2. Teachings based on these values assist in building character, responsibility and discipline. It teaches students to work towards the well-being of society and to live with the five basic human values in constant integrated awareness in all life situations. Once an individual has developed a healthy sense of self, great work will become apparent accompanied by better discipline levels, improved interest in academic work and reduced levels of violence (Gen & Chibber, 2013). The researcher feels that this approach teaches universal qualities to improve self-esteem and, therefore, the approach is applicable in all contexts. However, this approach has proven to be successful to build self-esteem in Prashanthi Nilayam Learning Institute based in India.



*Figure 2: Sathya Sai organisational values to assist transformation in individuals (Gen & Chibber, 2013).*

### ***2.3.3. Stress management of educators***

In an attempt to overcome stressors that educators experience, Olivier and Venter (2003) offer a range of recommendations for stress management. It was recommended that the Department of Education and the principal should ensure that teachers receive a balanced workload and schools should organise stress management workshops for educators. Furthermore, incentives should be organised for teachers as an act of compensation for their low salaries. The government should ensure that teachers are given appropriate promotional opportunities. Additional recommendations were that the management team should be responsible for rectifying the issue of poor discipline within the classroom. Moreover, educators and the principal need to be open and approachable. The school should have a participatory management style so that educators are also given a chance to contribute to the school policies (Olivier & Venter, 2003).

Educators need to make individual attempts to overcome high stress levels by engaging in activities such as physical exercise, following a healthy diet, developing a healthy sleeping pattern and engaging in religious or spiritual exercises like meditation or yoga. Educators should also strive towards developing innovative strategies to deal with ill-disciplined learners. Attending empowerment workshops would be beneficial to educators since it would increase self-confidence and help them learn to be more assertive (Olivier & Venter, 2003). If educators do not take heed of these recommendations, they will experience immense stress that impacts on their ability to teach and on learners' performance.

### ***2.3.4. Counselling programme***

Learners can be assisted by school counsellors with understanding their emotional instabilities. Counsellors assist learners with personal, social, career and emotional well-being (Mahlangu, 2011). Therefore, this enhances academic performance. Career counselling is provided to guide learners and assist parents on the career options available, therefore, showing concern and encouraging academic performance (Department of Education, 2013).

### ***2.3.5. HIV/AIDS Policy***

The HIV/AIDS policy is a crucial component of the school system as it helps prevent the spread of the epidemic with the use of efficient guidelines. The purpose of this policy is to instil a non-discriminatory attitude towards people. It attempts to reduce the stigmatisation attached to this

virus (Asmal, 1999). This policy is especially useful in the KwaZulu-Natal province due to the prevalence of HIV and AIDS. A survey was carried out by the Human Sciences Research Council in 2008 which reflected that KwaZulu-Natal had the highest HIV/AIDS prevalence as illustrated in figure 3 below:

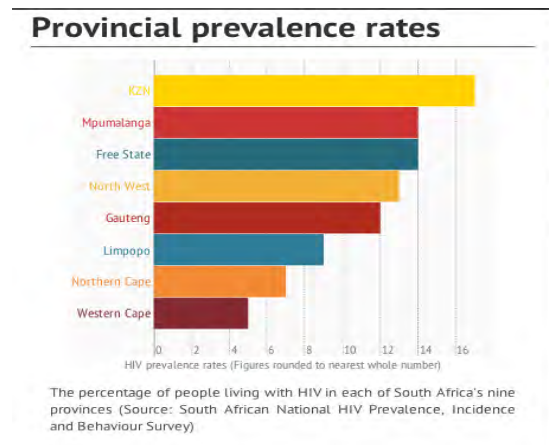


Figure 3: Provincial prevalence rates (Cullinan, 2014).

The prevalence rates of HIV/AIDS within KZN as reflected in figure 3 was the highest by 16 percent, compared to other provinces whose prevalence ranged from 0 to 14 percent (Cullinan, 2014).

The research was carried out by CAPRISA on high schools students. The research shows that the prevalence of HIV is substantial (Karim, 2014). This research was carried out in fourteen schools within the rural district of Vulindlela and it found that HIV prevalence was 1, 4 percent in males and 6, 4 percent in females (Karim, 2014). These statistics are substantial for a tiny proportion of the schools in KZN.

Spreading information about preventative measures and treatment regarding the virus will increase the health levels in South Africa. This policy is an attempt to increase the access that the South African youth has to information about risk behaviours and tries to alleviate one less problem which could inhibit academic success in schools within South Africa.

### 2.3.6. Substance Abuse Policy

Another critical policy for schools is the substance abuse policy. It is useful to all educational specialists since it teaches what substance abuse is as well as how learners who abuse substances should be handled (Amatole District Municipality Substance Abuse Policy- alcohol and drugs, 2011; Department of Education, 2002). The policy focuses on programmes centred

on how to eliminate or reduce substance abuse. This policy could assist many learners, especially within the province since they abuse substances on an ongoing basis (Department of Education, 2002).

### ***2.3.7. Collaborative engagement between parents, adults and police and anti-violence plans***

Schools must be planned for the optimal safety of the learners (Laflamme & Menckel, 2001). Strategies need to be developed to cope with psychosocial problems and the physical environment so that there can be a reduction of learners' risk of injuries. One strategy is a collaborative engagement between parents, adults and police to prevent the problems occurring in schools and affecting the learners working environments. Anti-violence plans should also be introduced into the schooling environment (Laflamme & Menckel, 2001). Such plans and collaborations help reduce violence, creating a more conducive environment for learning and likely to produce improved results.

### ***2.3.8. Support structures and interventions***

For fluctuations in academic performance to decrease and academic success to rise, the inhibiting factors need to be reduced and resolved by developing possible interventions/strategies to support the management team of the school (Bush et al., 2009). Strategies or interventions are also needed to support learners and teachers (Rammala, 2009; Formative assessment: improving learning in secondary classrooms, 2005). Some of these support structures are the governance and management, learner support teachers and the national curriculum statement advisors.

#### ***2.3.8.1. Governance and Management***

*The Department of Education Governance and Management structure* provides support services to school governing bodies and is also responsible for the training of these bodies (Department of Education, 2010). This sector is also responsible for the development and the coordination of safety programmes within schools as well as managing learners' issues which are inclusive of disciplinary matters (Department of Education, 2010).

### ***2.3.8.2. Special needs education services (Educational specialists)***

Inclusive education is a policy that is being implemented in the schools of South Africa to ensure inclusion of learners of all races, ethnicities, classes, genders, languages, abilities or disabilities. It ensures that they all benefit from the mainstream education system (Wade, 2000). This approach ensures that regular access to an educational setting is given to all learners (Pijl, Meijer & Hegarty, 1997). The White Paper 6 is in accordance with the inclusive approach as it points to the Constitution which stipulates that every individual has a right to access education that is equal in nature (Department of Education, 2005). Therefore, all learners are now permitted to attend a regular school even if the learner might require special needs (Pijl et al., 1997).

Accommodating all learners within classrooms is not an easy task for educators to undertake alone. Therefore, there is a need for learner support teachers. Learner support teachers assist teachers in the implementation of inclusive education and provide extra support to learners with or without special needs (Mahlo, 2011). Learner support programmes are essential in assisting teachers in offering individual attention to learners to improve academic results. This includes the results of those learners who have special needs by identifying and addressing severe learning difficulties and catering to their learning needs (Department of Education, 2001). It is also good for teachers to be aware of the support structures outside of the school system that support this initiative. These support structures are: community based sources, higher education institutions, non-governmental organisations, disabled people's organisations and parents of disabled children organisations (Indicators for Inclusive Education, 2001).

The inclusive education implementation is addressed by the District Support Team as a team effort exchanging knowledge, skills and supporting each other in identifying school needs and providing the relevant support (Indicators for Inclusive Education, 2001).

However, even though this support structure has been set in place, some learners are still not receiving the support they require. Therefore, improvements to these support structures are imperative for their effectiveness (Mahlo, 2011).

### ***2.3.8.3. National Curriculum Advisors***

The revision of the National Curriculum Statement was done by a Ministerial Project Committee and another support structure was developed to strengthen and make the current Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) more efficient (Department of Education, 2011).

The CAPS is an amendment to the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) for Grades R-12 and it makes the curriculum easily accessible to teachers (Coetzee, 2012). The CAPS document ensures that each subject will inform teachers of the content they need to teach and assess. This will be done for each grade and every subject within each grade. The topics for each term will be set along with the number of assessments teachers are required to give learners (Coetzee, 2012; Department of Education, 2011). The implementation and monitoring of the curriculum is the joint responsibility of the top management and head office, schools and districts as shown in the figure 4 below (Department of Education, 2015).

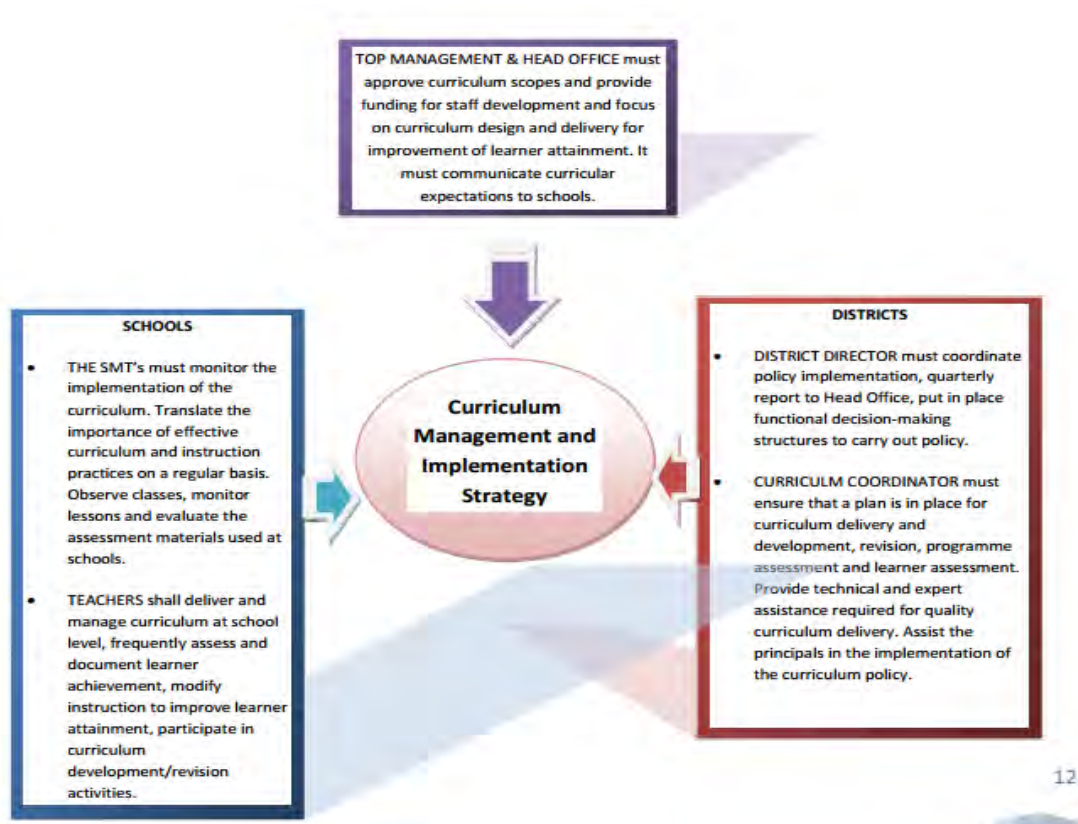


Figure 4: Roles and responsibilities of internal role players (Department of Education, 2015).

### 2.3.9. Teachers must set the environment tone and be more understanding

Teachers must try to understand the problems or factors impacting learners in all aspects of life, such as individual, familial, academic and community. Educators must take an interest in the learners' various cultures and emotions and include the ideas of learners when creating

learning targets. This cultural and emotional bond can be used as a strategy to try and improve their performance (Hargreaves & Fink, 2000).

Teachers can create an environment filled with love and care and demonstrate these qualities (Pierce, 1994). These qualities discourage ideas of failure and create a sense of security and safety in the learners (Pierce, 1994). This impacts positively on student academic achievements. The article entitled “Importance of climate change for at risk ” reaffirms the idea that emotional bonds assist in classroom learning (Pierce, 1994).

### ***2.3.10. Collaboration of the school with other entities***

It is evident from the studies conducted by Hargreaves and Fink (2000), Laflamme and Menckel (2001) and Lawson (2004) that the school has to engage in collaboration with others entities. The process of collaboration must start from within the school and all stakeholders have to work together in a united effort towards the school’s philosophy. Thus, conflict and segregation in social interactions can lead to a systematic failure and, therefore, should be curbed.

### ***2.3.11. Teacher assistants allow for individual attention***

To assist learners with their diverse intelligence and to support learners at an individual level teacher assistants have been introduced into the system (Department of Education, 2011). The teacher assistants assist teachers in conducting tasks such as the personal care of learners, carrying out work dealing with administration and instructional tasks (Doyle, 1997). Despite the large classrooms, teacher assistants can give one on one attention to learners and assist in supporting learners in the most appropriate manner possible even through the use of diverse teaching styles and methods. This support enhances the academic performance of learners.

### ***2.3.12. Community Involvement***

The Governance and Management sector promotes the involvement of the community in the development of schools (Department of Education, 2010). The community is a resource that can assist in changing attitudes of the people (Petersen, Bhana & McKay, 2005). The community must gain trust among its members and form a solid network that can facilitate change. In South Africa, there is a collectivist culture and behaviour is mediated to follow social norms, therefore, if the community facilitates attitudes that promote the well-being of

the learners, then it is more likely to be successful than having individual change programmes promoting well-being (Petersen et al., 2005).

### ***2.3.13. Development of policies and activities to assist and support teachers***

The South African government wanted to improve and transform schools. Therefore, they were concerned about the foundational role of education (Ngcobo, 2008). Policies and activities were developed that was concerned with teacher agency, and funding was increased to assist teachers who were initially brought into the system; teachers were assisted in the preparation and after that there were expected to engage in continuous development initiatives (Ngcobo, 2008).

### ***2.3.14. Management of a school***

The principal is in charge of the leadership and management of the school (Botha, 2004). The principal's task is to maintain a high performance by utilising the human and material resources through effective leadership. The principal is to meet goals by working with others (Botha, 2004; Kormla, 2012). However, this is not always the case in schools and entities do not always work in collaboration.

### ***2.3.15. School Governing body***

The South African Schools Act of 1996 ensures that school governing bodies are found within all schools (van Wyk, 2004). Each school governing body is to consist of parents, educators and non-educator staff members. All stakeholders within the governing body have rights and responsibilities and are expected to participate in making decisions about how the school is run (Department of Education, 2010). The common interest of all stakeholders is to provide quality education to all learners to the best of their ability (Department of Education, 2010; Gauteng provincial government: Republic of South Africa, 2015). This body is to influence important issues such as the school budget, appointments of educators and administrators, and discipline (van Wyk, 2004). However, all schools lack the ability to function in this ideal manner.

### ***2.3.16. Codes of conduct***

Codes of conducts are implemented to assist the smooth functioning of schools. The South African Council on Education (SACE), the professional body for educators, established a code of conduct which states the disciplinary measures that should be taken against educators who violate the conduct (Jansen, 2004). A code of conduct for learners should be implemented in



schools by the school governing bodies and the relevant stakeholders (Department of Education, 2010). The code of conduct for learners is aimed at creating a school environment that is purposeful, disciplined and dedicated to the improvement and upholding of the learning procedure (Prinsloo, 2005; Department of Education, 2007; Department of Education, 2010). However, these codes of conduct are not effective in managing the discipline of learners and behaviours of educators.

### ***2.3.17. The National Support for Learner Attainment Programme (NSLA)***

The NSLA was put into effect for improving performance, especially for grade twelve learners from schools which are underperforming within South Africa. An NSLA Integrated Framework was developed for GET and FET in 2013 (Department of Education, 2014). The NSLA seems to be effective as a 2014 matric class showed phenomenal improvement in their results and this improvement was attributed to the implementation of the NSLA (Department of Education, 2014).

### ***2.3.18. Policy on learner attendance***

The policy on learner attendance was developed to provide a framework for management for learner attendance and absence, to improve attendance rates in schools in the country and to be able to gather data about learner attendance. (Department of Education, 2008).

### ***2.3.19. National School Nutrition Programme***

The objectives of the national school nutrition programme are to contribute to improving the capability of learning through the development of school feeding schemes, to encourage and promote the production of food and ensure the security of food for communities, and to strengthen information and education on nutrition (Department of Basic Education, 2014).

### ***2.3.20. School Fee Exemption Policy: Resource Support***

As a financial resource support, policies have been established to minimise the fees from learners from a poor background. Different payments rates for different schools depending on the economic needs of the people are implemented (Fiske & Ladd, 2004; Ngcobo, 2008).

The school fee exemption policy stipulates that learners from poor families can be exempt from paying school fees (Department of education, 2006). For parents to be exempt from paying fees, a means (income) test is conducted. Partial fee exemption or full fee exemption is then

calculated by relating the parental income to the school fees. This improves learner attendance as more parents can afford to offer their children an education.

### ***2.3.21. Orphan and Vulnerable Children Small Grants Programme***

This programme is an initiative established to assist communities which provide support through the provision of finances, for children and families who are orphaned and vulnerable to purchase school necessities (O’Grady et al., 2008). The aim of this programme is to improve the living of orphaned and vulnerable children and families (O’Grady et al., 2008).

### ***2.3.22. Integrated School Health Programme***

The integrated school health programme aims to improve and ensure the general health of all learners within the school as well as the environmental surroundings of the school. It aims to address health barriers within the school (Department of Education, 2012).

### ***2.3.23. “Operation Hamba”***

Top members of management are divided into three teams to monitor and evaluate schools that performed less than thirty-four percent; this strategy is called, “Operation Hamba” (Department of Education, 2013). Some of the objectives of these school visits were to reflect on the district performance as well as the ANA and NCS examinations and to evaluate the district system and its processes to implement plans of improvement for underperforming schools (Department of Education, 2013).

### ***2.3.24. Peer Education Workshops***

Peer education workshops work on the principle that peers are influential (Peer Education, 2011). It is an informal style of educating where change is brought about and influenced by the peer instead of a professional. This type of learning uses participatory and communicative approaches as methods of learning and is cost effective (Peer Education, 2011).

## **2.4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

A combination of theories is utilised as a framework to guide the study to achieve the above-mentioned objectives. The theories that guide the current study are Gardner’s multiple intelligence theory (discussed above), the ecological systems theory (Shaffer & Kipp, 2007) and resilience theory (Ungar, 2008). These theories respectively relate to the interaction

between the various role-players in the education system such as the learner, educator, managers and community. It offers an integrated/collaborative and holistic approach to the implementation of the supporting structures. The theories also relate to the adaptation and development of learners to their environment and the various methods of teaching and learning that influence the individual learner’s performance. The theoretical framework adopted emphasises the holistic development of individual learners by focusing on both extrinsic and intrinsic factors of support that learners may require for improved performance from a physical, psychological, social, and spiritual perspective.

### 2.4.1. BRONFENBRENNER’S ECOLOGICAL MODEL

The Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems model (figure 5 below) is useful since it allows for the researcher to locate the factors that contribute towards poor academic success and the factors that enhance academic performance in the various levels. The various factors that enhance or impede academic performance could be located in the microsystem (individual), the mesosystem (the family), the exosystem (the community) and the macrosystem (the government). The systems approach is also useful since it does not only delve into the problems experienced in the schools alone that prevent good academic performance but also looks at the various layers of factors, that is, from the household setting to the government setting. This approach focuses on how the system as a whole can assist in enhancing the academic performance of learners rather than looking at the problems of the schools and learners alone.

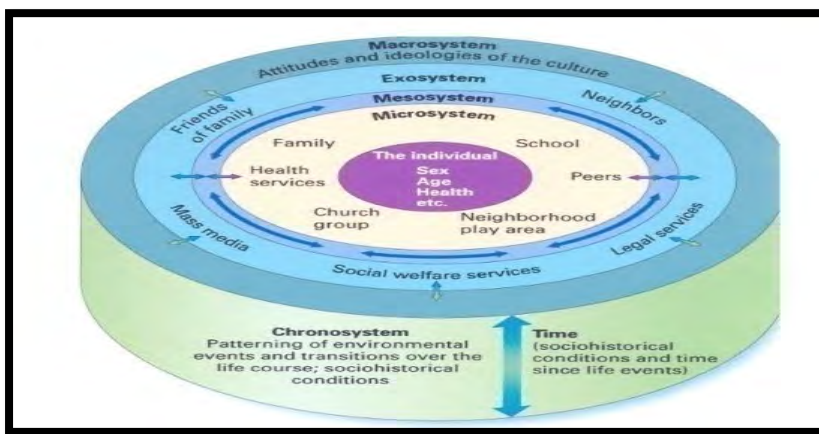


Figure 5: Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory (Shaffer & Kipp, 2007, p.68-71).

The barriers or issues that were found to prevent academic success and possible interventions to overcome barriers to learning will be located within Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory. Having these barriers located within the layers of Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems

model will provide a clear summary of the problems that contribute to poor academic success and interventions to overcome problems as discussed above. This summary provides a holistic picture of the problems schools are facing as well as mentions some suggested intervention strategies along with those interventions that were implemented.

The **microsystem** is the innermost layer of Bronfenbrenner's environmental layers and it involves the individual's immediate surroundings in which interactions and activities occur (Shaffer & Kipp, 2007).

The possible factors mentioned above which fit into this micro-systemic layer that prevent the individual from performing to their highest academic potential are:

- The individual's medical issues such as HIV/AIDS and the stigmatisation attached to it
- Substance abuse
- Learners having multiple intelligences and the type of intelligence the learner possesses may not match the teaching methods utilised by the teacher in class
- Sometimes the learner is ineffective in learning
- Emotional and economic instability within the home environment
- Learners lack resources at home and school
- Apathy from parents
- Poor teacher-learner bonds
- Peer related negative influences
- Large classroom sizes
- Learners having multiple intelligences and teachers do not find the time to teach each in the style of their preference
- Teacher absenteeism is also high

The interventions to assist academic performance that were mentioned in the literature that fit into the microsystemic layer were:

- The introduction of life orientation lessons in classrooms

The **mesosystem** is the second environmental layer in Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems model. It is the interaction between the microsystems such as the home, the individual and the school (Shaffer & Kipp, 2007). The possible factors which occur in this layer that prevent the

individual from performing to their highest academic potential are mainly problems at the school level such as:

- A lack of community support
- Non-compliance from the school governing body

The interventions to assist academic performance that were mentioned in the literature that fit into the mesosystemic layer were:

- The development of a healthy sense of self with the assistance of youth campaigns
- Recommendations for stress management of educators
- Counselling programmes (School counsellors for learners)
- Teacher assistants
- Teachers must set the environment tone and be more understanding
- Teacher assistants offer more assistance and allow for individual attention
- Peer education workshops
- The management of a school
- The school governing body
- Collaboration of the school with other entities

The **exosystem** is the system that does not affect the individual directly but does have an impact on the development of the individual. These include policy and curriculum issues (Shaffer & Kipp, 2007). The possible factors which occur in this layer that prevent the individual from performing to their highest academic potential as mentioned in literature are:

- Educators strikes are time-consuming from the school year
- Violence
- Beginner teachers as being ineffective compared to those with more experience
- There are many stressors on educators that indirectly impact on the learners; to name a few, tight time allocations to complete work and poor discipline within classrooms
- Increased level of movements from school to school due to promotions and better salaries and conditions.
- Teachers lack content knowledge
- Teachers lack motivation
- A lack of in-service training for teachers
- A lack of teacher incentives or reinforcement

- Numerous strikes
- Excessive movement of teachers
- Lesson studies of the past are no longer implemented
- Focus on underperforming schools (Operation Hamba)

According to the literature, the interventions to assist academic performance that fit into the exosystemic layer are:

- Collaborative engagement between parents, adults and police and the drawing up of anti-violence plans
- The HIV/AIDS policy
- The substance abuse policy
- The policy on learner attendance
- The school fee exemption policy
- The Code of conduct (for teachers and learners)
- The National support for learner attainment programme
- The National school nutrition programme
- The Orphan and vulnerable children small grant programme
- Support structures for the school were established such as the Governance and Management; Special Needs Education Services officials, Curriculum Advisors and the Employee Assistance programme
- The development of policies and activities to assist and support teachers

The **macrosystem** is the outermost environmental layer in Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems model where it is the cultural or sub cultural setting in which development occurs (Shaffer & Kipp, 2007). The possible factor which occurs in this macrosystemic layer that prevents the individual from performing to their highest academic potential is:

- The government acts in a coercive manner which does not assist in bringing about the desirable outcome of the employees.

The above overview of the problems and interventions were located within the layers of Bronfenbrenner's theory. However, other schools may experience these very same issues yet still succeed despite the odds. The next theory examines some of the reasons that schools achieve success despite facing numerous problems.

## 2.4.2. RESILIENCE THEORY

South African townships experience many stressful encounters in their community environment such as socioeconomic deprivation, violence and crime as well as gangsterism, homes that are not safe, poor language and communication, poor development of resourced schools in the area and the influence of HIV/AIDS on families (Mampane & Bouwer, 2006). Taking note of Bronfenbrenner's theory that looks at the individual from all layers, it is possible to state that most learners act out negatively in schools due to the various issues that confront them. However, there are also learners who are successful despite the poor conditions and adverse and disadvantaged situations they are placed in. These learners are said to have resilience (Baker, Dilly, Aupperlee & Patil, 2003).

Resilience does not merely mean a person's ability to bounce back but is the process that the individual experiences to account for their positive adaptation and development to their circumstances or environment despite it being adverse and disadvantaged (Ungar, 2008). Thus, resilience depends on the environment in which he or she is developing. The environment must make accessible to the child services which he or she needs (Ungar, 2008).

Resilience is:

- i) The individual's ability to direct themselves towards resources that will assist their well-being;
- ii) The capacity for the dual ecologies (physical and social) to make available these resources; and
- iii) The ability of individuals along with family and community to discuss culturally significant ways in which these resources can be distributed and shared (Ungar, 2008).

Resilience can also be seen as a form interaction between the child and the two ecologies, one being physical and the other being the social. The physical ecology includes quality of water people drink, housing, safety and security and pollution levels (Ungar, 2008). Social ecology includes personal attachments; opportunities' for rites of passages to structural supports, for instance, schools, medical care, and transportation. Many of these are culturally influenced. With these dual ecologies which are physical and social, an individual can grasp resilience (Ungar, 2008).

The focuses on dual ecologies are imperative. The individualised perspective of resilience places the burden solely on the child or individual for adaptation. The ecological perspectives offer assistance to the individual via social workers, psychologists and others that can intervene and offer the child structures of opportunity in which the child can understand their potential (Ungar, 2008).

Within the school context, this process of positive adjustment is called educational resilience. It denoted the likelihood of success in school and other aspects of life despite disadvantaged conditions (Baker et al., 2003).

#### ***2.4.2.1. How can schools assist learners with resilience?***

The school context can assist learners to build resilience through the empowerment of primary and secondary school teachers (Mampane & Bouwer, 2006). Researchers have noted that resilience education is an intervention that will assist effectively in nurturing and promoting resilience. This intervention will provide skill programmes and encourage learners to become aware of their strengths and talents (Mampane & Bouwer, 2006). If learners are developed to be resilient, they will try to improve their academic results despite the challenges they face and fluctuations in schools will be reduced. Thus, resilience education is a useful technique to stop fluctuation of academic results in schools.

#### ***2.4.2.2. Why are some schools resilient and others not in the same neighbouring area?***

Resilient schools mean schools that succeed despite the odds they are faced with much like a resilient individual who adapts despite negative circumstances (Christie & Potterton, 1997). Schools are resilient due to the manner in which they resolve problems. There are different styles of management by the principal in a resilient school. A school is resilient if they are able to act independently at times without too much reliance on the Department of Education. A resilient school finds ways to adapt if things are not working smoothly. Flexibility and the ability to consult with staff members at times is what makes a school resilient. Schools which are committed and concerned about the schools well-functioning are generally resilient in nature. Resilient schools are courageous such as they have the ability to take risks (Christie & Potterton, 1997). Resilient schools have a vision and school hours are used wisely; have a degree of safety and organisation in their schools, despite neighbouring schools having issues of violence and other problems. The resilient schools can reduce problems such as violence



and so forth from occurring in their schools. Discipline and authority are linked to the vision of the school and can be used as a means of assisting the school, for example, a punishment for a learner could be the chore of sweeping the classrooms (Mampane & Bouwer, 2006).

Resilient schools are schools which rise despite the terrible circumstances they are facing. Schools can succeed despite odd circumstances. Thus, despite the surroundings and issues that schools in the KwaZulu-Natal province face, they can also succeed if they are taught methods and empowered to become resilient in the situations they face and overcome fluctuating academic results.

## **2.5. CONCLUSION TO THIS CHAPTER**

This chapter has reviewed the literature that is of relevance to the study. It highlighted some of the factors that contribute towards poor academic performance as well as some of the weaknesses of the education and schooling system. Factors that enhance academic progress and intervention strategies that were implemented was highlighted as well as the support sectors for schools in the KwaZulu-Natal province namely; the Governance and Management Sector, the National Curriculum Statement Committee and the Special Needs Education Services (SNES). Theories that provide a framework relevant to the application of the study were also discussed.

## **CHAPTER III: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

This chapter concentrates on the research design and methodology employed in the current study to collect and analyse data to answer the research questions. It also includes the ethical considerations applied in the research process, the value of the study and its limitations.

### **3.1. RESEARCH DESIGN**

A research design is a strategic structure or plan designed with the purpose of answering the research questions of the study (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2006; Mayaba, 2008). A research design guides the selection of methodology and methods which will be utilised for data collection and analysis (Terre Blanche et al., 2006; Rammala, 2009). Theory of a specific research design informs the researcher on how to go about conducting the study (Mayaba, 2008). During the development of a research design the researcher has to make decisions and consider the following dimensions: i) the research purpose, ii) the research paradigm iii) the context of the research iv) and the techniques employed for data collection and analysis (Terre Blanche et al., 2006; Mayaba, 2008). In sum, research designs are developed to assist in “working out a way of thinking through the choices and some appropriate sequence of tasks which will allow you to answer a research question” (Neuman, 2006, p.149).

This study is based on the KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) province focusing on the Pinetown and Pietermaritzburg areas. The methodology and methods selected for this study were based on the aims of the study and the researcher’s experience and understanding of the problem as a reference point. The interpretive paradigm was used to determine the direction of this project since the discovery of the possible improvements to interventions or strategies is subjective to participants ‘experiences, knowledge, and their individual viewpoints (Terre Blanche et al., 2006).

The study is exploratory and descriptive in nature. Bless and Higson-Smith, (2000) assert that the purpose of the exploratory research design is to gain a broad understanding of a situation, phenomenon, community or person. The exploratory and descriptive design adopted in this study lends itself to the qualitative methodology as it focuses on the words spoken by the participants and is a meaningful approach to collect data on the experiences of human relations.

A qualitative methodology was suited to the research aim as it intended to gain further knowledge on challenges and possible intervention strategies for schools performing inconsistently. A similar study carried out by Rammala (2009) titled “Factors contributing

towards poor performance of Grade twelve learners at Manoshi and Mokwatedi high schools” utilised the qualitative research methodology. The qualitative methodology was chosen as it allowed participants to express their feelings, perceptions and opinions (Rammala, 2009). Specific to this study, detailed accounts of the problems faced in schools that inhibit academic success and possible interventions were gathered from office-based educational specialists functioning within the Department of Education in Pinetown and Pietermaritzburg areas.

### **3.2. QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

A paradigm is defined as a perspective of something, a pattern or lens through which an investigation is accomplished (Taylor, Kermode, & Roberts, 2006, p.5; Weaver & Olson, 2006, p. 460). Therefore, the methodological choice of this research was guided by the paradigm option in the study, namely the interpretive paradigm which was chosen by the researcher as stated for the reasons above.

The qualitative research methodology is suitably aligned to the interpretive paradigm and the research aims and questions. There are numerous situations whereby the use of language to record information is more appropriate. Language is a more meaningful approach to record human experience. Qualitative research provides for words as well as sentences to record information (Bless & Higson-Smith, 2000).

Qualitative research falls under the primary research category (Direct/Primary data) as the researcher collects in-depth information on a research issue or problem directly from participants (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Furthermore, qualitative research is generally carried out in the setting of the participant and depends on the verbal expression of participants (Neuman, 2006). The qualitative methodology enabled this study to better understand participants’ opinions and experiences, on factors that inhibit academic progress as well as their views on possible intervention strategies to improve academic performance of secondary schools. The qualitative methodology allows for ongoing change as new data is presented and new sources are obtainable (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Data was collected from office-based educational specialists as the primary source rather than from purely academic articles and books. A similar study carried out by M.S. Rammala titled “Factors contributing towards poor performance of grade twelve learners at Manoshi and Mokwatedi high schools” utilised the qualitative research methodology.

### **3.3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

This study focused on the structural educational support (office-based educational specialists) and interventions required to improve academic results of secondary schools confronted with poor, inconsistent academic performance in KwaZulu-Natal. It sought to understand the challenges that office-based educational specialists identified for improvement of academic performance of secondary schools, and how these challenges may be addressed. To understand the problem of inconsistent academic performance at the grade twelve level of some secondary schools, the study asked the main research questions that follow:

- i) What are some of the factors that contribute to some secondary schools poor and inconsistent results within the district?
- ii) Currently what strategies do the various sectors use within the education system to assist schools towards maintaining good academic results?
- iii) What are the challenges experienced when implementing interventions of support in schools?
- iv) How can strategies be improved/utilised so that schools that have achieved poor academic results can improve their standards?

### **3.4 . AIMS OF THE STUDY**

This study aimed to:

- i) Explore factors that contribute to the fluctuating and poor performance of learners in some secondary schools in the KwaZulu-Natal province.
- ii) Investigate the current strategies the various sectors in the Department of Education (KZN) utilise to assist schools towards improving and maintaining good academic results.
- iii) Explore challenges experienced by the office based education specialists when implementing interventions of support in schools.
- iv) Explore possible strategies or interventions for improvement of schools that have achieved poor academic results

The study was located in the KwaZulu-Natal province and focused on secondary schools in the district of Pinetown and Pietermaritzburg under the authority of the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education. The KwaZulu-Natal province was selected for the study since it was convenient for the researcher to access participants for the data collection process. KwaZulu-

Natal is located in the south-east of the country and includes townships that were created for the coloured, African and Indian population during the apartheid era and ‘white’ suburbs.

### **3.5. SAMPLING PROCEDURE AND STUDY SAMPLE**

According to De Vos, Strydom, Fouche, Poggenpoel & Schurink (1998), sampling is when a portion of a population is considered to be representatives of that population. In other words, a sample consists of a few cases that are extracted from the total population (Walliman, 2005). The non-probability, purposive sampling technique was utilised in this study. This technique of sampling is not determined randomly based on statistics (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). Purposive sampling is utilised by researchers to choose a sample that is best fitted and most appropriate to the study (Patton, 1990; Mayaba, 2008). This type of sampling method is primarily utilised when the people being studied in an area of speciality are few (Mayaba, 2008).

The Department of Education developed an interactive education support network (Department of Education, 2005). This is an interactive relationship inclusive of the full-service school, district support team, resource school, stakeholders, and the community (Department of Education, 2005). The total population for this study are office-based educational specialists who provide support to schools in the districts of Pinetown and Pietermaritzburg (District support team). The researcher has chosen to focus on the district support team since according to the “*conceptual and operational guideline of the Department of education*” it has a strong influence on learners by supporting educators and school management teams, focusing particularly on development which is for the curriculum and institution (Department of Education, 2005). The main aim of the district support team is to support capacity building within schools and recognise and prioritise the learning needs and barriers of learners. Furthermore, the district support team detects that which is needed to deal with the challenges faced in schools as well as puts into place strategic planning and management (Department of Education, 2005).

Since the purpose of the study was to understand the reasons and possible interventions for secondary schools performing inconsistently, participants were drawn from the sectors that provide support and are involved in intervention processes in the Pinetown and Pietermaritzburg districts. These sectors were: Governance and Management; Learner Support Teachers (from Special Needs Education Services) and CAPS: Curriculum Development and Revision (Curriculum Advisors).

The sample comprised a total of six office-based educational specialists from the support mentioned above mechanism sectors. These office-based educational specialists are responsible for the implementation of the mentioned support structures/mechanisms in schools.

The researcher found difficulty during the process of sampling as many of the office-based educational specialists did not want to participate due to time constraints, heavy workloads and fear of losing their jobs. The specialists from the employee assistance programme were difficult to contact within the time frame of this study and, therefore, did not form part of the sample. The sample group is, therefore, small (N=6). The demographics of the sample were as follows:

### 3.5.1. Participants Gender

The sample consisted of 5 males [n = 5 (83, 3 %)] and 1 female [n = 1 (16, 6%)] as illustrated in Figure 6.

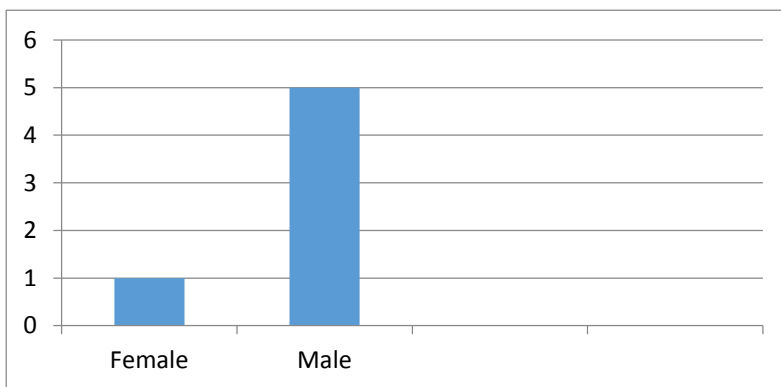


Figure 6: Participants Gender.

### 3.5.2. Race

The race groups represented in the sample was one Indian [(n=1) (16.6%)], two Whites [(n=2) (33, 3%)] and three Blacks [(n=3) (50%)] as illustrated in Figure 7 below:

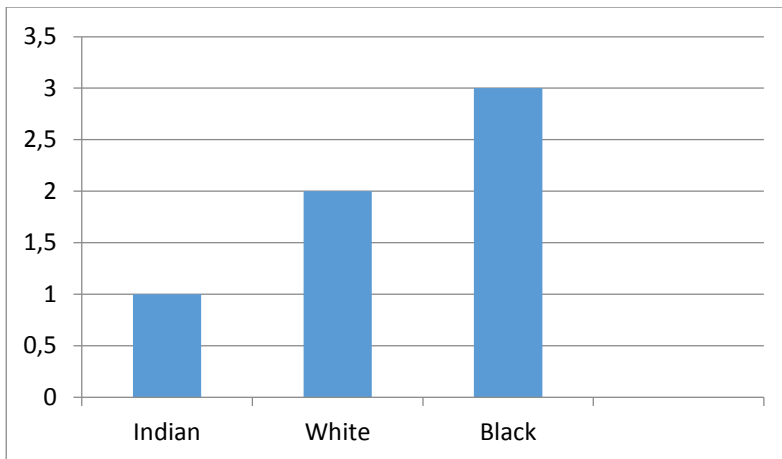


Figure 7: Participants Race.

### 3.5.2. Support Mechanism Sectors

The participants were from three support mechanism sectors. Two [(n=2) (33, 3%)] participants were from the Governance and Management sector, three [(n=3) (50%)] Learner Support Teachers (from Special Needs Education Services) and one [(n=1) (16, 6%)] curriculum advisor from the CAPS: Curriculum Development and Revision sector as illustrated in Figure 8 below.

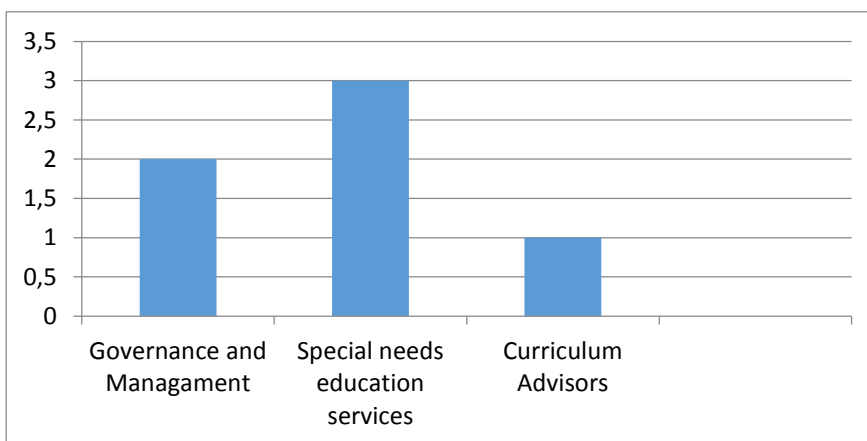


Figure 8: Support Mechanism Sectors.

### 3.6. RESEARCH METHOD FOR DATA COLLECTION

Data was collected through the interview method utilising a semi-structured interview schedule (Appendix four) as the instrument for data collection. The method of interviewing is commonly used to collect qualitative data (Rammala, 2009). In an interview information is being passed

on from interviewee to interviewer (De Vos, 2001; De Vos, Strydom, Fouche, Poggenpoel, Schurink & Schurink, 1998).

The research took place in the workplace of the office-based educational specialists and individual face-to-face interviews were conducted with the office-based educational specialists. The interview schedule (Appendix four) was made up of open-ended questions which allowed participants to express their feelings and opinions as well as allowed for the active participation of the interviewees. Three aspects of demographic information (gender and race) were completed by the researcher from observation. The questions were developed by the researcher and the researcher's supervisor. In this study, a single interview schedule was utilised for participants from all three support structures.

The questions asked elicited information on (Appendix four):

- The professional profiles of participants
- Aims of the specific directorate
- Factors that contribute to some secondary schools poor and inconsistent results within the Pinetown or Pietermaritzburg district
- Strategies that each sector uses within the education system to assist schools towards maintaining good academic results
- Schools responses to the directorates programme
- Challenges experienced when implementing interventions of support in schools,
- How challenges could be minimised
- How strategies could be improved/utilised so that schools that have achieved poor academic results can maintain high standards
- Suggestions to make the directorate more effective and efficient
- Degree of collaboration among directorates, support, provided for work done and additional support required

A letter was sent requesting permission from the Department of Education to conduct the study. Once written permission was granted, the researcher then sought the contact numbers of the office-based educational specialists and approached them to inform them of the study and requested their participation in the study. Once the researcher received the consent of the individuals, an appointment was made for times that were suited to both the researcher and the



specialist to engage in the interview process. The interviews were conducted at the offices of the office based educational specialists in the Pinetown and Pietermaritzburg district.

The interviews assisted the researcher to understand the world of the office-based educational specialists and understand the challenges they are confronted with when trying to provide intervention assistance to schools performing inconsistently. Open-ended interviews allow for two-way interactions to take place (Rammala, 2009). Open ended interviews allows for the participants to discuss more sensitive issues. An additional advantage of carrying out interviews is that the interviewer could seek further explanation or clarification from participants if the information is ambiguous or not easily understood.

Each interview was for the duration of approximately thirty minutes to one hour. The interview process took place over the period of August 2014 to December 2014. The data was audio recorded and transcribed once collected.

### **3.7. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

Data analysis ensures the transformation of data through the extraction of useful information in an attempt to come up with conclusions (Mayaba, 2008). It is a systematic process which involves selection, categorization, comparison, synthesis and interpretation to provide explanations of the phenomena the researcher is interested in (MacMillan & Schumacher, 1993).

Data was analysed using the thematic analysis approach. Thematic analysis is when the data is read exhaustively and patterns are discovered (Terre Blanch et al., 2006). The patterns allowed the researcher to find themes which emerge from the data. The themes that were found by the researcher were categorised to analyse the data (Neuman, 2006). Thematic analysis organises the data as well as describes the data with a great amount of detail and is found to be advantageous since it is a quick, easy to learn and carry out and produces a thick description of the data (Mayaba, 2008). Furthermore, this method of analysis assists in pointing out the similarities and differences in the data. Themes for the study were guided by research questions and questions in the interview schedules.

There are numerous steps to follow when doing the thematic analysis. These steps were adapted from Braun and Clarke (2006, p.4-5). The first step was familiarisation of the data by the researcher. This was done by transcribing the data and reading and re-reading the data along with jotting down ideas. Thereafter, the second step was to generate codes. This is when

interesting features of the data is coded in a systematic manner across all data, where data was relevant to each code was collated. The third step is to search for themes. This is where codes from potential themes with all relevant data gathered under each theme. The fourth step was the reviewing of themes to see if the themes fit accurately in relation to the codes. The fifth step is defining and naming themes whereby clear and concise definitions are given to each theme. The sixth step was to produce a report of analysis by using extract examples, relating the analysis to the research questions and the literature review producing a scholarly analysis

The researcher followed these steps and began analysing the data by the process of familiarisation where she immersed herself in the data provided. The researcher read and re-read the data to gain a rich understanding and wrote notes. The researcher then began to create codes. After that, themes that emerged from the data were searched for and noted. This was done by noting the most common issues of fluctuating results in Pinetown and Pietermaritzburg secondary schools and possible interventions after an extensive review of the participant's responses by the researcher. These were grouped together to form themes. Data that fitted into each theme was gathered under the theme. These themes are relevant to answering the research questions.

These themes were reviewed. Once the formations of the themes were identified the researcher reviewed the themes to ensure that they were, in fact, congruent with the codes and data. The themes were then given a title. The researcher then set out the findings in a written report. Setting out the findings in a written report required the use of extracting examples from the interview sessions which were used to explain the findings in relation to the research questions.

### **3.8. DESIGN PRINCIPLES**

The design of the study was guided by the principles of validity, coherence, reliability and generalisability.

#### **3.8.1. VALIDITY**

Validity in research refers to the truth and research is considered valid when it measures the phenomena that it seeks to measure (Silverman, 2005). This research study measures what it sought to measure; the researcher ensured that the interview questions within the interview schedule answered questions which were related to the aims of the research. The study ensured that the questions asked in the interviews were designed for the various levels of structural support services and answered questions such as: what are some challenges experienced by

schools in the Pietermaritzburg/Pinetown District as well as what interventions were carried out in the past and currently to assist schools. These questions are of relevance to the main research question i.e. possible interventions for improvement in secondary schools confronted with poor, inconsistent academic performance in the Pinetown and Pietermaritzburg Districts, KwaZulu-Natal. The researcher thus maintained that this study's research design is valid.

### **3.8.2. COHERENCE**

Design coherence refers to a good research design criteria which are achieved by ensuring that the purpose of the research and the research techniques fit logically and coherently in a research framework made available by a certain paradigm (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). The exploratory and descriptive research design of this study is suited to the qualitative nature of the study, is coherent and, therefore, provides good results.

### **3.8.3. RELIABILITY**

In qualitative research reliability refers to 'dependability or consistency' (Neuman, 2006). Silverman (2005, pg. 274) provided a similar definition of reliability stating that "it refers to the degree of consistency with which instances are assigned to the same category using different observers or by the same observer on different occasions. For reliability to be ensured, it is incumbent on the scientific investigators to document their procedure and to demonstrate that categories have been used consistently".

The researcher tried to ensure the reliability of the study by the use of low inference descriptors. Low-inference descriptors are when observations are recorded in a solid manner; this is inclusive of verbatim accounts of what is said by the participants (Silverman, 2005). Additionally, low inference descriptors mean the provision of long data extracts which are inclusive of the preceding question, the participants answers, comments and the interviewers continues (for example mhmm) (Silverman, 2005). Additionally, the researcher provided detailed information in transcriptions such as the important pauses and overlaps. Reliability in a qualitative study is very dependent on such trivial yet imperative details.

Furthermore, the researcher also tried to ensure reliability because of the inter-coder agreement which is when the researcher's supervisor and the researcher agree on the information which emerged from the data (Silverman, 2005). Additionally, reliability was ensured by the use of

technology to record information via audio recorders and above that transcriptions were cross-checked for meanings (Silverman, 2005).

#### **3.8.4. TRANSFERABILITY**

Transferability refers to the process undertaken by the readers of the study (Barnes et al., 1994 - 2012). It is the process whereby the results of research in one situation are applied to other similar situations (Barnes et al., 2012). It is important to note that the results of any research method may be applied to various other situations, however; transferability is most applicable to qualitative research because these qualitative reports are more detailed and specific in nature (Barnes et al., 2012). Qualitative research is based on one or few subjects or groups seldom are the results generalisable to other populations (Barnes et al., 2012). However, the details and the specifics of qualitative research make it ideal for the results to be transferable (Barnes et al., 2012). This study allows for transferability because it is a detailed and specific qualitative research study about inconsistent, poor academic performance in secondary schools and possible academic interventions or strategies to improve academic performance in schools.

#### **3.9. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Ethics is what the researcher should use as a basis to evaluate his or conduct (Mayaba, 2008). The researcher has an obligation to act in a professional manner. Ethics is usually related to what is right or wrong (Mcmillan & Schumacher 1997).

This research project obtained ethical clearance from the Higher Degrees Committee, at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Further ethical clearance was obtained from the Department of Education because the office-based educational specialists were working within the Department of Education. Permission was granted to conduct the study from both the Higher Degrees Committee (Appendix 1) and the Department of Education in writing (Appendix 2). Participation was purely voluntary and no participant was coerced into participating in the interviews. In an attempt to attain the participants consent the aims and rationale of the study were explained verbally and in written form such that an informed choice could be made. Those who had given consent were asked to sign the written consent form to indicate their agreement to participate (Appendix 3).

Participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any given point in time without any negative consequences (Terre Blanch et al, 2006). Additionally, the researcher

ensured that the participants were aware that all information was kept confidential and notified them that there was no need to put their name on the informed consent form (Terre Blanch et al, 2006). The participants were made aware that the consent forms and the audio records will not be linked to them individually in any way (Terre Blanch et al, 2006). Therefore, the responses during the interview will be purely anonymous. Moreover, participants were notified that the researcher's supervisor will see the data but the researcher will ensure the participants anonymity.

This research was of no physical, psychological, or emotional harm to the participants and no risk was posed. Participants in this study were all over 18 years of age. There was no financial expense for the participants in any way. It was indicated to the participants that this research is of benefit to them since it will bring to the forefront the challenges they are facing when trying to intervene and assist schools that are performing inconsistently. Furthermore, this research will make them aware of the recommendations to be considered in an attempt to reduce the challenges they face. These challenges and recommendations were completed in the results and analysis section of the written report of this study. This awareness about the challenges faced and the recommendations suggested will then offer guidance to make the intervention programmes more efficient and, therefore, should lead to more consistent results in schools.

The participants were notified that the data will not be destroyed immediately after the completion of the research but instead will be kept in the university archives for five years. The data may be required to be utilised in future studies and therefore, permission is already obtained from the office-based educational specialists. The participants were informed of the above information in the informed consent form. Participants in this study were inclusive of any voluntary office-based educational specialist irrespective of race and gender.

### **3.10. VALUE OF THE STUDY**

This research is a valuable since it makes schools aware of the challenges that inhibit academic success. Creating such awareness is a step closer to acting on effective solutions that could reduce these challenges from occurring in schools and sustain a constant, good academic pass rate and achievement. This research is especially relevant within the context of South Africa where the basic resources, nutrition and desks are not yet available to all schools and thus, actions need to be taken to create awareness and assist in a change to a better quality South African education.

### **3.11. CONCLUSION TO THIS CHAPTER**

This chapter focused on the research design of this study as well as made transparent the research methodology utilised. Additionally, the ethical considerations of this research project were discussed in detail. The chapter that follows will highlight the results and analysis of the research.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **FINDINGS**

#### **4.1. INTRODUCTION**

This chapter provides the key findings and analysis of data collected from office-based educational specialists from the Pinetown and Pietermaritzburg districts on the inconsistent academic performance of schools.

The data was analysed using themes derived from answers of participants interviewed with the interview schedule. These themes included, challenges contributing to poor academic success and challenges when implementing interventions. Further themes identified were strategies to assist schools in maintaining good academic results, ways to improve strategies or suggestions of new strategies and schools responses to programmes or strategies. Themes on collaboration, support received from the Department, additional support required and recommendations made by the officials to make the Department more effective and efficient in support of schools academic performance were additionally identified.

This chapter commences with a summarised overview of the results in tabular form below. The table below provides a summary of the themes that will be discussed in the various sections of the data analysis chapter.

Table 3

*Summarized tabular form of findings*

MAIN THEME	SUB THEMES	PRECISE (MAIN POINTS) OF THE SUBTHEMES
<b>CHALLENGES</b>  <b>Challenges contributing to poor academic success and challenges when implementing interventions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Classroom Context</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diversity within the classroom</li> <li>• Large class sizes</li> <li>• Individualised support required from teachers for the different types of intelligences of learners</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Understaffing of directorates/teachers due to lack of resources</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial constraints of the department</li> <li>• Lack of staff</li> <li>• Workload increase</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Work overload and time constraints</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Directorates/teachers face heavy workloads due to understaffing</li> <li>• Directorates are requested to do that which is not their core responsibility</li> <li>• The increased workloads lead to time constraints faced by directorates/teachers</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Ineffective teaching and learning</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learners sometimes do not learn the subject content taught to them</li> <li>• Teachers are sometimes absent from the classroom therefore are not teaching</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Curriculum</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multiple changes e.g. OBE to CAPS</li> <li>• Teachers sometimes do not teach the subject content</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Monitoring and evaluation</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inspections are no longer carried out on teachers during lessons</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>De-motivation of teachers leads to vast movement</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers lack motivation (due to heavy workloads and delay of immediate results when working with learners with barriers)</li> <li>• There is a vast movement of teachers(due to transfers, death, attrition, promotions)</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Basic, limited support and support still required</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is basic and limited support such as the provision of vehicles and a cell phone allowance</li> <li>• Support was still required from the department to understand the roles of each directorate</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Lack of skilled and qualified teachers due to the lack of in-service training</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers lack skill and qualification</li> <li>• Lack of in-service training institutions for teachers and support is limited by curriculum advisors</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Interventions are focused primarily on underperforming schools</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Underperforming schools are given more attention than satisfactorily performing schools</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Lack of collaboration, non-compliance, lack of community and parental involvement</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There was a lack of /no/limited collaboration</li> <li>• There is a lack of collaboration between the DoE and schools, between the directorates themselves as well as from parents and the community</li> <li>• There is no compliance towards implementing intervention strategies to improve results</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Strikes</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strikes inhibit results since they reduce lesson time</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Poor learner behaviour</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learners engage in activities such as substance abuse, risky sexual behaviour that leads to teenage pregnancy, gambling in schools, and participation in drug rallies</li> </ul>

<p><b>STRATEGIES</b></p> <p><b>Strategies to assist schools in maintaining good academic results</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Codes of conduct</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• These codes of conduct for teachers, learners and school governing bodies indirectly assist schools in maintaining good results due to the systematised and orderly functioning of the school</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Management of a school</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the managerial operation by the principal, work is managed as well as the personnel</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>School Governing Body (SGB)</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This strategy allows parents the opportunity to participate in their children’s learning process e.g. Making decisions related to school budget</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Orphan and Vulnerable Grants (OVC’s)</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is offered to children in order to ensure that they are provided with the basic needs e.g. school uniform</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The National School Nutrition Programme</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This policy is on based on nutrition ensuring that learners are fed</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The Policy on Learner Attendance</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This policy provides a framework of management for learner/teacher attendance and absence in order to improve attendance rates in schools</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Focus on curriculum coverage</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus is on ensuring that teachers understand what needs to be covered from the curriculum set out and be knowledgeable of the content thereof</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Focus on underperforming schools</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The strategy primarily focuses on those schools which have not performed well</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Motivation and support for stakeholders (learners and teachers)</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Directorates try to build capacities and skills in teachers</li> <li>• Learners are supported in their subject matter via peer education workshops and the national support for learner attainment programme</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>School safety committee</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This strategy prevents violence and tries to ensure a more conducive environment to maintain good academic results</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Integrated school health programme</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This intervention is to improve the health of learners e.g. offer knowledge to teachers on HIV/AIDS which they take back to schools and the learners</li> </ul>
<p><b>Ways to improve strategies or suggestions of new strategies</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Improvement on the focus of underperforming schools</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not to schedule motivational talks in underperforming schools close to the examination period</li> <li>• Pair underperforming schools with performing schools</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Improvement of the National Support for Learner Attainment Programme (NSLA)</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The policy should be applicable from grade R to grade twelve</li> <li>• Teaching and learning should be a systemic (support provided at every grade not just grade twelve) approach</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Improvement on the focus of the curriculum</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that teachers familiarise themselves with the content of the curriculum</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Improvement on workshops</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peer education workshops should not be limited to the urban areas but should be extended to the rural areas</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Improvement on the management of the school</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good management must be appointed</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Improvement on strategies in general</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They must be monitored, evaluated, tracked and supervised</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Disagreement on developing new strategies</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Corrective measures need to be put into place for those who do not implement intervention strategies</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Fill Vacancies</i></li> <li>• <i>Strategy (Human Resources)</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fill vacancies in order to reduce the workload of directorates and teachers</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Increased focus</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Needs to be more focused</li> <li>• Have more vision, insight and good problem solving skills</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Relationship building (Collaboration)</i></li> </ul> <p><i>Outside system support/other department support</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Directorates need to work in collaboration with schools and build a relationship based on trust</li> <li>• Schools need to build relationships with parents and work collaboratively</li> <li>• The department of education should work with other departments outside the system</li> <li>• Support required such as psychologists, the department of home affairs, and the department of social development</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Try to solve violence within the community</i></li> <li>• </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Solve violence in the community since then it would not be transferred to the school therefore reducing disturbance in the school and improving and creating a conducive environment for learning</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Attitude of learners</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speak to the learners and change their attitude to being more positive</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Knowledge that children learn differently</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers need to be more accommodating and understanding to multiple intelligences of learners</li> </ul>
<b>Schools responses to programs/strategies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Satisfactory feedback /responses</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schools were satisfied with the strategies implemented due to their positive feedback</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Unsatisfactory feedback/ responses</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schools were unsatisfied with the strategies implemented since it required work on their part</li> </ul>

This table provided a summary of the themes that will be discussed in the various sections of the data analysis chapter. Below find the detailed information of the themes based on the findings of this research.

## **4.2 CHALLENGES**

The questions related to challenges covered two types of challenges. The first challenge related to factors contributing towards the poor academic success of learners and the second related to challenges faced by officials when implementing interventions.

### **4.2.1 CHALLENGES CONTRIBUTING TO POOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS AND CHALLENGES WHEN IMPLEMENTING INTERVENTIONS**

The challenges contributing to inconsistent and poor academic success and the challenges experienced by office-based educational specialists when implementing interventions were noted to be multifaceted. The results of the current study indicate that there are several reasons for poor academic results in schools within the Pietermaritzburg and Pinetown districts. The responses received from the officials identified the challenges that are discussed below.

#### ***4.2.1.1. Classroom Context***

*This challenge was specific to the Special Needs Education Services Directorate.*

One participant identified diversity and large classrooms as a challenge. This response is not a surprise as it is well known that African countries are rich in diversity and culture. One of the participants indicated that teachers have much to grapple with and experience difficulty in

managing diversity and do not know how to control the large class sizes to be effective in their teaching as made known in the response below:

*P2: Teachers have to grapple with a lot of things (due to curriculum), added diversity of children in the classrooms, new initiatives, example, and no corporal punishment. People don't always know how to control children.*

One participant stated that teachers do not recognise children's individual way of reasoning to teaching and learning that also impacts on poor academic performance. It was acknowledged that all children do not process information in the same way as indicated below:

*P2: Teachers don't recognise children's individual way of reasoning to teaching and learning, they don't individualise learning.*

It was nevertheless understood by one participant that individualised support for each child is a challenging task for educators due to a large number of learners in the classrooms and the great amount of diversity they are faced with in classrooms.

*P2: Individualising support for each child is challenging.*

*P2: The class size and diversity within classes plays a role.*

The possible reason for large numbers in the classroom is because the Department of Education (DOE) is understaffed and, therefore, the increase in the ratio of pupils to teachers.

#### ***4.2.1.2. Understaffing of directorates and teachers due to the lack of resources***

Two participants identified understaffing as a challenge as shown by participant five and one below and two participants identified the lack of resources as a challenge as demonstrated by participant four below:

*P5: Few advisors, therefore, we cannot be effective.*

*P1: The Department is chronically understaffed.*

*P4: The resources may be a problem.*

Three participants indicated that the DOE has numerous positions available as shown below by participant one:

*P1: Eight hundred office based posts are vacant in the Department of education in KZN.*

Three participants indicated that fewer occupants in positions in the Department (teachers and directorates) made the job more difficult since the burden of completing necessary work falls on the few who are employed. This is known as ‘cross-cutting’ as shown by participant five below. Teachers are also understaffed and overworked just as the office-based educational specialists.

*P 5:if they give first of all in our particular context we are expected to do too many things, for example if a teacher is in need of in-service training we cannot give that colleges should do that we should be in a position to recommend that this teacher needs this and then such as the sit a course at a college we can't do all the work to ensure that the teacher picks up it's not possible, right but that is what we are expected to do, in other words, we are expected to do things that are not possible in my view. So to me, those are some of the challenges even made worse by the ratio of advisors to teachers if I may if I may go further because of cross-cutting and other problems the Department is not employing when people leave for instance there is not maths advisor none for FET at all*

However, the participants noted that these positions are unable to be filled due to financial constraints as stated by participant five and one below:

*P 1: Financial constraints impacts service delivery because it causes so many posts not to be filled therefore the Department is chronically understaffed.*

*P5: Lack of funding.*

Two participants highlighted that this shortage of financial and material resources also hinders the implementation of intervention programmes. Specialists lack new equipment such as laptops, iPods, computer monitors and photocopy materials. The support officials received from the DOE was limited due to financial constraints of the Department as indicated by the statement below:

*P5: Now the Department is not giving us the tools to get the work done well stationary yes they can buy us stationery which is relatively cheap but its more expensive things like computers they are not doing enough.*

Additionally, one participant stated that due to financial constraints of the DOE workshops proposed for school governing bodies on the implementation of intervention strategies in schools, are refused funding for the provision of meals for attendees as indicated by participant three below. This is problematic because some parents who attend the workshop are unemployed and, therefore, do not eat before attending. The duration of the workshop is therefore shortened.

*P3: When a workshop we call the SGB, they say they don't have the money, the workshops supposed to take the whole day but they cut it down because of time.*

*P3: We don't have to provide to people, some are unemployed, concentration span, need funding for governance and management when we conduct workshops (food).*

Two participants emphasised that the lack of finances by the DOE (KZN) affects availability of vehicles for officials and also on the poor conditions of the vehicles when they do become available as pointed out below:

*P4: No money for subsidised vehicles anymore. Used private vehicles for a while but it's not worthwhile. They promised to get official subsidised vehicles. We share my colleague and I, one old bakkie. If we both have vehicles, we can do better.*

As shown above, due to the lack of financial resources it has led to understaffing within the department. This may be the reason for time constraints and an overload of work placed on directorates and teachers.

#### **4.2.1.3. Work overload and time constraints**

Three participants reported that teachers have a heavy workload to grapple sufficiently with such as curriculum content, maintaining discipline, solving problems, managing conflicts, administrative work, monitoring of matric exams as well as the Annual National Assessment and school functionality. They report that this extra workload takes teachers away from their core responsibilities as shown below:

*P4: When the Department needs us we are involved and that takes us away from our core programme.*

*P1: We monitor matric exams as well as ANA and do school functionality. This takes us away from our core responsibilities.*



Due to the de-motivating heavy workload specialists and teachers experience the challenge of time constraints. Two participants indicated time constraints as a factor that they find challenging when implementing interventions as indicated below:

*P4: Because we work with the Department we involved in stuff that's not our core functioning, matric and functionality monitoring, we can't do our core functioning.*

*P1: I do a psychological assessment and it takes three or four hours, as well as a report and that takes long. We have a few people filling posts.*

The work overload and time constraints could have an impact on the fact that teachers shirk their responsibility and may not teach. Exacerbating such a situation is the fact that learners may not effectively learn.

#### ***4.2.1.4. Ineffective teaching and learning***

Two participants identified the curriculum as challenging for teachers as some of them do not always teach according to the curriculum as indicated by participants one and three below:

*P1: So at that time they were doing algebra, geometry and trig and then when I spoke to the kids before that they told me they don't know trigonometry yet it is part of the paper. So I asked the teacher- the children told me you don't do trigonometry -look at what an answer he gives me- he says I've prepared them so well in algebra and geometry that the amount of knowledge I have given them, the amount of expertise they got they don't need the trigonometry so he didn't even cover the trigonometry [section of the examination paper] (emphasis added).*

*P3: Teachers also are not teaching.*

One participant reported that some schools are not prepared and are still completing the curriculum in the fourth term, leaving hardly any time for revision. Schools not being prepared leave learners less time to learn. Their learning is further compromised by the fact that not all learners may receive textbooks and are consequently required to share these textbooks amongst each other, as indicated by participant one below, this makes it increasingly challenging for learners to study the syllabus

*P1: You go to schools sometimes learners don't even have the set works they share the set works how can you expect children to learn.*

It seems that office-based educators have agreed on some of the key responsibilities of being an educator and that some educators are not meeting their responsibilities as expected. According to the participants, some teachers shirk their responsibility in executing tasks assigned to them. Teachers shirking in their tasks may be a consequence of work overload and time constraints. However, one participant highlighted that teachers are not present in classrooms in the allotted time slot as shown by participant three below. This causes lessons to begin late and affects the amount of time it would take to complete the syllabus. Therefore, the absence of teachers may be contributing to poor results.

*P3: There must be somebody to teach them they (learners) can be there but teachers are absent.*

Apart from the absence of teachers in the classroom and teachers not teaching, one participant found learners are not learning the curriculum however teachers are bound by rules of passing learners and therefore poor learner attainment is challenging. It is a major concern that teachers are only allowed to fail the learners' once in grade three and twice in a phase as indicated by participant one below. Thus, many learners enter matric without learning and unable to read or write contributing to poor learner attainment. One participant indicated that improving learner attainment is very narrow sighted as focusing on 'matric' which is right at the very end of a secondary institute.

*P1: A child is only allowed to fail once in grade three and twice in a phase. Learners are being pushed to pass. Learner attainment is the lowest. Children cannot read or write and enter matric.*

#### **4.2.1.5. Curriculum**

Deteriorating results even further, apart from the fact that teachers are not teaching and learners are not learning, is the fact that there are numerous policies. One participant expressed that schools were overburdened with too many policies. As an example, the curriculum has been revised on numerous occasions and is yet to be correct as expressed by participant below:

*P1: Teachers need to become familiar with the content they teach; they need to become familiar with the curriculum but again the curriculum[and]how many revisions but they still haven't get it right.*

The workload of teachers is exacerbated by these curriculum changes. The curriculum has recently changed from the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) to the CAPS system. One participant mentioned that there is too much emphasis on the curriculum as shown below:

*P5: I think the Department made the fundamental mistake in that there was too much emphasis on curriculum, too little emphasis on the personelle who supposed to handle the curriculum*

#### **4.2.1.6. Monitoring and evaluation**

Two participants mentioned that teachers do not want to act in collaboration and allow for inspections to be carried out by curriculum advisors. It is, therefore, difficult to check if the curriculum has been taught and if the content of the curriculum is understood and grasped by the teachers themselves. What this reveals is that the lack of lesson studies contributes to poor academic results. Curriculum advisors find it difficult to do their job because they note that teachers demand visibility of them but at the same time refuse them permission to inspect and offer advice on the lessons given to student as shown by participant five below:

*P5: Teachers don't let us go into the class to observe without their permission. It would be easier to see difficulties. So you cannot see the weaknesses of the teachers.*

#### **4.2.1.7. De-motivation of teachers' leads to vast movement**

Teachers may be de-motivated because of the issues discussed above such as the excessive amount of work they are assigned, the lack of resources of the DOE, time constraints placed upon them for curriculum completion and the pressure to improve learner attainment. Other factors identified by the officials that may serve to de-motivate teachers are diverse backgrounds of learners, the lack of empowerment felt by teachers and lack of success in the classroom which is not immediately perceived by the teacher.

One office-based education specialist indicated that for success to be seen in classes may take a long time; therefore, teachers need to be motivated when success is not seen immediately as by participant two below:

*P2: So say a child is ten and his been in the school system for three years it's not going to be three weeks to take away all of the barriers the barriers have been building up for ten years particularly in the last three years the child's been at school it's going to take along of time to change that and that's hard for a teacher when she doesn't see success, hard to remain motivated when you don't see immediate success.*

The challenge identified was that the motivation offered to teachers is only limited to the amount of time the office-based educational specialist is present with the educator as stated below:

*P2: There are few of us I can motivate and make a teacher enthusiastic for that morning that I spend with them but the minute that I go she's overwhelmed by other things and I'm not there to support her and carry her through her bad times and by the time I come back again she's despondent maybe she's moved on somewhere else maybe she just [and then you got to start off from scratch].*

One participant found the movement of teachers challenging. Due to feelings of de-motivation, there is a vast amount of movement amongst teachers. The one participant stated that the movement of teachers is due to transfers, retirement, promotions, and death and better positions being offered in other schools as shown below:

*P6: One will die one will be promoted one will retire that's why I say I said the movement.*

#### **4.2.1.8. Support is basic/limited and still required**

Moreover, even though teachers are de-motivated very basic or limited support is provided for them. Four participants mentioned that they were given basic support from the Department such as the provision of stationery and tools. Furthermore, support was viewed as the provision of monthly payments, subsidised vehicles and a cell phone allowance. A participant from SNES mentioned that he was fortunate to be part of a section where he was supported in the form of freedom to do his work the way he wanted to without having someone constantly watch over his shoulder as illustrated by participant one below.

*P1: Nobody breathes down my neck I appreciate that- but with freedom comes accountability.*

However, two participants indicated that the support provided by the Department is limited. They pointed out that they do receive support, however, mentioned that support is never enough as indicated in by participants three and four below. Others mentioned that support is received if they failed to solve a problem but stated the support is not one hundred percent. Nevertheless, if the Department cannot support in one way, they try to support the directorates in another way.

*P3: We do photocopy the material even though it's not enough sometimes we also rely on the school we go one copy per school and rely on the school to duplicate for other members.*

*P4: We've used our private vehicles for some time but it is not worthwhile because they promised all the time to get us official or shall I say subsidised vehicles and so we've withdrawn in our in our district we've withdrawn myself and my college at least have private vehicles now they've replaced it with one old bakkie that we need to share so that is one of the things if we can have both our vehicles and transport to we can we can do better that is one of the main things that we can do much better.*

One participant from the SNES directorate implied that support was still required as illustrated by participant two below:

*P2: I think that one faults that we have difficulty with in our section is that the district officer district office and sometimes the messages are not the same office and I think again of the Education Department people don't understand what our role is and the expectations of us are not what we able to fulfil the understanding of what we should be doing or how we should be doing it or how easy it is isn't and I understand that as well because they got their challenges to face and it's easy to pass the Buck and say go to SNES they'll sort it out.*

#### **4.2.1.9. The lack of skilled and qualified teachers due to the lack of in-service Training**

Another challenge contributing to poor academic performance as noted by two participants was that teachers lack the qualifications and skills required to execute their jobs efficiently as indicated below:

*P1: If you had to do a critical analysis of teachers and their teaching ability you'll be shocked -some of them have a bare understanding and I'm not I'm generalising.*

*P5:Low teacher qualification-you find that what you need in the school is, in particular, subjects like maths and science you need to have a background there's a difference between maths and a subject like history.*

One participant stated that there is a need to be a balance of both good personnel and a good curriculum. It was stated that the DOE has made the mistake of placing too much emphasis on the curriculum and too little emphasis on the personnel who will be teaching the curriculum as shown by participant five below:

*P5: In my view I think the direction we took of emphasising curriculum was not quite right a bad teacher can make the best out of a bad curriculum but if you take an excellent curriculum and you think we are going to take an ill-equipped teacher it's going to mess it up.*

*P5: I think the Department made the fundamental mistake in their there was too much emphasis on curriculum, too little emphasis on the personnel.*

One participant stated that there was rampant unionism. The unions are given the power to manage the teacher appointments and they sometimes choose the least skilled and qualified for the job as demonstrated below:

*P1: Rampant union unionism they have a huge problem they control the Department appointments sometimes you getting the least qualified person for the job.*

It was pointed out that there are some teachers who are very dedicated but they have a bare understanding and are not familiar with the content especially in the sciences. Two participants spoke of the knowledge gap existing and noted that teachers lack pedagogic content knowledge abbreviated as PCK as indicated by participant six below:

*P6: Some of the educators they do have the content of the subject but how to impart it is another issue that is pedagogical, another one will have the skill to impart the knowledge but when you find out this person is teaching science he doesn't have science three he's teaching science in grade twelve or FET ten eleven twelve but he hasn't got*

*science three or maths three science is only there in grade twelve in his certificate and then he has done a special course for science for one year so the content there is a challenge that's why if you go to accounting science and maths failure rate is high.*

Based on the above extract it seems that some teachers may have the knowledge but they do not know ways in which they can impart that knowledge, others have the skill of imparting the knowledge but do not have the knowledge. Therefore, in this situation the older teachers who have pedagogic content knowledge lack innovative ideas of imparting the knowledge and the new teachers who do not have pedagogic content knowledge have innovative ways of imparting knowledge.

Additionally, the problem contributing to poor results lies in teachers who are skilled and do not carry out the work assigned to them.

The explanation for those teachers who are unskilled might be due to the lack of in-service training they receive. One participant found the lack of in-service training for teachers challenging. He said that even though one can support and assist these educators who are lacking basic skills, there is a limit to the amount of support one can offer. The participant further stated that the closure of colleges in the education sector contributed to teacher's lack of in-service training as shown below:

*P5: Advisors can support but there's a limit to which advisors can provide in-service training to teachers who are lacking some basics. There need to be colleges there for who are going to perform the function in place.*

*P5: Closure of colleges of education the lack of real in-service training, so what some teachers really need is maybe to have access to in-service training be it after school be it over weekend be it even being pulled out of the school for a couple of months and give internship in-service training that is not happening.*

#### **4.2.1.10. Interventions are focused primarily on underperforming schools**

Another factor which was found challenging was the fact that interventions are primarily focused on underperforming schools. Two participants indicated that interventions are primarily focused on schools that are underperforming as demonstrated below by participant five:

*P5: The fact of practice is really to support underperforming schools although we are said to be supporting all schools I thought that you need to get the background.*

Specialists noted that they spend most of their time assisting teachers who have serious problems in subjects and ignore teachers that are doing satisfactorily but not perfectly as shown by participant five below:

*P5: For example, it will be wrong to say the schools that are functioning the [school names] or whatever it's not like those are perfect those also need support but because of the sheer number of schools that are underperforming, we tend to focus on underperforming schools.*

Intervening within schools that are underperforming and ignoring those schools that are doing satisfactorily was noted to be challenging because once the underperforming schools are on their pathway to success, another one or two schools then drop in their results. This is called the yo-yo effect as stated by participant six below:

*P6: You get 8 high schools, within one circuit come the end of this year 6 will perform very well and then two will underperform, fine and then we will rush to this and then intervention, so a program, ok there may also be an intervention here but not that much intensive, that's why I'm intensive come to the end of that year one school one of these schools will move up and one from this one drop down, so you end up not knowing as to why that's why some are playing the yo-yo.*

It was also specified to be challenging because sometimes despite intervening all year in schools, the schools still performs poorly. One official indicated that many times interventions were not timeous. They occur when results are at its worst and not when they were about to decline as stated by participant five below:

*P5: A lot of the time we intervene when things have gone badly we don't intervene when things are about to go badly.*

Schools may continue to perform badly despite interventions due to a lack of collaboration and non-compliance from the community and parents.



#### ***4.2.1.11. Lack of collaboration, workshops and non-compliance, lack of community and parental involvement***

There is a lack of collaboration between the DOE and schools and within the directorates in the DOE. To improve results in underperforming schools and schools, in general, the Department directorates need to work in collaboration with schools and amongst themselves. There were various views on collaboration amongst and between departments. Five participants' identified the lack of synergy/collaboration in the Department in the implementation of interventions as illustrated by participants one and two below.

*P1: I think we work in silos in the Department there's no synergy or collaboration*

*P2: So we often are not working collaboratively and that's when I feel very sorry for parents because everybody they see gives them a different message.*

Of these five participants, two participants indicated that there was no collaboration at all amongst the directorates within DOE as indicated by the comment below:

*P1: I think we work in silos in the Department there's no what's the word synergy.*

Additionally, three participants mentioned that there is collaboration between the Directorates but it is limited and, therefore, can be improved as stated by participants six below:

*P6: Yes, there is collaboration even if it is not to the highest level but is reinforced by the plan, by the programmes of the department. Programmes reinforce, I can't work in isolation, I am a management person, I may not know anything about the new curriculum approach*

However, in contrast, one participant observed that the directorates are working better with each other now than in the past.

One participant, the special needs educational specialist (SNES) further noted that the Department sometimes does not understand how things work since special needs education is not their core function. Therefore, sometimes recommendations are made that SNES communicate to the specialists the dilemmas to assist for better understanding. It was pointed out that collaboration is also lacking when working with people from outside the system because the outsiders are also facing their set of challenges.

The lack of collaboration between schools and directorates was increasingly challenging as one participant noted the non-compliance of SGB's to workshops held. Workshops are carried out by directorates with SGB's on an ongoing basis to assist school results and to assist the school to function more smoothly and efficiently. However, the participant said that despite workshops being held, the attendees (i.e. SGB members, teachers) do not comply with the standards set and do things which they are advised *not* to do as illustrated by participant three below. This was noted to be disrupting the order in the system.

*P3: There are many workshops that we have conducted but we need to see the change -but the thing is when they go back in their schools they do the very same thing which of course is really not putting our system not in order and not even the education itself but people are doing what they want and what they like- some they do comply but some sometimes because for their personal agenda, people have got their personal agenda.*

One participant indicated that some schools implement these interventions and other schools question the consequences to be followed for non-compliance. It was highlighted that no drastic actions or consequences are taken against those who default as shown by participant three below:

*P3: There are schools who are implementing it and the next thing is if I don't implement what will happen to me if there's nothing that is happening to those who don't implement then others will just follow suit not implementing because there's nobody whose looking and there are no drastic actions that are taken to those people who are defaulting. People who are defaulting and not implementing interventions when they are fully aware that they should must be taken to the law, they must be punished and corrective measures need to be done or sanctions need to be done.*

In addition, not only was the school defaulting but two participants found the lack of community responsibility a challenge and other participants found the lack of parental involvement a challenge contributing towards poor results. Two participants stated that learners were products of the community that they come from and, therefore, felt that one cannot divorce education in schools from the community. These participants view the problems as deterioration of the moral fabric of the society and the community. It was mentioned that

parents have abandoned their responsibility in communities and are not participating in their children's lives and education as implied by participant one below.

*P1: I think the moral fabric of society is tearing- parents have [abdicated] their responsibility in all communities.*

#### **4.2.1.12. Strikes**

Due to the lack of collaboration, disagreements occur and, therefore, strikes are embarked upon by learners, teachers, and unions. Three participants found strikes to be a challenging factor contributing to poor academic performance. It was mentioned by one participant that ironically schools with ill-equipped teachers and poor management (generally the underperforming schools) are the first ones who begin striking which exacerbates the situation of poor results. One participant stated that strikes inhibited their work and made it difficult to recover lost time as stated by participant one below:

*P1: Strikes happen we had two stays away this year, one was for a month one was for a week and the people that started it was one of the unions very difficult to cover up what you lost very difficult work goes on and you know you feel sad about the sad thing is the children lose out*

However, one participant does not view strikes as a serious issue, stating that educators merely strike for a short duration of two weeks in a year. It was nevertheless agreed that the strike may affect performance on a small scale as indicated by participant three below:

*P3: Not on a bigger scale maybe on a small scale ja strike ja I don't think so but people used to exaggerate it and say teachers are striking that's why the results like this I if teaching is smooth and learning is smooth then two weeks is not an issue.*

#### **4.2.1.13. Poor learner behaviours**

Apart from strikes disrupting school functioning so is the poor behaviour of learners such as teenage pregnancy, substance abuse and violence.

Two participants found poor behaviours in learners to be a challenging factor contributing to poor academic performance. Learners face numerous barriers but may also engage in activities and behaviours that add to the barriers they face and prevent themselves even further from

performing well academically. One participant indicated that a common problem found with learners was teenage pregnancy. An example of this problem is illustrated by participant's number four and one below.

*P4: So like that one school I know in ##### they are contract workers laying water pipes but many of these girls of that one specific school got pregnant because of that contract workers offering them money and so on.*

*P1: We have lots and lots-I'm talking from a psychological perspective of poor Behaviour- unmotivated learners, child abuse, sex abuse, teenage pregnancy all this impact on [the performance].*

Other problems observed were drug abuse, learners involving themselves in drug rallies and engaging in gambling in schools. It was noted that drug abuse was exacerbated by dagga plants being easily accessible because they are grown in areas of close vicinity to many schools as indicated below:

*P4: We can see dagga plants in the side of the roads.*

Two participants found violence to be a challenging factor contributing towards poor performance. Participants indicated that violence is one of the main problems in certain school contributing to poor academic performance. One participant mentioned that teachers are threatened by and afraid of the student population as indicated in the response below:

*P1: There are no-go areas in the school- can you believe it- no go-teachers are scared to go in there.*

*P1: The teachers have been threatened by certain members of the of the learner population that if we don't pass we will kill you.*

One specialist indicated that they are overloaded with work. Therefore, they are only able to speak to teachers about traumatic incidents when a trauma presents itself. Violence is rooted not only in the school but the community as indicated below:

*P1: In this particular school I went to there were three killings of learners not in the school but the community.*

One participant indicated that if the learners and the community are ill (sick), then the community is not well balanced. These social ills are then transferred to the school environment and manifests in the form of violence as indicated by participant's response above. Two participants noted that even fights that occur out of schools, still disturbs the school emphasising that if the community is ill then the school will also be sick as indicated by participant six below:

*P6: Where the community's ill we don't have a well-balanced community.*

*P6: So they will transfer that social ill to a school environment.*

Learners disturbing behaviours may be attributed to the lack of community and parental involvement and the circumstantial barriers learners' experience as mentioned earlier. Two participants found the circumstantial barriers learners experienced to be a challenging factor contributing towards negative results which will be explained below. Apart from a lack of community and parental involvement creating barriers for consistent performance, participants have also indicated that learners sometimes come from environments that hinder performance such as they experience multiple problems, one of which is unemployment as indicated by participant two. Some learners do not have any adult figures to guide and care for them and some do not have basics resources such as access to food. Additionally, many travel numerous miles to get to school as indicated below:

*P2: Very often the barriers extend to outside the classroom you know that to there's unemployment there's poverty there's absence of adult figures there's absence of consistency err there's absence of food there are children that travel miles to get to school do you think they are in any state to sit down and do reading and writing and maths when they are six years old.*

Children also face issues such as child abuse and sexual abuse which may consequently result in teenage pregnancy or HIV/AIDS as demonstrated by participant one.

*P1: Child abuse, sex abuse, teenage pregnancy all this impact on [the performance].*

Participants, therefore, felt that teachers find it challenging to work with learners in classes because of the difficult and challenging circumstances these learners face as pointed out below:

*P2: I think that challenging circumstances at home mm meant teaches have a lot more to deal with in the classroom I don't think that their equipped to its very challenging very demanding to be a teacher.*

#### **4.2.2. Conclusion to the findings on challenges**

The above themes have given better insight into understanding the challenges contributing to inconsistent and poor academic success and the challenges experienced by office-based educational specialists when implementing interventions. The next section highlights the theme of intervention strategies to assist in improving performances of schools.

### **4.3. STRATEGIES**

#### **4.3.1. STRATEGIES TO ASSIST SCHOOLS IN MAINTAINING GOOD ACADEMIC RESULTS**

Three participants indicated that there were numerous systems and policies put in place to maintain good academic performance. It was reported that the strategies are multi-prone and that there are no uniform strategies which are established as stated below:

*P6: There are so many programmes.*

*P5: The strategies we use are multi-prone.*

One participant mentioned that the numerous high-quality strategies and policies are documented on paper but are not of any use if they are not implemented and no outcome is visible as stated below:

*P3: Good, excellent policies onpaper, but if they are not implementedthen, we cannot see the outcome.*

##### **4.3.1.1. Codes of conduct**

*This strategy was specific to the Governance and Management Directorate.*

One participant highlighted that codes of conduct hadbeen formed. These indirectly assist schools in maintaining good results due to the systematised and orderly functioning of the school. Codes of conduct have been established for learners, teachers and school governing bodies. As an example, one participant mentioned the code of conduct designed for teachers by the South African Council of Education (SACE). Overall, codes of conduct are put into

place for the smooth functioning of schools. The participant emphasised that this was one such system put into place to assist schools in maintaining good performance. The management of a school is expected to ensure that the codes of conduct are followed. These policies are not always effective as will be discussed under ‘non-compliance.’

#### **4.3.1.2. Management of a school**

*This strategy was specific to the Governance and Management Directorate.*

One participant indicated that they have systems which are in place to maintain good academic results and one such system is the management of the school. The participant noted that the managerial operation was especially dependent on the principal being well equipped. The participant stated that in the managerial operation, work is managed as well as the personnel. Participants indicated that the principal monitors and tracks the functioning of school staff as indicated by participant three below:

*P3: We need principal to be well equipped as much as they understand and they are aware of that how to manage that's a part that's a very important part of the managerial part how to manage you don't only manage work you also manage the personnel how people are what time are they coming to school, are they prepared that's another issue they come to school have they prepared what to do rather than coming to school and prepared in the school they should come to school prior they already prepared that because they are there to work.*

The educational process is not only the responsibility of the principal but should be a collaborative effort with the parents and teachers.

#### **4.3.1.3. School Governing Body (SGB)**

*This strategy was specific to the Governance and Management Directorate.*

One participant mentioned that an additional system which is in place is the school governing body which was established to allow parents the opportunity to participate in their children's learning process and thereby improve academic results as seen below:

*P6: We do have structures that are legitimate as per South Africans schools act SGB if you read in the clause there it says that parents should participate in the learning of*

*the child in the school in the structure known as SGB to help your school to perform very well.*

#### **4.3.1.4. Orphan and Vulnerable Grants (OVC's)**

*This strategy was specific to the SNES directorate.*

Some learners do not have parents and therefore to maintain good academic results basic circumstances need to be in order. Two participants mentioned the orphan and vulnerable small grants programme as a strategy to maintain good results. They indicated that the orphan and vulnerable grant is offered to children to ensure that they are provided with the basic needs thereby assisting the maintenance of good academic results as indicated below:

*P4: We are also involved in the orphans and vulnerable children err but it is dwindling out a bit err it is not coming from us its coming from national provinces and next year there will be 20 schools who will get 10 000 rand each which is basically for helping learners [overseas] for buying uniform, school uniform also community dialogues connected to the peer education.*

#### **4.3.1.5. The National School Nutrition Programme**

Some learners who have parents come from poverty-stricken homes and also need support. Therefore, the nutrition programme was developed to provide learners with a meal in school. One participant highlighted that the policy on nutrition also assists schools to maintain good academic results. This policy ensures that all learners are fed. Participants stated that the meals provided in schools are also to encourage the increased attendance of learners as shown by participant three below:

*P3: It's also encouraging that the learners should come to school because they'll be fed.*

#### **4.3.1.6. The Policy on Learner Attendance**

*This strategy was specific to the Governance and Management Directorate.*

One participant indicated that another policy to assist schools maintain good academic performance was the policy on learner attendance. This policy stipulates the rules which learners must follow regarding attendance and provides a framework of management for



learner attendance and absence in order to improve attendance rates in schools within the province and to be able to gather data about learner attendance and analyse it thereafter (Department of Education, 2008).

The participant emphasised that this policy is not only restricted to learners but is required to be understood by parents and communities as well as shown below. The participant stated that this policy speaks of the punctuality of both the learners and teachers, addresses work quality and the fact that teachers need to be present to teach and impart knowledge to the learners and fulfil their responsibility of completing the syllabus as stated below:

*P3: Learners should understand and follow not only for the learners the parents should also understand the learner attendance policy.*

*P3: When you look at the learner attendance they talk about punctuality if you talk about punctuality not only talking about only to the learners the learners must be there and the teacher must also be what, on time.*

*P3: It also talks about err work quality so they are there just because they are there to learn so there must be somebody to teach them they can be there but teachers are absent.*

#### **4.3.1.7. Focus on curriculum coverage**

*This strategy was specific to the Curriculum Advisors*

One participant indicated that to maintain good academic results curriculum needs to be given much attention. The participant pointed out that they try to focus on curriculum coverage with the teachers and make clear what they supposed to do and what not to do. Furthermore, follow-ups are carried out with the emphasis on curriculum coverage to understand how the teachers handle the work.

#### **4.3.1.8. Focus on underperforming schools**

Two participants indicated that to assist schools in maintaining good academic results the Department focuses on underperforming schools. It was reported that schools that performed less than 60 percent in grade twelve academic results were categorised as underperforming. The specialist's energy was concentrated on schools that were positioned into this

“underperforming” category. The focus is to track and monitor schools that have not done well and see what has caused negative outcomes such as the decline of results. One participant indicated that they tried to resolve at least one contributing factor to poor performance a year as stated below:

*P6: So that's why I'm saying we can't say that we have got this factor contributing there may be so many factors, if the results are improving it means instead of having 5 factors that are effecting the results at least they have solved one they are left with 4, maybe the following year they solve the another one they left with three because there are so many factors to those schools that are performing very well it maybe only one factor which is err hindrance to the results because there are so many factors, where the schools are located how to staff the school the package of the school the atmosphere of the school the environment of the school norms and standards a no fees school a fees school etcetera.*

Specialists attempted to draw up turnaround strategies for these underperforming schools and match-high performing schools to underperforming schools to share preparations, notes and to exchange tests. It was noted that those who performed less than thirty-five percent in grade twelve academic results are to be involved in a special programme called “Operation Hamba.” to boost their results upwards.

#### ***4.3.1.9. Motivation and support for stakeholders (learners and teachers)***

One participant indicated that they have the National Support for Learner Attainment (NSLA) Programme to assist with maintaining good academic results in schools. The NSLA programme is structured primarily to support grade twelve learners as indicated by participant one below. This strategy was specific to the Special Needs Education Directorate.

*P1: We have the learner attainment that is only supporting learners in matric.*

Not only do learners need to be supported but so do teachers. Two specialists indicated that they tried to motivate and support teachers to maintain good academic results. They further indicated that they try to assist teachers to develop their skills wherever they lack as shown by participant five and two below. Workshops are held to discuss the challenges learners and teachers face in various areas as well as to offer extra tuition on certain subjects for learners.

*P5: The strategy support and trying to help the teacher developing wherever he is falling he or she is falling short.*

*P2: We try to build capacities amongst the teachers that's the way -that the only that I see that we can do it.*

Furthermore, two participants indicated that workshops are carried out to assist and support in maintaining good academic performance. One participant noted that workshops were carried out especially in the commonly difficult subjects such as mathematics and calculus. Furthermore, one participant pointed out that community dialogues that are connected to peer education workshops are encouraged whereby the community takes responsibility for their area of the peer education workshops and provides the specialists with information about the specific area. One participant indicated that all invited contributed to community dialogue. In these peer education workshops the needs and problems of schools are discussed across the continuum from the most basic to the most complex as demonstrated by participant four below:

*P4: So the needs and the problems ranged from the basic to the biggest one of the biggest problems is teenage pregnancy in our days as well as drug abuse that we come across and other social ills so they address specifically what is the problem in their area so like that one school I know in ##### there are contract workers laying water pipes but many of these girls of that one specific school got pregnant because of that contract workers offering them money and so on.*

The workshops are to pinpoint where challenges lie such that they can be addressed and consequently minimised as implied by participant four below, thereby assisting the maintenance of good academic results by trying to produce more favourable circumstances.

*P4: We would like that to expand to rural areas but we do shorter visits to follow up now the community dialogue we encourage the learners and the teacher who is accompanying them to give us more information about the area at the peer education workshop; they do plans with the resources available now that is differently obviously from a deep rural area in and in an urban area.*

#### **4.3.1.10. School Safety Committee**

*This strategy was specific to the Governance and Management Directorate.*

*Learners face numerous challenges. Violence is one such challenge as mentioned earlier. Therefore, a school safety committee was established to protect learners from violence.*

One participant mentioned that the school safety committee is a strategy established to prevent violence and to ensure a more conducive environment to maintain good academic results. There is a school safety committee for all schools which consists of most stakeholders within the area.

#### **4.3.1.11. Integrated School Health Programme**

*This strategy was specific to the Special Needs Education Services Directorate.*

Good health is imperative for learners to maintain good results. Therefore, one participant mentioned that an integrated school health programme was established which is aimed at improving health conditions of learners in schools. One specialist in the SNES Department stated that they assisted in the coordination of this programme and helped do specific tasks in school related to the improvement of health, for example, create awareness about HIV/AIDS to teachers as illustrated by participant four below:

*P4: They doing specific things in the schools relating to health and also HIV and AIDs- teachers have been taken this year especially in the holidays for 5 days we give them specific lessons and we invite different stakeholders to give them the skills and knowledge to take back to the schools now that is basically our core function.*

#### **4.3.2. Conclusion to strategies to assist in maintaining good academic results**

Not all the intervention strategies to improve academic results are mentioned above are progressing effectively. Participants' views on ways to improve certain strategies and suggestions for new strategies are presented below.

### **4.4. WAYS TO IMPROVE STRATEGIES OR SUGGESTIONS OF NEW STRATEGIES**

#### **4.4.1. Improvement in the focus of underperforming schools**

One participant suggested that the Department needed to be more proactive and thoughtful. In as much as talks given to learners of underperforming schools is intended for good purposes,

it should not be done close to the time of the examinations as it detracts learners from studying at home. Another suggestion made to improve the results of underperforming schools is to merge the underperforming schools with performing schools as shown by participant six below. However, the questioning of this strategy's political accuracy was raised.

*P6: I'm not sure that what has been done by Western Cape is acceptable, they closed down all those schools and then they merged them with the other performing schools.*

#### **4.4.2. Improvement of the National Support for Learner Attainment Programme (NSLA)**

The suggestion by the specialists was to increase human resource for the programme's effectiveness. Furthermore, it was emphasised that the focus on learner attainment should not only be on matriculants but should instead begin from primary school through to secondary school. However, there are systems being put into place such as the NSLA Integrated Framework developed for GET and FET in 2013 it was suggested to improve this policy and broaden its implementation to grades other than grade twelve. Additionally, it was suggested that study skills should be taught as part of the Life Orientation (LO) subject where teachers should teach on how to learn not only what to learn as shown by participant one below.

*P1: We have the learner attainment that is only supporting learners in matric, we need to start earlier, you know like study skills should be infused right from grade 1, teachers teach children what to learn but they don't teach them how to learn and I think that that's where the one of the major areas is we got this idea that matric is the mark yardstick.*

#### **4.4.3. Improvement on the focus of the curriculum**

Despite the attempt to improve learner attainment and support the curriculum needs also to be given much attention. Two participants mentioned that the curriculum could be improved by ensuring that teachers become more familiar with the CAPS document such that they can pass on the knowledge to the learners. The participants felt the need for teachers to familiarise themselves with the content of the curriculum. Furthermore, it was suggested that group teaching would be useful as shown by participant two below:

*P2: We need to do more group teaching so that needs a good insight into each child and more effective group teaching and I think there needs to be better recognition from the teachers as to what they are trying to achieve.*

#### ***4.4.4. Improvement of workshops***

Two participants mentioned that improvements could be done in workshops to assist academic performance. One participant noted that the strategy of peer education workshops should not be limited to the urban areas but should be extended to the rural areas as indicated by participant four below. Interventions are sometimes not taken seriously and staff does not always comply. Therefore, drastic measures need to be taken for non-compliance to improve the effectiveness of workshops.

*P4: We want peer education workshops to be extended to rural areas. Head office should take it up with the CEO and the people in charge of the money.*

#### ***4.4.5. Improvement in the management of the school***

Two participants mentioned improvements are necessary for the management of the school to improve results and this can be done if good management is appointed. According to a participant, teacher inspections needed to be introduced once again as it previously carried out whereby the teachers are critiqued on some of the lessons they deliver as indicated by participant one below:

*P1: Get back old inspections, do the old critique, keep teachers on the go.*

#### ***4.4.6. Improvement on strategies in general***

Two participants mentioned that strategies could be improved in general. They must be monitored, tracked and evaluated as well as supervised as shown by participant 3 below. The staff has to be responsible for monitoring the strengths and the weaknesses of the strategy and suggest ways to improve them continuously. Corrective measures needed to be implemented against those who do not implement intervention plans as indicated by participant 3 below. Furthermore, participants mentioned that interventions may be more effective if initiated from within the school instead of the outside and noted that this option should be seriously considered as indicated by participant six below. Participants displayed a high level of insight

into improvements and felt that existing strategies should be utilised instead of creating new ones.

*P3: There are systems in place, but they must be monitored and evaluated and also supervised, to check is it working, is not, and make amends.*

*P3: People who are defaulting and not implementing interventions when they are fully aware that they should must be taken to the law, they must be punished and corrective measures need to be done or sanctions need to be done.*

*P6: Maybe it will work more if the intervention is inside, ja if the atmosphere is perfect staffing is perfect governance is perfect, qualified educator is perfect inside the school is ok but now outside the principal is not perfect I will see him only for 3 days or for 3 hours or 2 hours a day I will go out of the school.*

#### **4.4.7. Disagreement on developing new strategies**

*The disagreement to develop new strategies is specific to the Governance and Management Directorate.*

One participant disagreed on the development of new strategies and indicated that the Department needs to work on improving what is currently in place. Participants noted that it is a waste of time and money to set up new strategies without utilising the strategies which are already in place. Specialists noted that strategies are implemented but for the implementation process of these interventions to be successful principals and management must supervise and be accountable as indicated by participant three below:

*P3: Yes there must be monitoring and evaluation to look at what is it working- is not working- if it's not working make amends.*

Even though some participants disagreed on developing new strategies other participants mentioned new strategies to contribute towards improving academic performance as will be shown below.

#### **4.4.8. Fill personnel vacancies**

Two participants mentioned that vacancies within the Department should be filled to make the workload of employees more manageable as shown by participant five below. It was even suggested by the curriculum advisor to employ personnel to do in-service training in an attempt to decrease the workload of employees as demonstrated once again by participant five below. Three participants suggested that the DOE can become more efficient and effective if human resource is increased. Just as teachers are few so are the directorates. Three participants noted that the Department should fill posts within the Department itself and in schools. One participant mentioned that once this human resource exists after that the Department can build up the way in which they view things (in a positive light or not) as indicated by participant six below. The human resource can then be trained to be more focused.

*P6: The department needs to fill posts. Let human resource first exist then build up how they look at things (attitude towards school).*

*P5: Employ personnel to do in-service training it would make our work manageable.*

#### **4.4.9. Increased focus**

*This recommendation is specific to the SNES directorate*

Two specialists from SNES mentioned that there needs to be more focus for the Department to be more efficient as indicated by participant one below. One participant mentioned that it can be improved if the Department has people who have more vision, insight and good problem-solving skills also as indicated by participant one below. Furthermore, teachers need to be more innovative, creative and resilient. Increased focus may work better if the Department and teachers work in collaboration and interact.

*P1: There needs to be more focus. The department needs people with far more vision, insight and good problem solving skills.*

#### **4.4.10. Relationship Building (Collaboration with outside systems)**

Three participants mentioned collaboration as an additional support required. One participant suggested that to make the Department more efficient and effective that the Department needs to build a relationship with schools only then will they begin to trust and want to work together with the directorates. Furthermore, the Department needs to encourage schools to build a relationship with parents and work collaboratively. It was proposed by one participant that the



Department should work with people from outside the system such as the Departments of health, social welfare and home affairs as well as communicate more with non-governmental organisations. Two specialists also indicated a need for collaboration with other directorates within the DOE. Moreover, it was suggested that the directorates should continue its effort to communicate. Three participants noted that outside system or another Department support was an additional support which they required. Outside support from the other departments is required by three participants since it was mentioned that education is a societal issue and, therefore, the society should act in a unified manner as illustrated by participant three below.

*P3: It's a societal issue so we need to pull together.*

Because many of the learners are child headed and orphans, support from the Department of Social Development would be useful. Furthermore, some learners do not have identity documents or birth certificates. Therefore, the assistance of the Home Affairs Department is required. One participant also noted the increased support required from outside systems such as non-governmental organisations as indicated by participant two below.

*P2: We should be working with people outside the system, Department of health, social welfare, and home affairs.*

One participant further indicated that they required support from psychologists when dealing with psychological issues; accessibility to speak with people from universities for new knowledge related to the work at hand; financial assistance or material items from stores for clothing for learners during the winter season and glasses for those learners that require them as shown by participant three below. Additionally, one participant mentioned the need for more workshops.

*P3: we used to go out of the system and tap some expertise from other people like universities like yourself, so you go outside go outside for go outside for motivations go outside for financial assistants, they may not have monies but we go out for donations project as it is now we have got educators who are teaching but we are not paying them they have being donated by to us by a project known as teach South Africa, we'll go to companies like Asmall's they gave us winter vacation sprints glasses to our underperforming schools especially maths science and accounting. So we shout and then you go out of the system*

#### **4.4.11. Try to solve violence in the community**

*This recommendation was specific to the governance and management directorate*

One specialist mentioned that the Department would be more efficient and effective if they attempted to solve violence in the community. This was suggested because it was thought that if violence were solved into the community, then it would not be transferred to the school, therefore, reducing disturbance in the school and improving and creating a conducive environment for learning at school.

*P6: We need to know how to solve violence in the community so that the violence cannot be transferred to school. Where the society is perfect, schools are perfect.*

#### **4.4.12. Attitude of Learners**

*This recommendation was specific to the governance and management directorate*

One participant felt that additional support was required to change the attitude of learners. Participants thought that the Department can improve their efficiency and effectiveness on results if they speak with the learners and inform them that they are in school to brighten their future and make them understand that they need to work hard to achieve their goals and aspirations in life as indicated by participant three below:

*P3: Learners should know that they are there just for themselves and for their future. They should understand that they are the ones who supposed to work hard towards achieving their goals, their aims.*

#### **4.4.13. Awareness that children learn differently**

*This recommendation was specific to the SNES directorate*

One participant thought that the Department could become more efficient and effective if teachers are more accommodating and understanding to multiple intelligences of learners i.e. to know that children learn in different ways as demonstrated by participant two below. It was emphasised that teachers need to identify what they are trying to achieve with the learners and they need to learn to look past the fact that they might not be responding in the same way that they expect them to as shown below:

*P2: Teachers need to think about what they want the children to know and the other thing is to become aware of the fact that children learn differently and to know that*

*even if the child can't write down the words doesn't mean to say he doesn't know the words- if the child can't spell properly doesn't mean to say he doesn't know the answers so they actually need again to look at what they trying to achieve with the children and see past the fact that they may not be responding, in the same way, you expected them to.*

#### **4.5. Conclusion on ways to improve strategies put in place or suggestions of new strategies**

Ways to improve certain strategies which are put into place to improve academic performance were discussed above. The next section covers schools responses to intervention programmes already put in place.

#### **4.6. SCHOOLS RESPONSES TO PROGRAMMES/STRATEGIES**

##### ***4.6.1. Satisfactory Feedback/Responses***

*This is specific to the SNES directorate.*

Two participants mentioned satisfactory responses to programmes. These two participants stated that schools were happy with the programmes put into place by showing their appreciation and gratitude and providing positive feedback as indicated by participant four below:

*P4: Some phone to say thank you. We get some good feedback.*

##### ***4.6.2. Unsatisfactory Feedback/Responses***

Two participants mentioned unsatisfactory responses from schools about the programmes. However, contrary to satisfactory responses a participant from SNES indicated that schools responses were not always enthusiastic because programmes put into place demanded more of them to provide support. Another directorate such as the curriculum advisor stated that responses were unsatisfactory. Teachers stated that they are in need of further support as shown below:

*P5: Well they other than that the teacher the schools expect more support from us we can only be limited because to give an idea, there are two physical science advisors for 160 schools that translate into 1 advisor for 80 schools now can that advisor visit schools who I'll say probably not.*

#### **4.7. CONCLUSION TO THIS CHAPTER**

The chapter provided a thematic analysis of the results of the data collected from office-based educational specialists from the Pinetown and Pietermaritzburg districts pertaining to reasons for inconsistent academic performance. Some of the challenges indicated by participants include medical issues, linguistic challenges, emotional and economic instability in the home environment, lack of resources, apathy from parents, violence issues, poor teacher-learner bonds, negative peer related influences, general issues affecting performance at school, stressors on educators, strikes, minimal or no community support, coercive dealings from the governance, non-compliance, teachers lack content knowledge, learners do not learn, teacher absenteeism, lesson studies of the past are no longer, teachers lack motivation, movement of teachers, and lack of in-service training for teachers inclusive education.

The strategies to overcome these challenges were identified as providing life orientation lessons, the development of a healthy sense of self with the assistance of youth campaigns, recommendations for stress management of educators, counselling Programme, HIV/AIDS policy, substance abuse policy, collaborative engagement between parents, adults and police and anti-violence plans, support structures and interventions, governance and management , special needs education services (educational specialists), national curriculum statement/advisors, teachers must set the environment tone and be more understanding, collaboration of the school with other entities, teacher assistants allow for individual attention, community involvement, development of policies and activities to assist and support teachers, management of a school, school governing body, codes of conduct, the national support for learner attainment, policy on learner attendance, national school nutrition programme, school fees exemption policy: resource support, orphan and vulnerable children small grants programme, integrated school health programme, operation Hamba, and peer education workshops.

Above has provided the summary of the key findings in this chapter. The summary of the findings from this research is also tabular format and can be found below to give a clear and concise overview of the challenges inhibiting consistent performance and the established, revised and new strategies. The next chapter will discuss the findings of this study.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS**

#### **5.1.INTRODUCTION**

This chapter will discuss the findings of the study making clear the challenges which contribute to poor academic performance in the KwaZulu-Natal province, Pinetown and Pietermaritzburg districts. In order to overcome the challenges faced in academic performance the already established strategies to improve performance will be discussed along with the new or revised strategies suggested by participants.

#### **5.2.CHALLENGES**

##### **5.2.1. CHALLENGES CONTRIBUTING TO POOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS AND CHALLENGES WHEN IMPLEMENTING INTERVENTIONS**

###### ***5.2.1.1. Classroom Context***

Schools have much diversity within the classroom due to the large classroom sizes which make support for the learners within the classroom environment challenging. Participants reported diversity within classrooms to be a contributing factor towards negative results with a specific focus on the diverse types of intelligence of learners. Teaching is carried out according to the book. However, not all learners learn in the same way. These results are supported by the literature of Shaffer & Kipp (2007) which speaks of the multiple intelligence theory; this theory emphasise that students learn in different ways and may not process information merely in a verbal or linguistic manner but may also process information by the use of spatial intelligence, logical-mathematical intelligence, musical intelligence, body-kinaesthetic intelligence, interpersonal intelligence, intrapersonal intelligence, naturalist intelligence and spiritual or existential intelligence (Shaffer & Kipp, 2007).

Specialists reported that teachers do not recognise the individual way of reasoning to teaching and learning. Due to the numerous intelligence learners may use to learn, teachers find it challenging to individualised support, more so in classes of large numbers. This finding is related to the finding of the study by Bush et al. (2009) which states that learners may learn differently and may, therefore, require large amounts of individual attention which are

challenging for a teacher especially if a class size is large and this contributes towards poor academic success. Therefore, the diversity of intelligence within large classroom sizes makes the individualization of support within the classroom environment challenging affecting learner performance negatively.

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory ensures that a holistic picture is required to understand the challenges that could lead to poor performance. Bronfenbrenner's ecological system theory is of value because it makes it possible to identify factors contributing to poor academic results of learners not merely from the microsystem which is the immediate surroundings of the individual in which interactions and activities occur, but also from other layers which contribute to poor results indirectly. The challenge of the classroom context being the large amounts of diversity that teachers face in terms of multiple intelligences of learners and large classroom sizes falls into the microsystemic layer of this ecological systems theory since the learner has direct contact with such circumstances (Shaffer & Kipp, 2007).

#### ***5.2.1.2. Understaffing of directorates/teachers due to the lack of resources***

The lack of resources within the Department has led to their reduced ability to employ personnel causing the Department to be understaffed. It was reported by participants that the Department of Education is undergoing financial resource constraints and, therefore, is not filling posts any longer. Due to this understaffing directorates, therefore, have to deal with excessive amounts of work that the Department requires of them, some of which takes them away from their core responsibilities. This is causing a huge strain on the workload of these directorates and makes them inefficient which contributes towards poor academic performance in schools. Teachers are understaffed and cannot cope with the workload assigned to them especially so with a large number of classroom sizes. This is related to the findings of Hargreaves and Fink (2000) which stated that teachers are understaffed and, therefore, had increased workloads.

Participants indicated that the support in terms of resources which they have been limiting. They noted that the Laptops, computer, photocopy materials have been given to them many years back and, therefore, is not functioning at its best to assist them to do their job today. They mentioned that resources are provided but they are limited. This is related to the finding by Rammala (2009) who mentioned that learners were also lacking resources within the schooling environment such as textbooks, desks, computers, televisions. This goes hand in hand with the fact that the Department of education is facing financial constraints and, therefore, can only

provide limited resources as mentioned by participants. Therefore, the complaint given by participants about the lack of funding for workshops could also be linked to the lack of funding resources which the Department has. Additionally, the complaint mentioned by the directorates about the lack of transport and vehicles could also be due to the lack of finances and resources of the Department.

According to Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory the lack of funding resources that the Department is confronted with can be placed within the macrosystemic layer and the challenges faced due to this lack of funding resources such as the lack of meals workshops, the limited staff and vehicles for the staff can be placed within the exosystemic layer (Shaffer & Kipp, 2007). This clearly indicates the ripple effect that the lack of resources within the DOE (placed in the macrosystem) has on other layers (i.e. exosystem) of the ecological systems theory, therefore, inhibiting and challenging the implementation of interventions (Shaffer & Kipp, 2007).

According to resilience theory, schools should take control without much reliance on the DOE and prepare competently for syllabus coverage considering the issue of understaffing and the distribution of study materials considering the issue of the lack of resources. The manner in which schools take charge and resolve problems is what distinguishes a resilient school from a non-resilient school (Christie & Potterton, 1997).

Being under-resourced in relation to necessary resources (human, financial and material) would clearly impact negatively on learner performance.

#### ***5.2.1.3. Work overload and time constraints***

Due to the challenge of understaffing mentioned above directorates are faced with heavy workloads which constrain their time. Participants reported that teachers have a heavy workload such as curriculum content, maintaining discipline, solving problems, managing conflicts, administrative work, monitoring of matric exams as well as the Annual National Assessment and school functionality. School functionality involves school governing bodies, the community and numerous stakeholders who are involved and linked to education as well as support schools yearly whereby their aim is to strengthen education in the province. The continuous change of the curriculum content further adds to the time constraints teachers' face.

Participants further indicated that the time factor is challenging when implementing interventions. Moreover, they stated that they are requested by the Department to do tasks, not

of their core functions due to the understaffing issue, therefore, creating a further challenge for time. This relates to Naidoo (2011) which states that teachers are faced with heavy workloads. Therefore, time is constraining because teachers and directorates are overloaded with work and have excessive daily tasks to complete which poses a challenge when implementing interventions and improving inconsistent results.

Heavy workload leading to time constraints affects the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem mentioned in Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory since it inhibits smooth functioning at the departmental layer, the policy layer and the school layer (Shaffer & Kipp, 2007). Nevertheless, resilience theory indicates that employees of the Department need to adapt to the time constraints and attempt to function at their optimal best regardless of the difficult circumstances (Christie & Potterton, 1997).

Understaffing, heavy workloads and limited time mentioned above impacts negatively on learner performance.

#### ***5.2.1.4. Ineffective teaching and learning***

Learners do not always learn the subject matter. However, in the same way, teachers do not always teach the subject matter. Participants mentioned that learners also do not learn once the content of the curriculum has been taught to them by the teachers. This is related to Barkhuizen's study (1998) which states that there is a risk that the way in which learners sometimes learn bores them and, therefore, learners do not enjoy the learning process hence they do not learn. Not only are learners not learning but participants mentioned that teachers are not always teaching the structured curriculum in classrooms and teachers are sometimes not present in classrooms in the allotted time. These findings are related to the study by Bennell (2004) which states that the absence of teachers is increasing more and more everyday within schools and further states that teachers are devoting less time to the preparations for the lessons they are to teach. This challenge can be placed within the microsystem of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory because it has to do with the direct interaction between teachers and learners (Shaffer & Kipp, 2007).

Ineffective teaching and learning may present as a factor contributing to the challenge of inconsistent results and impacts negatively on learner performance.



### ***5.2.1.5. Curriculum***

It seems as if the continuous changes in the curriculum leads to poor learner performance. Participants reported that the curriculum has been revised multiple times, most recently from the OBE system to the CAPS (Department of Education, 2012; Coetzee, 2012). This continual change of curriculum created a challenge when attempting to make results more consistent. This curriculum issue can be placed within the exosystemic layer of the ecological systems theory because it is an issue that impacts on the individual indirectly (Shaffer & Kipp, 2007).

### ***5.2.1.6. Monitoring and evaluation***

Monitoring and evaluation of teachers seem to improve lesson studies. Specialists indicated that there are no longer inspections carried out on teachers and it was noted that should this challenge be overcome then, teachers would prepare their lesson plans better. These findings are related to the study by Ono and Ferreira (2010) which stated that lesson studies were carried out for teacher development which are traditional development efforts that were utilised previously (Ono & Ferreira, 2010). The study showed that teachers who participated in lesson study have improved in the lessons they provide the learners (Ono & Ferreira, 2010). This can be placed within exosystemic layer because lesson studies carried out on teachers, indirectly impact on learners, yet may improve results (Shaffer & Kipp, 2007). This challenge indicates that the lack of lesson studies is a contributing factor to poor academic results.

### ***5.2.1.7. De-motivation of teachers leads to vast movement***

It seems that teacher's lack motivation and, therefore, this contributes to the rapid movement in schools. Specialists indicated that teachers are de-motivated by the large amounts of work which they are assigned. Teachers also work with learners with barriers, which is a long and challenging process and results are not immediate which further contribute to their low motivation levels. Teaching and learning depend on the educator and if he/she is empowered. This relates to the literature by Bennell and Akyeampong (2007) which states that the majority of teachers are de-motivated and. Therefore, there is limited involvement from teachers when changing teaching practices.

Resilience theory indicates that teachers are to attempt to motivate themselves and not place too much of reliance on the Department of education to set up motivational support and talks (Christie & Potterton, 1997). If teachers learn to empower themselves, then their inner motivation will not be limited to the amount of time a specialist is in their presence. Teachers

can be taught methods and empowered to become resilient to the adverse and disadvantaged circumstances they are confronted with. This is called resilience education which is an intervention strategy to promote resilience (Mampane & Bouwer, 2006).

It was noted by the participants that there is much movement of teachers for various reasons which affects the smooth running of the school. Participants indicated this movement to be due to death, attrition, transfers and promotions. This is related to findings noted in Bennell (2004) which states that high levels of teachers move due to attrition and transfers which disrupts the smooth functioning of schools in Africa. The vast movement of educators could also be related to their feeling of de-motivation.

According to Bronfenbrenner's theory, the disruption of schools due to rampant movement can be placed within the exosystemic layer since this is the layer which does not involve the learner to assist actively decision-making yet still has an effect on them (Shaffer & Kipp, 2007).

The teacher's lack of motivation and their rapid movement in schools contributes negatively to the performance of learners.

#### ***5.2.1.8. Basic and limited support and support still required***

Not only do teachers and learners need support but so do directorates. However, directorates received basic and limited support from the department. Some participants indicated that the support provided by the Department was basic and other mentioned that the support was limited such as the provision of vehicles and a cell phone allowance. This may relate to the lack of support regarding materials and resources that is to provide learners with textbooks, computers and the internet (Rammala, 2009).

All the participants agreed that they often do not have adequate support. A participant indicated that support was still required from the Department to understand the roles of each directorate. This is related to the fact that sometimes directorates and teachers have to deal with poor guidance from the head of school (Department of Education, 2001; Olivier & Venter, 2003; Bush et al., 2009; Naidoo, 2011). It is important to understand and acknowledge the roles played by different personnel (Department of Education, 2001; Olivier & Venter, 2003; Bush et al., 2009; Naidoo, 2011).

The basic, limited and required support can be placed within the exosystemic layer since this is the layer in which, problems that don't actively allow the learner to participate but still affect

the learners indirectly occur (Shaffer & Kipp, 2007). The indirect impact of basic limited and required support impacts academic performance negatively.

#### ***5.2.1.9. Lack of skilled and qualified teachers due to the lack of in-service training***

It appears that teachers lack the skills they require for the profession to the shortage of in-service training programmes. Teachers were reported to lack skill and qualification. It was stated that participants may sometimes have the skill to impart the content but lack pedagogic content knowledge (PCK) and if they do have the pedagogic content knowledge they lack the ability to impart the content. This is related to Sayed (2004) which states that there is a risk of teacher education providers merely providing trained educators with teaching methods and ignoring the important aspect of their content knowledge. This might also be related to the findings of Rivkin, Hanushek and Kain (2003) which stated that newer teachers were not as effective as older teachers because but older teachers lack innovative ideas of change in the school. Therefore, in this situation the older teachers who have pedagogic content knowledge lack innovative ideas of imparting the knowledge and those who do not have pedagogic content knowledge have innovative ways of imparting knowledge.

Additionally, participants noted that the problem contributing to poor results lies in teachers who are in fact skilled however do not carry out the work assigned to them. Through the application of the resilience theory, schools need to rise despite their adverse conditions and adapt the teacher to the subject field required and ensure that teachers are executing the tasks assigned to them (Christie & Potterton, 1997).

A possible explanation for those teachers who are unskilled might be due to the lack of in-service training they receive. Participants indicated that there is a lack of in-service training for teachers and there is only a limit to which curriculum advisors can provide support to teachers. This is related to Swart et al. (2002) which states that teachers themselves felt that they had inadequate knowledge and a lack of skill and training for the implementation of Inclusive Education. The multiple intelligences of learners require teachers to be adequately skilled in implementing inclusive education and being inclusive of learners who learn in different ways (Shaffer & Kipp, 2007). Therefore, the importance of in-service training should not be underestimated.

This can be placed in the exosystemic layer of the ecological systems theory because it is an indirect impact on learners yet still affects learners academic performance if the teachers hired

lack in- service training, skill and are unqualified to teach the curriculum (Shaffer & Kipp, 2007).Learner performance is impacted upon negatively since some teachers lack the skills they require for the profession due to the shortage of in-service training programmes.

**5.2.1.10. *Interventions are focused primarily on underperforming schools***

Schools which are underperforming are the primary focus areas whereby interventions are implemented. Participants indicated that the focus is primarily on underperforming schools, as such, schools which are performing well but not perfect are ignored and teachers which are teaching satisfactorily but not excellently are put aside to deal with at some other point. This is related to the national support for learner attainment which states that the focus is to improve results for grade twelve learners in underperforming schools (Department of Education, 2014). Furthermore, operation Hamba is also focused on assisting learners which perform less than thirty-four percent (Department of Education, 2015).

This can be placed within the exosystemic layer of the ecological systems theory since it is a strategy/policy which prioritises underperforming schools and this indirectly, yet still affects learner performance (Shaffer & Kipp, 2007).

According to the resilience theory, the Department should attempt to manage and support all schools, not only schools that are underperforming, but support to curb poor results in school should also be inclusive for those who are performing well despite adverse circumstances (Christie & Potterton, 1997).This focus being primarily on underperforming schools may impact negatively on those schools which are not yet underperforming.

**5.2.1.11. *Lack of collaboration, non-compliance, lack of community and parental Involvement***

There were various views on the collaboration of the directorates. Some noted that there was a lack of collaboration, others noted there was no collaboration, some mentioned there was limited collaboration which required improvement and one participant indicated that they observed more collaboration recently than before. This increased collaboration is good since it leads to the smoother functioning of the system. However, conflict and segregation in social interactions can lead to a systematic failure (Hargreaves & Fink, 2000; and Laflamme & Menckel, 2001). This lack/limited collaboration thereof impacts negatively on academic performance.

It seems as though the lack of collaboration between directorates and the school management teams leads to the non-compliance of intervention programmes set in place to improve school functioning and overall learner performance. Parents and the community also lack involvement/ collaboration with the school and learners. It was stated by participants that the Department lacks synergy and collaboration. They noted that it is difficult to work and collaborate with people outside the system because they are faced with their set of challenges. Bronfenbrenner's theory highlights the lack of collaboration of stakeholders from the different layers may be because they are all so focused on the work assigned to them in the layer that they do not collaborate with other layers and take cognisance of their perspective (Shaffer & Kipp, 2007). The layers, therefore, function in segregation and sometimes experience conflict even though they should be working interdependently. Laflamme and Menckel (2001) and Hargreaves and Fink (2000) state that segregation and conflict give room for systematic failure.

The lack of collaboration seems to be challenging since participants stated that principles, educators and SGB's do not always comply with the interventions suggested by the Governance and Management Directorate. They stated that they were not always aware of whether these interventions are implemented in schools because they are not in schools all week to observe. This is related to a similar example mentioned earlier stated by Beare (1993) which stated that teachers do not want to involve parents in any decision which needs to be made, this behaviour is non-compliant to the Governance and Management directorates which promote parental involvement. This clearly shows non-compliance to interventions put into place by the Directorate.

It was noted that parents have abdicated their responsibility to the community and are not participating in their children's lives. This is similar to the findings of Legotlo et al. (2006) which states that poor academic results can also be attributed to lack of discipline and less parental involvement. It was further reported that one cannot separate the community from education. This was supported by Hargreaves and Fink (2000) who stated that community support is imperative for the improvement of a school's academic standing.

This lack of collaboration seems to be within all systemic layers namely the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem (Shaffer & Kipp, 2007). Within the microsystem, there is a lack of collaboration between the learner and the teacher, the learner and the parents. Within the mesosystem, there is a lack of collaboration between the school and the parents. Within the exosystem there is no collaboration between the Directorates and the school as well

as between the various directorates themselves. And lastly, within macrosystem, there seems to be no collaboration between the government authorities and the authorities from the Department of Education.

This lack of collaboration between directorates and school management teams as well as between parental/community involvement with the school and the learner leads to non-compliance of interventions, thus impacting negatively on learner performance.

#### **5.2.1.12. Strikes**

There were numerous strikes held within the Department of education over the past few years. There were ambivalent views of strikes from the Directorates; some expressed that the strikes were not an inhibition to academic performance because they only occurred for a short period. Whereas, others felt that the time taken up during strikes, even though the strike happens over a short period, the time lost could never be recovered, and, therefore, was considered a waste of time. Nevertheless, it was indicated by participants that strikes do contribute to poor academic results even on a small scale. This is supported by the findings of Naidoo (2011) which stated that a strike occurred 67 days before a matric examination implying that strikes that occur can lead to poor academic performance especially if the occurrence of the strike is at a crucial point in the school year. From the perspective of the ecological systems theory, strikes occur at the exosystem due to disagreement with decisions made at the macrosystem. These are conflicts which can lead to failure of the system as mentioned by Hargreaves and Fink (2000) and Laflamme and Menckel (2001). The issue of strikes is challenging and may be a negative impact on learner performance.

#### **5.2.1.13. Poor learner behaviour**

Learners come from diverse backgrounds and circumstances which may sometimes lead to poor learner behaviour. Apart from strikes disrupting school functioning so is the poor behaviour of learners. Learners engage in activities and behaviours that contribute towards negative results such as substance abuse, risky sexual behaviour that leads to teenage pregnancy, gambling in schools, and participation in drug rallies. Substance abuse is exacerbated because dagga plants are easily accessible because they are being grown close to the vicinity of many schools. The findings in this study on poor learner behaviour is related to the findings by Rammala (2009) who reported that a huge concern in school is substance abuse which causes learners to behave in unacceptable ways. Additionally, the results of this study

are related to Rammala's study (2009) regarding the easy accessibility of substances. In Rammala's study (2009) liquor stores were close to the vicinity of many schools. Risky behaviour leading to teenage pregnancy was also found to contribute towards negative performance in the results of the current study and this was further supported by the study carried out by Rammala (2009). These behaviours of learners were experienced within the microsystemic (home) and the mesosystemic (school) layers of the ecological systems model. The poor behaviours could be explained as a coping mechanism for the other challenges experienced within these systems.

Participants indicated that violence is one of the major problems schools are faced with. This is similar to the findings of Zulu, Urbani and van de Merve (2004) who similarly states that violence is a major problem in schools within the KwaMashu areas. It was noted that teachers are threatened by the student population and are afraid of the learners and feel unsafe because of the violent threats they receive from them. This is similar to the findings of Naidoo (2011) who stated that issues of violence and crime cause the educators to become fearful and stressed within their working environment. Furthermore, participants indicated that communities which are not well-balanced transfer social ills to the school environment. This is related to, Seedat et al. (2009) which stated that violence, as well as injuries, are the second leading causes of mortalities in the South African community which therefore explains why the schools in South Africa experience major violence issues as indicated by Zulu et al. (2004). This issue of violence and the other poor behaviours mentioned above creates a challenging environment which contributes to poor academic success.

### **5.2.2. Conclusion to the discussion on challenges**

The above has discussed the challenges contributing to inconsistent and poor academic success and the challenges experienced by office-based educational specialists when implementing interventions. The next section will discuss intervention strategies to assist in improving performances of schools.

## **5.3. STRATEGIES**

### **5.3.1. STRATEGIES TO ASSIST SCHOOLS IN MAINTAINING GOOD ACADEMIC RESULTS**

### ***5.3.1.1. Codes of conduct***

Codes of conduct are set in place to improve learner performance. Participants indicated that codes of conduct were in place for the learners, educators and school governing body's which improve the smooth functioning of a school thereby improving academic performance within schools. This is related to the Code of conduct established for educators known as South African Council of Education (Jansen, 2004). The South African Council on Education is the code of conduct which states the disciplinary measures to be taken up against educators who are registered with the Council for inappropriate behaviour or actions within the teaching profession (Jansen, 2004). Furthermore, it is related to Prinsloo (2005) which states that the code of conduct for learners must be developed with the aim of creating a meaningful and purposeful school environment committed towards improvement and maintenance of the learning procedure (Prinsloo, 2005). The codes of conduct for teachers and learners fall into the exosystemic layer of the ecological systems model because it is based on a policy and indirectly impacts on the learner (Shaffer & Kipp, 2007). Overall, the emphasis is on the fact that codes of conduct are put into place for the smooth functioning of schools. These codes of conduct contribute positively to improving learner performance.

### ***5.3.1.2. Management of a school***

The management of the school has been formed for smoother school functioning thereby aiming to improve academic performance. Participants indicated that the management of a school was dependent on the school principal. They mentioned that the principal must be well equipped and that they are to manage the work as well as the personnel. Participants further indicated that the principal must monitor, track and evaluate how people are functioning. These findings are related to the literature of Botha (2004) which states that the principal is in charge of the leadership and management of the school (Botha, 2004). The principal is to assist maintaining a high performance by utilising the human and material resources through effective leadership (Botha, 2004). The management of a school fits in the mesosystemic layer in the ecological systems theory because it refers to the principal of the school which is based in the school layer (the mesosystem). Results may improve and become more consistent should the management of the school be effective.



### ***5.3.1.3.School Governing Body (SGB)***

SGB's are intended to encourage parental and community involvement is thereby improving learner performance. Participants stated that school governing bodies were created to offer a chance for parents to be involved in their children's teaching and learning process. This is in keeping with the literature by van Wyk (2004) which states that the school governing body consists of parents, educators and non-educator staff. Furthermore, van Wyk (2004) states that the SGB need to be involved in decision-making in the fundamental issues of the school such as discipline, school budget etcetera. The school governing body also fits into the mesosystemic layer of the Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory because it consists of the interaction between parents, support staff and teachers identified as interactions between microsystems. Should the school have an active school governing body then results may stand a higher chance of remaining consistent.

### ***5.3.1.4.Orphan and Vulnerable Grants (OVC's)***

Grants are provided to improve and support the learner's academic life in some way, in this case, living standards and uniform (Pfliederer & Kantai, 2010). Participants thought of orphan vulnerable grants as grants given for children who are orphaned and vulnerable to buy what is needed such as school uniform. This is related to an article titled "OVC Programmes in South Africa Funded by the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. Summary Report for 32 Case Studies." (2008) which stated that OVC small grant programme was designed for communities which support and care for orphaned and vulnerable children and households and it is aimed at improving their living standards. The orphan and vulnerable children small grants fall into the exosystemic layer of the ecological systems theory because it is a programme that does not affect the individual directly but has an impact on the development of the lifestyle of the learner to being more suitable for the learning environment (Shaffer & Kipp, 2007).The provision of such grants has a positive impact on the living standards of learners, therefore, may contribute positively to academic performance.

### ***5.3.1.5.The National School Nutrition Programme***

The national school nutrition programme was formed for learner nutritional purposes within schools. Participants stated that the national school nutrition programme ensures that all learners are fed. Participants felt that this was an encouraging policy since it encouraged learners to come to school so that they can get a meal for the day. This is related to what was said by the Department of Education (2014) that the national school nutrition programme

contributes to improving the capability of learning through the development of school feeding schemes; it encourages and promotes the production of food and ensures the security of food for communities, and strengthens information and education on nutrition. The school nutrition programme falls within the exosystemic layer of the ecological systems theory since it forms part of policies related to school nutrition and has an indirect impact on learner performance (Shaffer & Kipp, 2007). This policy may increase attendance and concentration thereby improving consistent results.

#### ***5.3.1.6. The Policy on Learner Attendance***

The policy on learner attendance was established to track the attendance of learners to notice reasons which may lead to poor or good academic performance. Participants stated that the policy on learner attendance was developed to structure rules which learners must follow regarding their attendance and absence. The policy needs to be understood by parents and the community. Participants emphasised that teachers are also to be present and punctual. This is related to what was said by the Department of Education (2008) which stipulated that the policy for learner attendance was developed in order to provide a framework of management for learner attendance and absence. Furthermore its purpose was to improve attendance rates in schools within the province and to be able to gather data about learner attendance and analyse it thereafter. This programme falls within the exosystemic layer of the ecological systems theory since it forms part of policies related to learner's attendance and indirectly impacts the learner (Shaffer & Kipp, 2007). This policy may assist in improving learner attendance to classroom lessons thereby improving academic results.

#### ***5.3.1.7. Focus on curriculum coverage***

A particular strategy to enhance academic results was to focus on the curriculum coverage with teachers. Participants indicated that they try to improve academic results by focusing on curriculum coverage as indicated in the literature by the Department of Education (2011) and Coetzee (2012). This literature states that the National Curriculum Statement was done by a Ministerial Project Committee yet another support structure which was developed for the task to strengthen and make the current Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) more efficient (Department of Education, 2015.; Coetzee, 2012). It was also indicated in the literature by Ngcobo (2008) which states that the South African Government had introduced the Outcome Based Education (OBE) as a policy in order to assist the transformation of schools to a more positive light of academic performance. This strategy falls within the exosystemic layer

of the ecological systems theory since it works with teachers and informing them about what needs to be covered in terms of the curriculum and this does not involve the participation of the learner yet impacts on learner performance (Shaffer & Kipp, 2007). This strategy might impact positively on learner performance.

#### ***5.3.1.8. Focus on underperforming schools***

Another strategy to enhance performance was to focus on those schools which are underperforming. Participants stated that they focused on underperforming schools to improve results of schools that have attained less than 60 percent pass rate. The focus is to monitor and track these schools which have not performed well. Furthermore, they noted that those who performed less than thirty-five percent were planned to do “operation Hamba” to boost results. This is related to what was stated by the Department of Education (2015) which stated that members of management were divided into three teams to monitor and evaluate schools that performed with less than thirty four percent which a strategy is called “Operation Hamba”. This strategy of focusing on underperforming schools fits within the exosystemic layer of the ecological systems theory since it involves the interaction between the directorates and schools about the implementation of intervention strategies to improve performance which in turn is carried out by the school management teams, thus having an indirect approach towards learners yet improves academic results (Shaffer & Kipp, 2007). This strategy might assist in the improvement of academic results in schools.

#### ***5.2.1.9. Motivation and support for stakeholders (Learners and teachers)***

This strategy to enhance academic performance focuses on motivating and supporting teachers/learners. It was reported by the directorates that they try to build capacities amongst the teachers and they noted that their focus is on support. They further indicated that they try to assist teachers to develop their skills wherever they are lacking. This is related to Ngcobo (2008) who stated that teachers were assisted in developing their lesson preparation skills and with continuous development. Providing support and building capacities amongst teachers can be placed within the exosystemic layer since it does not involve the learners’ active participation but still affects their performance (Shaffer & Kipp, 2007).

Additionally, participants indicated that workshops are carried out to improve results, therefore. They are done in the especially difficult subjects’ mathematics and science. Furthermore, participants stated that community dialogues which are connected to peer

education dialogues are encouraged. In the peer education workshops, problems are identified from the most simple to the most complex. The purposes of the workshops are to pinpoint the challenges faced in communities such there can be strategies put into place to minimise these challenges. This similar to what was found in an article titled “Peer Education” (n.d.) which stated that it is an informal style of educating where change is brought about and influenced by the peer instead of a professional and this type of learning uses participatory and communicative approaches as methods for learning. This peer education support is provided at the microsystemic layer since it is the direct interaction of the learner with their peers which improves performance (Shaffer & Kipp, 2007).

The national support for learner attainment programme was established to improve learner performance. Participants noted that the National Support for Learner Attainment was put into place to improve performance. However, the focus was said to be on grade twelve learners. This is similar to the NSLA was put into place to improve performance especially for grade twelve learners from schools which are underperforming within South Africa (Department of Education, 2014). However it has been mentioned that there has been an NSLA Integrated Framework developed for GET and FET in 2013 (Department of Education, 2014). This programme can be located in the exosystemic layer of the ecological systems theory since it forms part of policies and indirectly impacts on learner performance (Shaffer & Kipp, 2007). This programme might impact positively on academic performance.

This strategy/approach which focuses on the motivation and support of the relevant stakeholders may improve academic performance.

#### ***5.2.1.10. School Safety Committee***

A strategy was established to prevent violence and to ensure a more conducive environment to maintain good academic results which are known as the school safety committee. This strategy was in keeping to the Governance and Management Directorate. This was in keeping with the literature from the Department of Education (2010) which states that the Governance and management sector is responsible for the development and the coordination of safety programmes within schools. Due to the violence especially physical violence, there is more exposure to health risks and, therefore, there was the establishment of the Integrated School Health Programme. This is a resilience strategy developed to rise above the challenge of violence (Christie & Potterton, 1997).

This strategy can be placed within the exosystemic layer since having a safety committee indirectly impacts on the learner yet has a positive impact on the learners learning environment. This strategy may improve the safety within the schooling environment making it more conducive to learning thereby improving academic performance.

#### ***5.2.1.11. Integrated School Health Programme***

Health was improved in schools by the establishment of the integrated school health programme. Participants from SNES indicated that they helped coordinate the integrated health programme which is aimed at improving health conditions of learners in schools (Department of Education, 2012). This is related to what was said by the Department of Education (2012) that the integrated school health programme is to improve and ensure the general health of all learners within the school and the environmental surroundings of the school as well as tries to address health barriers within the school. This strategy can also be placed within the exosystemic layer since having an integrated school health programme indirectly impacts on the learner yet has a positive impact on the learner's health assisting learning conditions.

This strategy improves the health conditions within the schooling environment making it more conducive to learning, therefore, impacting positively on learner performance.

#### **5.2.2. Conclusion to strategies to assist in maintaining good academic results**

Above was discussed the strategies to assist in maintaining good academic results. Ways to improve certain strategies and suggestions for new strategies are discussed below.

### **5.4.WAYS TO IMPROVE STRATEGIES OR SUGGESTIONS OF NEW STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE**

#### ***5.4.1. Improvement in the focus of underperforming schools***

It seems that there are ways to improve the strategy focusing on underperforming schools. Participants indicated that as much as the focus is on underperforming schools the Department needs to be realistic and not schedule motivational talks close to the examination period since instead learners should be learning. Learners have a responsibility towards their learning and progress (Formative assessment: improving learning in secondary classrooms, 2005).

Another suggestion was to pair underperforming schools with performing schools. This might be related to what was stated by Shoba and Joubert (2015) which stated that Angie Motshekga,

the Basic Education Minister, said that she is in favour of the stronger provinces helping, the weaker ones. This improvement may impact positively on learner performance.

#### ***5.4.2. Improvement of the National Support for Learner Attainment Programme (NSLA)***

There are suggestions for improvements to be made on the national support for learner attainment programme. Participants indicated that this policy should not only apply to grade twelve learners but should also be applicable from grade R to grade twelve. It was suggested that teaching and learning should be a systemic approach. This is related to the NSLA Integrated Framework developed for GET and FET phases (Department of Education, 2014). Therefore, there are systems being put in place to improve this policy and broaden its implementation to other grades other than grade twelve. This improvement may impact positively on academic results within schools.

#### ***5.4.3. Improvement on the focus of the curriculum***

There are improvements to be made on the strategy which focuses mainly on the curriculum. It was suggested by participants that this strategy can be improved by ensuring that teachers familiarise themselves with the content of the curriculum. This is related to Sayed (2004) which states that teacher providers sometimes omit to teach teachers content and merely focus on teaching methods. Therefore, teacher providers or supporters are to ensure and emphasise that content is known and imperative to the teaching and learning process. The improvement to this strategy impacts positively on learner performance.

#### ***5.4.4. Improvement of workshops***

Workshops carried out could be improved. Participants noted that the strategy of peer education workshops should not be limited to the urban areas but should be extended to the rural areas. It was also mentioned that interventions are sometimes complied with by staff. Therefore, there should be drastic measures taken to improve the effectiveness of workshops. Bull, Krout, McCuan, & Shreffler (2001) reviewed the barriers of community-based services to the rural areas stating that it was difficult to provide services due to long distance and poor road structures. The same logic can be applied to the reasons why the Department is hesitant to reach rural areas. This improvement brought about in workshops impacts positively on learner performance.

#### ***5.4.5. Improvement in the management of the school***

The results of the current study indicate that there is room for improvements regarding school management. Participants mentioned that the management of a school can be improved if good management is appointed. Furthermore, inspections on teachers were suggested to be introduced once again. Participants stated that this was known to keep previously teachers active. This is related to the study done by Ono and Ferreira (2010) which carried out a study in Mpumalanga attempting to bring back lesson studies as were done in the past. This improvement in school management enhances academic performance.

#### ***5.4.6. Improvement on strategies in general***

All strategies can be improved to produce better learner performance. Participants indicated that strategies needed to be improved in general whereby they must be monitored, evaluated, tracked and supervised. These findings are related to the article edited by Khosa (2013) entitled “Systemic School Improvement Interventions in South Africa” which states that school interventions must aim to change schools and bring about improvements and may relook at interventions in an attempt to intensify them leading to their improvement.

It was further indicated that corrective measures need to be put into place for those who do not implement intervention strategies. This might be related to the similar way in which learners are given corrective measures should they behave poorly (Department of Education, 2007).

Should all strategies be improved in the manner mentioned above, it leaves room for better academic performance.

#### ***5.4.7. Disagreement on developing new strategies***

New strategies are not always the path to enhance the academic performance of learners. Some participants felt that new policies should not be established in haste as the current policies should be amended and implemented. Participants highlighted that for these policies to implement correctly; they must be monitored and supervised by principles and management who must be accountable for the implementation. This can be related to the National support for learner attainment policy which spoke of the amendment of this policy to improve results in more phases within schools (Department of Education, 2014). This follows the same reasoning whereby a new policy was not implemented but rather a current policy implemented. This indicates that the view that some of the directorates have are shared by the Department of

education. This would, in turn, save the Department of much education money which comes into play when developing new policies. This strategy would save the Department financial resources for other imperative strategies already established to improve results for learners in schools.

#### ***5.4.8. Fill Vacancies***

Vacancies should be filled in the department. Participants stated that the Department should fill vacancies to reduce the workload of directorates and teachers. An in-service training programme was also suggested to reduce the current workload faced. This is related to the fact that teachers have too many learners to cope within one classroom and more teachers are required to make the workloads and time restraints more manageable (Olivier & Venter, 2003; Bush et al., 2009; Naidoo, 2011). This strategy applies to the exosystem whereby positions need to be filled in order to reduce the overload of work and time constraints on teachers, school principals and directorates (Shaffer & Kipp, 2007). This decision to fill vacancies does not involve the learner directly yet still has an effect on learner performance. This would decrease the workload of directorates allowing them to focus on their core responsibilities thereby improving academic results.

#### ***5.4.9. Increased focus***

Increased focus would make the Department more efficient. Participants noted that the need to focus Department more on efficiency in the department. It was thought that this would occur should the Department have more vision, insight and good problem-solving skills. This is related to the development of a healthy sense of self whereby one has a vision, insight/high thoughts and self-confidence and is, therefore, more focused (Sai Baba, 2009). This strategy can be placed within the exosystemic layer since it was suggested that the Department develops increased focus which would indirectly impact on learner performance. However, this does not require active decision making from the learner (Shaffer & Kipp, 2007).

This increased focus would impact positively on learner performance.

#### ***5.4.10. Relationship building (Collaboration)***

There should be more support provided from outside the system and other departments. Participants noted that outside system support or another Department support was the additional support required such as psychologists, the Department of home affairs, and the



Department of social development etcetera. This is related to Hargreaves and Fink (2000) and Laflamme & Menckel (2001) which states that the school has to engage in collaboration with others entities. This would bring about more collaboration and smoother functioning, therefore, would contribute towards improving results.

Relationships and collaboration need to be built within and outside the department. Participants mentioned that for the Department to me more efficient they need to work in collaboration with schools and build a relationship based on trust. Furthermore, it was stated that schools need to build relationships with parents and work collaboratively. It was also suggested that the Department of Education should work with other departments outside the system. Directorates within the DOE need to work in collaboration with each other. This is again related to Hargreaves and Fink (2000) as well as Laflamme and Menckel (2001) which emphasises that the school has to engage in collaboration with others entities.

This strategy on collaboration can be placed within all systemic layers namely the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem (Shaffer & Kipp, 2007). Within the microsystem, there needs to be collaboration between the learner and the teacher, the learner and the parents. Within the mesosystem, there needs to be collaboration between school and the parents. Within the exosystem there needs to be collaboration between the Directorates and the school as well as collaboration between the various directorates themselves. And lastly, within macrosystem, there needs to be collaboration between the government and the Department of education.

The resilience theory states that despite the challenging circumstances faced at the various layers collaboration should still strive for on a daily basis (Christie & Potterton, 1997). Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory encourages this attempt of collaboration and an integrated approach to improving learner academic performance (Shaffer & Kipp, 2007). This theory indicates that the individual/learner is within the microsystem. However, there are numerous layers around the microsystem that have an impact on the learner and learner performance (Shaffer & Kipp, 2007). Teachers need to collaborate with parents and the community in the mesosystem, directorates need to collaborate and have an integrated approach amongst themselves in the exosystem, so too must collaboration occur with the Department of education and other departments, for example, Department of Home Affairs. Additionally, the government from the macrosystem collaborate with the Department of Education in the exosystem.

#### ***5.4.11. Try to solve violence within the community***

A solution to violence within the community needs to be established. Participants indicated that the Department would be more efficient and effective if they attempted to solve violence in the community since then it would not be transferred to the school, therefore, reducing disturbance in the school and improving and creating a conducive environment for learning at school. This is related to Laflamme & Menckel (2001) who stated that anti-violence plans should also be introduced into the schooling environment since it would help reduce violence thereby creating a more conducive environment for learning and likely to lead to improved results. This strategy can be placed within the exosystemic layer since solving violence will indirectly impact on the learner yet has a positive impact on the learners learning environment (Shaffer & Kipp, 2007).

#### ***5.4.12. Attitude of learners***

The attitude of learners needs to be developed to being more positive and motivated. Participants indicated that the Department can improve their efficiency and effectiveness on results if they speak to the learners and change their attitude to being more positive. This is related to learners developing a healthy sense of self which gives them a more positive view of themselves and, in turn, gives them self-confidence (Gen & Chibber, 2013). This strategy falls into the mesosystem since the Department is trying to improve learner attitude and performance by directly impacting on the situation of poor learner attitude and performance. Improved learner attitude will impact positively on learner performance.

#### ***5.4.13. Awareness that children learn differently***

Learners learn in different ways. Participants noted that the Department could become more efficient and effective if teachers are more accommodating and understanding to multiple intelligences of learners i.e. to know that children learn in different ways. This is related to Shaffer & Kipp (2007) that speak of Howard Gardner's multiple intelligence theory which states that learners have multiple intelligences and do not all learn the same way. This strategy can be placed within the microsystem since it is where teachers and learners need to interact and understand each other's needs to improve results. Understanding and accommodating to that fact that children learn differently may have a positive impact on learner performance.

#### **5.4.14. Conclusion on ways to improve strategies put in place or suggestions of new strategies**

Ways to improve certain strategies which are put into place to improve academic performance were discussed above. The next section discusses schools responses to intervention programmes already put in place.

### **5.5.SCHOOLS RESPONSES TO PROGRAMS/STRATEGIES**

#### **5.5.1. *Satisfactory feedback/responses***

Schools responded satisfactorily with regard to programmes and strategies put into place. Participants indicated that schools were satisfied with the strategies implemented due to their positive feedback. This is related to the findings of Kormla (2012) which states that strategies to improve principal skills were successful and lead to the improvement of academic results despite the adverse circumstances faced by the school such as lack of resources and funding, thus providing positive feedback towards such an intervention strategy.

#### **5.5.2. *Unsatisfactory feedback/responses***

Schools responses were unsatisfactory with regard to programmes and strategies put into place. Participants indicated that schools were unsatisfied with the strategies implemented since it required work on their part. This is related to the findings of Moloko, Mphale and Mhlauli (2014) which states that the informants, made up of, employees of the Department of Education were dissatisfied with the education system.

### **5.6. CONCLUSION TO THIS CHAPTER**

This chapter has discussed the findings of the study making clear the challenges which contribute to poor academic performance in the KwaZulu-Natal province, Pinetown and Pietermaritzburg districts. In order to overcome the challenges faced in academic performance the already established strategies to improve performance were discussed along with the new or revised strategies suggested by participants. Therefore, this research obtained possible interventions strategies for schools which perform inconsistently within the KwaZulu-Natal province, Pinetown and Pietermaritzburg districts.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

#### 6.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter aims to summarise the findings from the investigation of factors contributing towards poor academic success in schools within the KwaZulu-Natal province. Based on the findings and analysis, conclusions are drawn.

#### 6.2. CONCLUSIONS FROM THIS RESEARCH

This research was conducted in the KwaZulu-Natal province, in the Pinetown and Pietermaritzburg community with the aim of investigating factors contributing towards poor academic success. Conclusions were drawn from the findings of this studying in an attempt to answer the four sub-research questions that follow:

- v) What are some of the factors that contribute to some secondary schools poor and inconsistent results within the district?
- vi) Currently what strategies do the various sectors use within the education system to assist schools towards maintaining good academic results?
- vii) What are the challenges experienced when implementing interventions of support in schools?
- viii) How can strategies be improved/utilised so that schools that have achieved poor academic results can improve their standards?

In response to the research question: **What are some of the factors that contribute to some secondary schools poor and inconsistent results within the district?** The findings of the study reveal that there are numerous factors contributing to secondary schools poor and inconsistent academic results (Rammala, 2009; Kormla, 2012). These factors are as follows:

There is much diversity in the classroom context and individualising support for numerous learners who have multiple intelligences is challenging for teachers (Shaffer & Kipp, 2007). There is also understaffing within the Department due to the lack of resources; this is consecutively followed by an overload of work by employees of the department (Naidoo, 2011). The overload of work leaves teachers feeling de-motivated and teacher motivation offered by the Department is limited. Other factors contributing to poor and inconsistent

academic results are that teacher movement is erratic due to factors such as attrition and promotions; teachers sometimes do not teach the curriculum and learners compound this problem by not learning the content teachers have imparted (Bennell, 2004). The curriculum undergoes numerous revisions which teachers have to grapple with on an ongoing basis (Department of Education, 2011). Additionally, inspection or lesson studies that were previously carried out no longer occur therefore making it difficult to monitor teachers' knowledge of the subject area (Ono & Ferreira, 2010). There is also the challenge of lacking skilled and qualified teachers in the department (Sayed, 2004).

Participants (teachers and SGB members) who have attended workshops to improve results and school functioning are not always compliant to what was advised by the directorates in the workshop sessions. Strikes within the Department were also seen as a challenging factor contributing towards poor academic results (Naidoo, 2011). Learners' behaviour or actions are sometimes poor since they engage in substance abuse, gambling in schools, engaging in risky sexual behaviour often leading to teenage pregnancy (Rammala, 2009). Violence is a major concern in schools such as stabbings and killings (Zulu et al., 2004). The lack of parental involvement and responsibility compounds the problem of learner behaviour (Legotlo et al., 2006). Learners also experience circumstantial barriers to learning such as home environments where their parents are unemployed and, therefore, they lack basic resources such as food (Munn, 1996; Rammala, 2009). Learners may experience child and sexual abuse (Vethe, 2011). The findings revealed that all of the above factors contribute towards poor and inconsistent results in schools.

The second research question was **“Currently what strategies do the various sectors use within the education system to assist schools towards maintaining good academic results?”**

The findings reveal that there are various strategies the education system uses to assist schools towards maintaining good academic results. These strategies are as follows:

Codes of conduct are put into place for learners, teachers and school governing bodies to ensure the smooth functioning of the school and therefore indirectly improve results (Jansen, 2004; Department of Education, 2010). The management system in schools focuses predominantly on the principal who monitors, tracks and supervises all aspects of the school (Botha, 2004).

A school governing body is established in many schools that consist mainly of parents thereby allowing parents the opportunity to participate in their child's academic life (van Wyk, 2004). Orphan and Vulnerable Children small grant programme assist learners and families who are orphaned and vulnerable to meet basic needs (O'Grady et al, 2008). The national school nutrition programme was established with the aim of ensuring that all learners are fed (Department of Education, 2014). Therefore, this enhances their ability to concentrate and improve results.

Other strategies used within the education system to assist schools towards maintaining good academic results is the policy on learner attendance which was formed to ensure learners are present to learn thereby aiming at improving results (Department of Education, 2008). The directorates also focus on curriculum coverage and assist teachers on what to do and what not to do and they further monitor how teachers are coping with the work (Department of education, 2015). The Department ensures that they focus on underperforming schools where management team monitors and evaluates the schools and are thus accountable for the schools performance (Department of Education, 2015). A programme developed for schools that perform less than thirty-four percent is called, "operation Hamba" which is aimed at boosting results (Department of Education, 2015). The National Support for Learner Attainment programme (NSLA) was formed to assist learner attainment (Department of Education, 2014). Motivation and support are offered to teachers because if they are empowered it would have an influence on the learners (Ngcobo, 2008). Workshops are also held for teachers and for learners to improve results; these include peer education workshops (Peer Education, n.d.). There is also a school safety committee to prevent violence in schools (Department of Education, 2010). Lastly, the integrated school health programme was established to assist learners to be in a healthy condition (Department of Education, 2012). The findings revealed that all of the above strategies are used by the education system to assist schools towards maintaining good academic results.

The third question was **"What are the challenges experienced when implementing interventions of support in schools?"**

The findings of this study reveal that there are various challenges experienced when implementing interventions of support in schools. These challenges are as follows:

Teachers' lack in-service training and even though the directorates support them in their work this support is limited because of the number of teachers (Swart et al, 2002). It is further challenging when implementing interventions because while the teachers seek support, however; they refuse to be inspected on their lessons in the classroom. Non-compliance is a challenge, for example, sometimes the school governing body do not comply with the suggestions of interventions provided by the Governance and Management Directorate (Beare, 1993).

The lack of collaboration between directorates and with people from outside the system is a huge challenge (Hargreaves & Fink, 2007; Laflamme & Menckel, 2001). The Department is also understaffed which causes time constraints and work overload on directorates when implementing interventions (Naidoo, 2011). Interventions are focused primarily on underperforming schools and this is challenging because schools that are not excellent but satisfactory are ignored (Department of Education, 2015). A further problem is the top-down process of management style and decision-making with regards to the implementation of interventions in the DOE. Resources are also lacking when implementing interventions such as funding for workshops and the provision of subsidised vehicles which are required Directorates to visit schools (Rammala, 2009). The findings revealed that the above-combined factors present serious challenges when implementing interventions of support in schools.

The fourth and last question was **“How can strategies be improved/utilised so that schools that have achieved poor academic results can maintain high standards?”** The findings of this study reveal that there are ways in which strategies can be improved/utilised so that schools that have achieved poor academic results can maintain high standards.

Firstly, findings suggested that no new strategies were necessary to be established because they cost time and money, instead currently established strategies were to be improved and utilised. Findings suggested ways of improving strategies which are discussed below:

The strategy of focusing on underperforming schools could be improved by ensuring that motivational talks of the learners were carried out at appropriate times and not close to the examination period when learners should be studying (Formative assessment: improving learning in secondary classrooms, 2005). Another finding to improve underperforming schools was to merge performing and underperforming schools (Shoba & Joubert, 2015). However, the

political accuracy of this was questioned. The national support for learner attainment policy can be improved by extending the focus beyond merely grade twelve level (Department of Education, 2014). Furthermore, study skills were to be taught as part of Life Orientation classes. The improvement of the strategy to focus on the curriculum was that teachers should become more familiar with the CAPS document such that they can pass on the knowledge to the learners (Sayed, 2004). Workshops could be improved by extending them to rural areas and corrective measures applied for non-compliance with plans of implementation. Ways to improve school management was to employ good management and to introduce the lesson studies or inspection critique lessons once again which will assist monitoring and evaluation of teachers (Ono & Ferriera, 2010).

Strategies, in general, can be improved by having these strategies monitored and supervised and by attempting to intervene from inside instead of outside (Khosa, 2013). All of the above factors were ways to improve intervention strategies as revealed by the findings of this study.

### **6.3. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS SUGGESTED BY THE OFFICE BASED EDUCATIONAL SPECIALISTS**

Directorates stated recommendations to assist the Department to more efficient and effective as follows:

The Department should fill the numerous posts which are vacant such that the workload of each directorate and educator is reduced (Olivier & Venter, 2003; Bush et al., 2009; Naidoo, 2011). More focus is required by the Department to employ personnel, who are innovative, have a vision, are resilient, creative and have good problem-solving skills (Gen & Chibber, 2013). The Department also needs to build a relationship with schools such that they begin to trust the directorates and become willing to work with them. The Department is also to encourage schools to build a relationship and work collaboratively with parents (Laflamme & Menckel, 2001; Hargreaves & Fink, 2007). People from outside the system are useful to work with to improve functioning in schools such as other departments, for example, the Department of Home Affairs for identity documents of learner's etcetera. Furthermore, the Department should encourage the ongoing effort of collaboration.

It was recommended that the Department finds ways to solve violence within the community because if the community is prone towards anti-violence, then the school would follow (Laflamme & Menckel, 2001). Learners need to be told that education is to brighten their future and that they should work hard to achieve their goals and aims in life. Additionally, teachers



should be encouraged by the Department to be more accommodating and understanding to the multiple intelligence of learners and the Department needs to provide more support for teachers (Shaffer & Kipp, 2007). The above factors are recommendations that were made by the directorates interviewed in this study.

#### **6.4. RECOMMENDATIONS SUGGESTED BY THE RESEARCHER**

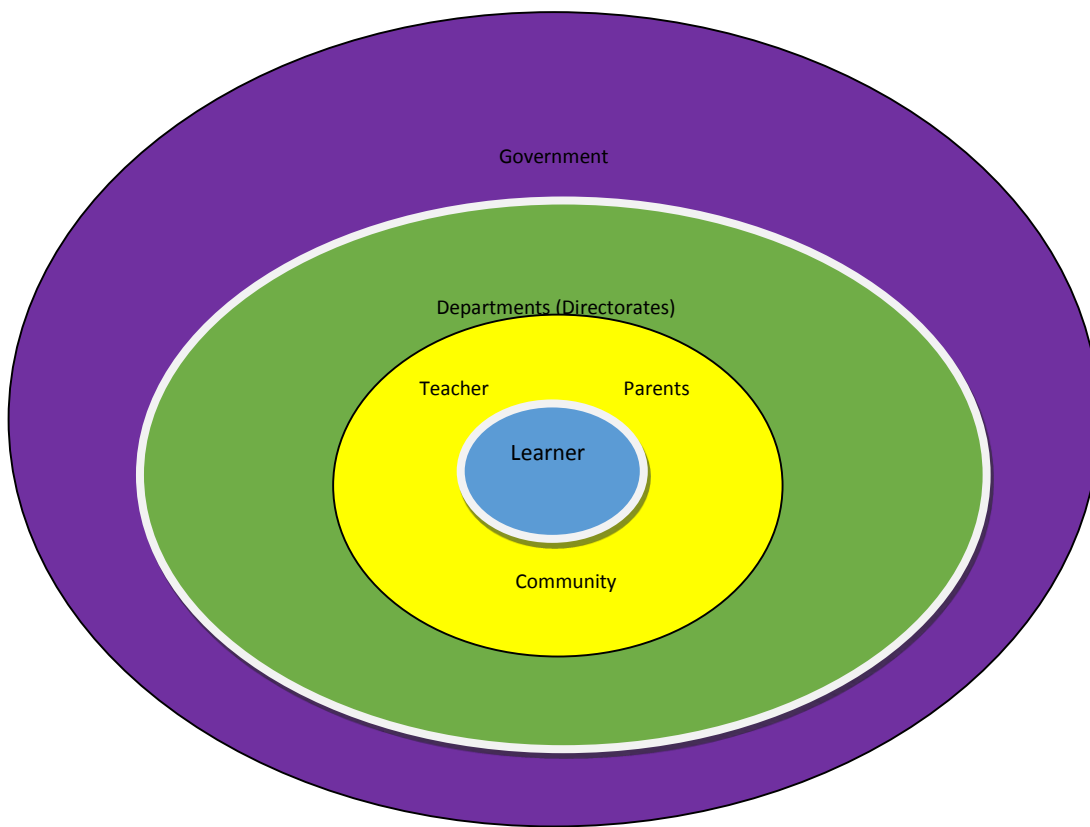
Based on the findings of this study the recommendations suggested will be discussed in detail below. Classroom sizes are to be reduced such that teachers can cope better with the diversity and multiple intelligences in the classroom. (Shaffer & Kipp, 2007). Teachers should cater for the multiple intelligences of learners and individualised support. The Department needs to gain access to resources and consequently fill vacancies such that teachers are not left with an overload of work (Hargreaves & Fink, 2000; Naidoo, 2011). The amount of work given to teachers should be reasonable along with the timeframes for completion. Additional support should be provided to teachers by the specialists; this can only be possible if more specialist vacancies are filled. The movement of educators should be regulated to ensure the smooth functioning of schools (Bennell, 2004). School management should monitor teachers and ensure that they are present in classrooms, their lessons begin on time and they are teaching (Jansen, 2004). Teachers should be inspected to improve the quality of lessons delivered by educators and some lesson studies per school term should be compulsory (Ono & Ferriera, 2010). The Department needs to ensure that teachers employed should have the skills to impart lessons, the relevant qualifications and the content knowledge required by the Department of Education for the subjects they are teaching (Sayed, 2004). The Department should focus their attention on employing good personnel i.e. good attitude must be considered just as important as curriculum knowledge.

The Department should set up a college for the in-service training of teachers. These in-service trainers can gain experience in schools while at the same time provide assistance to qualified teachers at a low cost to the department. Schools should attempt to prepare for the distribution of study materials i.e. apply for funding from organisations, get sponsorships. Schools should be monitored by the Department to ensure that the syllabus is completed on time every year. School management and parents need to ensure that learners are learning. The attitude of learners needs to be changed by informative, motivational talks done by directorates, teachers and motivational members of society (Gen & Chibber, 2013). This positive attitude change can

also be induced by the introduction of a value-based education programme for teachers and learners within schools (Gen & Chibber, 2013).

Attention should not be given merely to underperforming schools but also to satisfactorily performing schools. The Department should monitor and ensure that the school management and the school governing body are implementing intervention strategies and complying with the standards set by the department. Specialist may not always be physically present for the monitoring programme therefore written reports, entailing feedback of the interventions, should be requested from the management and school body on an ongoing basis. Directorates in the Department need to collaborate with each other as well as with departments from outside the system for better school functioning and, therefore, better results (Indicators for inclusive education, 2001). The strategies which the researcher suggests to improve collaboration and, therefore, academic performance is highlighted in figure 9 below:

- a) The government should work in collaboration with the various departments providing as much support as possible to each Department
- b) The Department of Education should work in collaboration with other departments to ensure smooth functioning and sound support
- c) The Department of Education should work in collaboration amongst themselves for better support provided to school management teams where integration is imperative
- d) School management teams should work in collaboration with the Department of Education and the school staff to improve results
- e) The school management team and staff should work in collaboration with each other especially to implement intervention strategies to improve academic results
- f) Learners should work in collaboration with teachers and staff of the school along with parents and community to improve academic results



*Figure 9: Possible solution for smoother functioning with the application of Bronfenbrenner's ecological system theory.*

However, the disadvantage of such a systemic approach is that if one line of communication is broken it has a ripple effect on the support and collaboration provided by the other layers. For example, if the directorates do not work in collaboration with the school management team then the school management team would then not be in the most suitable position to provide support to the rest of the school staff and in turn the learners.

For the optimal academic performance of the learners, a strategy needs to be put in place to ensure collaboration and integration within the layers and across the layers in the ecological systems theory. Increased collaboration would impact positively on academic performance.

Strikes should be curbed and less disruptive ways should be carried out to express disagreement or the need for change. School governing bodies, parents and the community should monitor and discipline learners and curb their poor behaviour, poor attendance and poor performance. Learners need to be taught resilience education and how to uplift themselves and perform well despite the adverse circumstances they face (Ungar, 2008). Peer education workshops should be carried out to learn resilience and to discuss problems within schools for directorates, teachers and learners (Peer Education, 2011). The Department should support the directorates in the best way they can. Learners should be supported at all grades, not merely grade twelve

(Department of Education, 2014). The Department needs to monitor and ensure that there is a school safety committee established in all schools (Department of Education, 2010).

## **6.5. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The results found in this study cannot be generalised to the province of KwaZulu-Natal since the sample size consisted of merely six directorates which is small. According to the original plan of the study twelve directorates were to be interviewed. However, time was not enough and many directorates were refused to participate in the study because of their own time constraints therefore, not all twelve directorates could be interviewed. The study was also not generalisable due to the geographic location of the participants. Directorates were from various distant areas and thus, it was difficult for the researcher to access the directorates physically in these numerous far distant places because it would cost a lot of money. The recommendation I have for future reference is that more directorates from various areas should be interviewed and research funding should be applied for to cover the costs of the research.

The six interviews were conducted face to face but there were many directorates that made the appointments and had sudden work and, therefore, were unavailable. There were also people who refused to participate in the study when requested due to other arrangements or personal preference. These face to face interviews were costly for the researcher as the research had incurred petrol costs to reach participants. The quality of some of the face to face interviews was limiting because of the environment; there were times when the directorates were engaging in the interview process in a noisy environment and the interviewer found it difficult to hear the Directorate clearly and concisely. The recommendation I have for future reference is that incentives should be offered to participants to encourage their participation and a suitable quiet venue should be allocated where focus groups are run with directorates such that even if some directorates are unavailable others are present for the interview to continue.

Another limitation of the study was that the letter of permission from the Department of Education took a long time to be received and, therefore, there was a delay in data collection. The recommendation I have for future reference is that the letter of permission should be sent earlier in the year so as to receive the permission early and data collection can begin early and include a higher number of directorates to try and make the sample more generalisable.

## 6.6. IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study has achieved its aims and objectives as mentioned earlier. It investigated factors contributing towards poor academic success and intervention strategies put into place for inconsistently performing schools. Nevertheless, there are numerous related areas that can be researched such as follows:

- Research can be carried out to monitor if teachers are aware of how to recognise multiple intelligence of learners and their application and adaptability of the various teaching methods for each type of intelligence. The main aim of such a research should investigate if the results of learners have improved due to individualised support from teachers.
- Research should also be carried out on investigating what school functionality means and after that should monitor and evaluate school functionality within the KwaZulu-Natal province.
- Exploration should be done on factors contributing to good academic results. This research would assist in making the Department aware of these factors such that they can encourage them and implement them in all schools (Rammala, 2009).
- Research should be carried out investigating the qualifications of directorates and teachers and the relevance of these qualifications to the subjects they are teaching, especially in underperforming schools (Rammala, 2009).
- Future research should be conducted to explore if educators personality and teaching styles may have consequences on learners performance (Rammala, 2009).
- Research should also be carried out in schools that have introduced and implemented the value based education programme which teaches all to abide and follow the five values of truth, right-conduct, non-violence, peace and love. The researcher should investigate how to reduce criminal and violent acts of learners through the utilisation of this education programme (Gen & Chibber, 2013).

- Monitoring and evaluation should be carried out in schools which implement the value-based education programme and its outcomes/effects on learners and teachers respectively (Gen & Chibber, 2013).

## **6.7. CONCLUSION**

The study presents that there are numerous factors contributing towards poor academic success. It further presents some of the strategies that are put in place and the challenges that go along with the implementation of these strategies. Other ways to improve these strategies were mentioned. Recommendations to make the Department more efficient and effective were also provided by directorates and the researcher. Despite recommendations being offered to minimise challenges and consequently improve results in schools and despite ways suggested to improve strategies, it might not be easy, but it is essential to try.

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## Appendix One: Ethical Clearance



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Pietermaritzburg Campus

Protocol reference number: HSS/0371/013M

Project title: Educational structural support and interventions to improve academic results of secondary schools confronted with poor, inconsistent academic performance in the Pinetown District, KwaZulu-Natal.

Dear Ms Maraj

**Expedited approval**

This letter serves to notify you that your application in connection with the above has now been granted full approval.

**Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach/Methods must be reviewed and approved through an amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. Please note: Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years**

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research protocol

Yours faithfully

Professor Urmilla Bob (Chair) and Dr S Singh (Deputy Chair)

/px

cc Supervisor: Nontobeko Buthelezi  
cc Academic Leader Research: Professor D McCracken  
cc School Administrator: Mr Sbonelo Duma

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee  
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Founding Campuses: ■ Edgewood ■ Howard College ■ Medical School ■ Pietermaritzburg ■ Westville



## Appendix Two: Letter from the Department of Education



education

Department:  
Education  
**PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL**

Enquiries: Sibusiso Alwar

Tel: 033 341 8610

Ref.:2/4/8/508

Miss Sarisha Maraj  
36 Buckingham Avenue  
Scottsville  
3209

Dear Miss Maraj

### PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct a pilot and research entitled: **EDUCATIONAL STRUCTURAL SUPPORT AND INTERVENTIONS TO IMPROVE ACADEMIC RESULTS OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS CONFRONTED WITH POOR, INCONSISTENT ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN THE PINETOWN DISTRICT, KWAZULU NATAL**, in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

1. The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2. The researcher must ensure that Educator and learning programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, Educators, Schools and Institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Heads of Institutions where the intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6. The period of investigation is limited to the period from 01 August 2013 to 31 August 2015.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Mr. Alwar at the contact numbers below.
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report / dissertation / thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Director-Resources Planning, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to school/s and/or institution/s in the following District/s of the KwaZulu Natal Department of Education.

**Pinetown District**

**Nkosinathi S.P. Sishi, PhD**  
**Head of Department: Education**  
**16 August 2013**

#### KWAZULU-NATAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

POSTAL: Private Bag X 9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200, KwaZulu-Natal, Republic of South Africa  
PHYSICAL: Office G25, 188 Pietermaritz Street, Pietermaritzburg, 3201. Tel. 033 3418610 Fax : 033 341 8612  
EMAIL ADDRESS: sibusiso.alwar@kzndoe.gov.za; CALL CENTRE: 0860 596 363;  
WEBSITE: [www.kzneducation.gov.za](http://www.kzneducation.gov.za)

...dedicated to service and performance  
beyond the call of duty

## Appendix Three: Informed Consent

Dear Sir/ Madam

### **RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH**

I am a Psychology Masters student in the University of KwaZulu-Natal Pietermaritzburg. I would like to do a research study on the investigation on Office-based education specialists and their attempts to counteract the effect of poor and inconsistent academic performance of secondary schools in the KwaZulu-Natal province.

There are schools that are struggling to meet a constant pass rate. This is so even though there are various support structures. The aims of this study are to investigate some of the reasons for this fluctuation in schools of the Pinetown and Pietermaritzburg district and possible interventions to reduce or eliminate these challenges. The study aims to:

- **Explore challenges according to the various support structures within the education system that are considered to contribute towards fluctuating academic results of secondary school within Pinetown district**
- **Investigate Interventions supporting structures have given in the past to schools that achieved below the national or provincial average**
- **Determine possible Strategy improvements so that schools that have achieved poor academic results can improve/maintain high standards**

I would like for you to participate in an individual interview with me which will be audio recorded. The study will benefit support structures since it will assist in finding possible solutions to the challenges that schools face and these solutions can be used by the support structures and implemented in schools. Your participation is purely voluntary and you can withdraw from the study at any given point in time without reprisal. Your identity will be kept confidential and protected. The data collected will be kept in the university archives for five years. The data collected may be used by other academics during those five years. Once the five years has ended the data will be shredded and deleted from the university archives.

I hereby agree to participate in this study and I understand the purpose and terms of the study:

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

For any further information please contact me on my Cell 083 572 8337 or mail me on maraj.sarisha@gmail.com or you can contact my supervisor for this research project Ms Nontobeko Buthelezi via e mail Buthelezi@ukzn.ac.za or 033 260 5670.

## Appendix Four: Interview Schedule

### INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR DIRECTORATES

- 1) **Estimated Age:** \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) **Gender:** \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) **Race:** \_\_\_\_\_
  
- 4) Tell me about your day to day job and what is expected of you?
- 5) What is the directorates' key aim in the district?
- 6) What do you think are some of the factors that contribute to some secondary schools poor and inconsistent results within the Pinetown district?
- 7) Currently what strategies does this sector use within the education system to assist schools towards maintaining good academic results?
- 8) What are schools responses to the directorates programme?
- 9) What are the challenges experienced when implementing interventions of support in schools?
- 10) How do you think these challenges can be minimised?
- 11) How can these strategies be improved/utilised so that schools that have achieved poor academic results can maintain high standards?
- 12) What do you think can be done to make the directorate more effective and efficient?
- 13) What additional support would you say you would require, if any?