

**FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO LOW ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF  
GRADE TWELVE LEARNERS IN MBIZANA DISTRICT**

**A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree**

**DOCTOR OF EDUCATION**

**IN**

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**BY**

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# I

## ABSTRACT

Low academic performance of grade twelve learners is one of the major concerns in South Africa. Mbizana district is one of the areas where grade twelve results have remained relatively low over the years. The Eastern Cape National School Certificate (NSC) provincial pass rate in 2007 was 56.9% and the pass rate for Mbizana district was 42.7%. In 2008 the provincial pass rate was 50.6%, while the pass rate for Mbizana slumped down to 29.3%. Thus, it is clear that Mbizana grade twelve learners were under-achieving in the NSC examinations. Although the situation has since shown some notable improvements, the district still remains one of the worst performing, both provincially and nationally – standing at the NSC pass rate of 58.7% in 2013, against 64.9% and 78.2% provincial and national pass rates, respectively. It was against this background that the researcher felt that the case of Mbizana warranted a systematic investigation.

This study focused on the environmental and socio-economic factors that were presumed to affect learner academic achievement in the Mbizana district. More specifically, the this study sought to find out what learners, educators, school management team (SMT) members, and school governing body (SGB) members considered to be the major contributory factors to the relatively low academic performance of Mbizana district school learners in the NSC examinations. It was also of interest to the study, to establish the major similarities and differences in the factors that the various stakeholders considered to be the major contributory factors to the reported low learner academic achievement.

To give the study a theoretical base, three theoretical perspectives that focus on various factors affecting learner performance were presented and discussed, namely Carroll's Model of School Learning, Slamin's QAIT Model of Effective Classroom Practice and Huitt's Model of Teaching/Learning Process. The researcher chose Huitt's Model of Teaching/Learning Process as the most appropriate to guide and direct her study. In addition to this, the researcher also

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undertook a review of literature focusing on previous empirical studies related to factors considered to affect learner performance, in line with the research questions.

The study used a mixed-methods research paradigm, involving both qualitative and quantitative research data. The chosen research design was Descriptive Survey, and the data gathering techniques were questionnaires and interview schedules for face to face interviews with the respective respondent groups. The research sample comprised ninety randomly selected respondents, broken down as follows: forty grade twelve learners, fifteen SMT members, twenty five subject educators and ten SGB members. All the participants were drawn from the Mbizana district, Eastern Cape Province, South Africa.

With regard to the major findings, the factors considered by grade twelve learners to be the major contributors to their low academic performance included a lack of parental support, road poor infrastructure, and a shortage of physical (laboratories, libraries) and qualified educators. On their part, SMT members considered learners' socio-economic statuses, a shortage of qualified educators and a lack of physical and material learning/teaching resources. For the educators, there was a view that owing to a number of factors, teacher morale and motivation were low – and that this adversely affected learner academic performance in Mbizana schools. The educators further contended that some among them experienced difficulties in adequately implementing the new curriculum; and also that many were either unqualified or under-qualified for the classes that they

With regard to SGB members, the cited major contributors to low learner academic performance were the absence of supportive infrastructure (laboratories, libraries), a shortage of qualified educators, lack of parental support, a non-supportive socio-economic background of learners, and the unstable education system, occasioned by never-ending curricular changes. The similarities and differences in the responses of the various stakeholders were noted.

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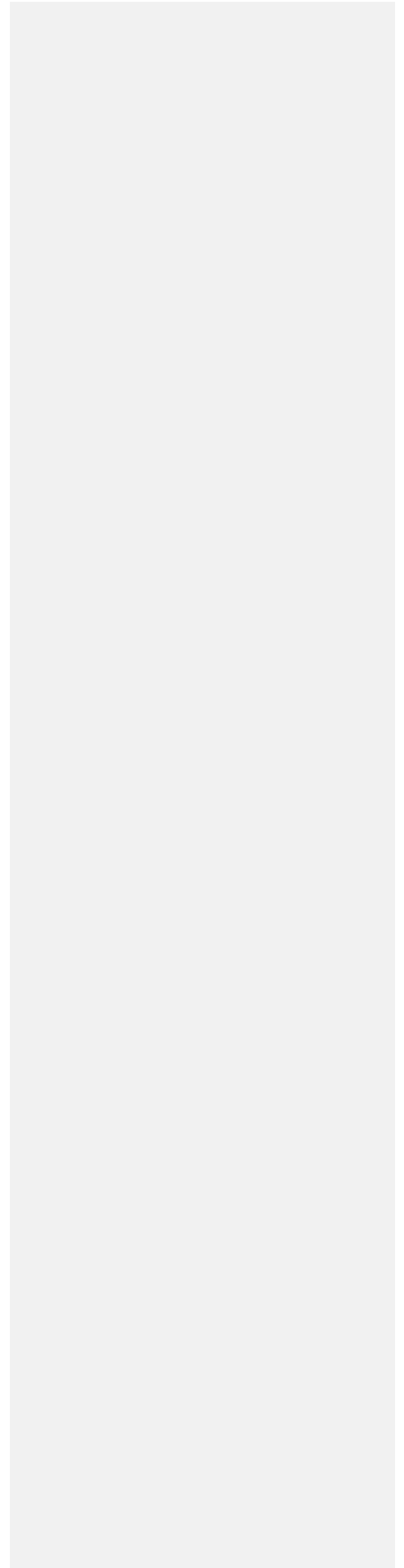
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**DEDICATION**

I dedicate my study to my Creator as well as my family members namely, my husband, Zolile; my daughters, Thabisa; Unathi; Yamkela and Nelisiwe Nkanzela.



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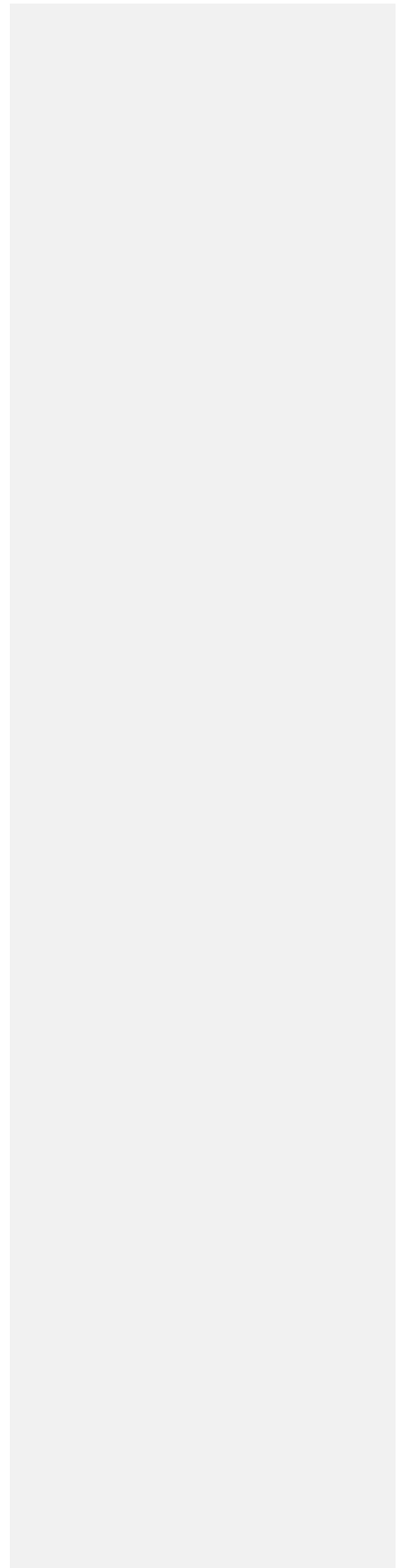
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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY**

Low academic performance of grade twelve learners is one of the major concerns in South Africa (MacMillan & Schumacher, 2001:8). Mbizana district is one of the areas where grade twelve results have remained relatively low over the years (Eastern Cape Department of Education, 2008a:1). Table 1.1 National Senior Certificate (NSC) pass rates of Mbizana district from 2007 to 2013 against the national and provincial levels. According to the table, Mbizana had pass rates of 42.7% and 29.3% for 2007 and 2008 respectively (Eastern Cape Department of education, 2008:1). As a matter of record, in 2007, Mbizana district was rated the last in Cluster A of the Eastern Cape, as well at national level. Against the provincial pass rate 2007, Mbizana district was rated the last in cluster A, in the Eastern Cape as well as at national level. Against the provincial pass rate of 56.9%, Mbizana was far behind in 2007 at 42.7% and the difference was -14.2%. In 2008, the district's NSC pass rate decreased by 13.4% and moved from 42.7% to 29.3% (Eastern Cape Department of Education, 2008b:11). After 2008, there was a noticeable improvement in grade twelve learner performances in the district which saw the pass rate in 2009 rose to 49.8%; in 2010, it was 54.9%; in 2011 it was 49.8%; in 2012, it went up to 57.7% and in 2013 it was 58.7%.

Table 1.1 Comparison of pass rates from 2007 to 2013

Level	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
National	65.2%	62.6%	67.8%	67.8%	67.8%	73.9%	78.2%
Provincial	56.9%	50.6%	58.3%	58.1%	58.3%	61.6%	64.9%
Mbizana	42.9%	29.3%	49.8%	54.9%	49.8%	57.7%	58.7%

The researcher wondered whether factors that affect learner performance in South African schools are similar across the country or whether they were particular to a given local area. However, amongst the findings of the committee set up by the former Minister of Education, Naledi Pandor in 2008, was that teachers were spending less time in the classroom than it was expected (Sokopo & Hans, 2010). The culture of teaching and learning was reported to have diminished and this had impacted negatively on learner performance (Sokopo & Hans, 2010). The ministerial Committee also reported that schools complained about teacher absenteeism, incompetent principals and underprepared district officials as being contributing factors towards learner low academic performance (Sokopo & Hans, 2010). The Committee further reported that curriculum advisors did not provide enough support for the teachers when they visited schools, therefore teachers did not clearly understand curriculum policies. Kupan (2009) and Prew (2008) agree that if departmental officials pressurize schools to deliver quality learning and teaching to improve learner performance then they need to support the schools. Several studies have reported that successful schools, i.e., where a high standard of performance is achieved, are well managed (MacMillan & Schumacher, 2001; Steyn, 2008). School Management Teams and special committees play a crucial and supportive role in the development of curriculum policies and procedures. Lack of legitimacy of the education



system leads to crises in schools and in the majority of school, this is accompanied by poor management and a collapse of teaching and learning (Steyn, 2008; Macmillan & Schumacher, 2001).

A study that was conducted by MacMillan and Schumacher (2001) involving 60 school management team members (20 principals, 20 Heads of Department and 20 educators), suggested that intelligence could not be the only reason for low learner academic performance. The study showed that there could be reasons such as lifestyle and socio-economic factors that could also make an intelligent learner to perform badly. Amongst other findings, the study also found that students with decreased overall dietary quality were considerably more likely to have low academic performance in school than those with increased overall dietary quality (Asbridge, Florence & Veugelers, 2008: 209).

The results of the two above-mentioned studies suggest that future research should concentrate on the impact of background and socio-economic factors on learner performance. For instance, Studies carried out in some countries indicate that parental involvement in the education of their children enhances learners' performance inside and beyond the classroom, depending on the parents' levels of education (Cockburn, 1997; Mohammed, 1997; Shreurs & Moreau, 2006). The parents' levels of education have an impact on learner performance as parents tend to motivate and assist their children with their homework. The reported results of various researchers show that uneducated parents do not render sufficient academic assistance to their children mainly due to their limited education levels (Cockburn, 1997; Luthuli, 1990; Mohammed, 1997; Shreurs & Moreau, 2006). Mkhize (2002:7) states that less than 50% of parents in South Africa have further relevant training after matric. Further research was conducted by MacMillan and Schumacher (2001) on the co-operation of parents from informal settlements in the performance of their children. The results showed that most parents could not help their children because of their limited levels of education. As a

consequence, the children of these parents could not perform well even if they were highly intelligent and some resorted to truancy and crime.

The results also showed that parents living under poor conditions lost interest in their children's education (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). Some even felt too inferior to mix with other parents in school meetings where their children's performance was discussed. Very few studies have been conducted in the Republic of South Africa which report on the impact of the country's education system, education policies, procedures and structures on learner performance (Marna, 1997:11). The introduction of the Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) approach, first at the General Education and Training (GET) level, then Further Education and Training (FET) and grade to grade, could have had an impact one way or another on learner performance, as some teachers are reported to have ended up using the old approach (Marna, 1997: 12). OBE was introduced in South Africa to address the country's specific concerns at all levels but learners were still reported to be subjected to the same ridicule as they were previously, during the previous separatist education system (Kuppan, 2009; Mohlala, 2000). Some researchers such as Marna (1997:12) have reported that OBE was found by most educators to be time consuming; that they were overloaded with paperwork; and that teachers were expected to allow for these differences (Spady, 1996; Van Niekerk & Killen, 2000). The fact that learners who are physically and mentally challenged are expected to join main-stream schools was also reported to have had an impact on their performance since the South African education system and structures had insufficient provision (Department of Education, 2001).

## **1.2 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

According to Sokopo and Hans (2010) education in Mbizana is still in turmoil despite promises from government that there would be a turnaround in the dismal National School Certificate (NSC) pass rate. Sokopo and Hans (2010) further report that soon after the 2009 NSC results were published, former education Minister, Naledi Pandor, visited Mbizana district. Amongst the discoveries she made was that in most schools, classrooms were overcrowded, some schools had no electricity and there were new text books that had not been handed to pupils.

In the light of the above findings, the researcher views grade twelve learners' low academic performance in Mbizana as a crisis warranting closer examination and systematic research. The Eastern Cape, MEC Mahlubandile Qwase admitted that there was a problem in the Mbizana district and that the department had plans to resolve the situation (Bot, 2005).

On the other hand, Coetzee (2003:30) reports that low learner academic performance in the Eastern Cape Province is due to a lack of management and leadership skills on the part of school principals. Thus, there is contention that school principals that lack managerial and leadership skills contribute to low learner academic performance (Gary & Wilcox, 1995; Levacic, 1995); that with regard to efficient school management, there is a need for proficient, devoted and hard-working school principals in order to provide quality education for all learners (Silver, 1983; Sergiovanni, 1990). Coetzee (2003:17) also emphasizes the need for school principals to ensure the efficient operation of schools as institutions where an atmosphere exists that is favourable for teaching and learning, in order to allow all learners the opportunity to optimally achieve, academically.

Therefore, the significance and contributions of the present study are as follows:

- a) To generate information on factors that contribute to low academic learner performance of grade twelve learners at Mbizana district. Such information will assist in determining ways by which learners already in schools may be supported in order to mitigate the adverse effects of such factors.
- b) The outcome of the study could also suggest a model for improving learner performance, against the identified contributory factors.

### **1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

This study focused on the environmental and socio-economic factors that were presumed to affect learner academic achievement in Mbizana district in the Eastern Cape Province. Mbizana is situated between the towns of Lusikisiki and Port Edward on the National Road, 150 kilometres from Durban (Mbizana Local Municipality, 2012). Most households in Mbizana are of a rural nature and approximately 95% of the population resides in surrounding villages, while the rest live in the town. In terms of the types of dwellings in Mbizana, the basic results of the statistical release of the community survey done in 2007 on national municipalities by Statistics South Africa revealed that only 24% of the population of Mbizana live in formal dwellings (Statistics South Africa, 2008: 24). Since, Mbizana is mostly a rural area; most people rely on natural resources in the form of subsistence farming for their livelihood (Statistics South Africa, 2008:24).

The investigation of the Rapid Assessment of service delivery and Socio-economic survey conducted in 2006 reported that in Mbizana District most people were poor and their only sources of income were government social grants (Balindlela, 2006). The investigation found that in rural areas, especially former Transkei homeland- in which Mbizana is located, one third of households were headed by women of over sixty five years of age (mainly pensioners) and the poorest female headed households were in the O.R. Tambo municipality

where Mbizana is located (Balindlela, 2006). Another reason for the pervasive poverty in Mbizana is the high rate of unemployment and the fact that a large portion of the population struggles to secure formal employment (Mbizana local Municipality, 2012).

According to the Mbizana Local Municipality-IDP Review (2013-2014), 63% of households have no access to tap water. Some households get water from boreholes, rain water tanks, dams and springs. With regard to sanitation, 41% of households use pit latrines with no ventilation, only 1.2% use flush toilets with connected sewerage systems, 1% of households use flush toilets with septic tank systems, 14% of households have access to sanitation, 86% of households have no access to roads.

Amongst other factors, the above mentioned infrastructure and socio-economic factors could have a negative influence on learner performance in Mbizana (Sokopo, 2010). In 2007, Mbizana district showed a decrease in its National Senior Certificate (NSC) pass rate from 52.4% in 2006 to 42.7% in 2007 (Eastern Cape Department of Education, 2008: 1). Mbizana was therefore lagging behind other districts within its cluster (cluster A) such as Mthatha, Libode and Qumbu, which improved and all performed above 60% (Eastern Cape Department of Education, 2008b: 29). On a large scale, the Eastern Cape provincial pass rate in 2007 was 56.9% and the pass rate in Mbizana was 42.7%. In 2008 the provincial pass rate was 50.6% and the pass rate in Mbizana was 29.3% (Eastern Cape Department of Education, 2008b: 29). Thus, it is clear that Mbizana grade twelve learners were under-achieving in the NSC examinations. This situation required a systematic investigation.

## **1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

More specifically, the research questions to be addressed in this study were as follows:

1.4.1 What factors do grade twelve learners consider to be the major contributory factors to the relatively low academic performance in the NSC in Mbizana district?

1.4.2 What factors do School Management Team (SMT) members consider to be the major contributory factors to the low academic learner performance in the NSC in Mbizana district?

1.4.3 What factors do educators consider to be the major contributory factors to the low academic learner performance in the NSC in Mbizana district?

1.4.4 What factors do School Governing Body (SGB) members consider to be the major contributory factors to low academic learner performance in the NSC in Mbizana district?

1.4.5 Are there similarities and differences in the factors considered by the various stakeholders to be the major contributors to the low academic learner performance in the NSC in Mbizana district?

## **1.5 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:**

Following on the above research questions, the objectives of this study were, therefore to:

1.5.1 ascertain the factors that Mbizana grade twelve learners consider to be the major contributors to low academic learner performance in the NSC examinations.

1.5.2 find out the factors which School Management Team (SMT) members consider to be the major contributors to the low academic learner performance in the Mbizana district.

1.5.3 find out the factors which educators consider to be the major contributors to the low academic learner performance in the Mbizana district.

1.5.4 find out the factors which School Governing Body (SGB) members consider to be the major contributors to the low academic learner performance in the Mbizana district.

1.5.5 ascertain whether or not there are similarities and differences in the factors considered by the various stakeholders to be the major contributors to the low academic learner performance in the Mbizana district.

## **1.6 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

### **1.6.1 Research design**

Descriptive research design was used as it is appropriate for describing factors that contribute to the low academic performance of grade twelve learners at Mbizana district. More specifically, this was a survey study using both quantitative and qualitative data gathering techniques. This approach is often termed blended or mixed method research design. Statistically, only descriptive statistics were used-in line with the study design being a descriptive research design.

### **1.6.2 Sample design**

The research was conducted in the Mbizana district, Cluster A, in the Eastern Cape province. Mbizana district consists of 252 General Education and Training (GET) schools and 28 Further Education and Training (FET) schools. The research was conducted in nine (FET) schools, which were randomly selected and categorized according to learner performance. A sample of ninety participants made up the sample and this number consisted of fifteen School Management Team members, fifteen School Governing Body members, fifteen subject educators and forty-five grade twelve learners from nine schools.

### **1.6.3 Research instruments**

Questionnaire and interview schedules were designed for different stakeholders (SMT and SGB members, learners and educators). The questionnaire consisted of a section for biographical information (Section A) and a section on possible factors contributing to low academic performance of grade twelve learners (Section B).

Participants were asked to respond to closed questions on a Likert type scale with four response options namely, strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree. These questionnaires also carried some open-ended questions which required the respondents to express their opinions. Interviews were conducted with the different respondents.

### **1.7 DATA ANALYSIS**

Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected. Quantitative data involved frequencies and percentages which were expressed in tables, pie charts and bar graphs. These were supported by verbatim statements collected from the respective participants.

### **1.8 PILOT STUDY**

A pilot study was conducted before the final study. This assisted in selecting the relevant and appropriate items for use in the final study. The items were based on literature as well as on interviews that were conducted with a few participants on relatively low academic performance of grade twelve learners in the Mbizana district.



## **1.9 DEFINITION OF TERMS**

### **1.9.1 Performance**

Performance can be defined as doing something according to a specified standard or a process of performing a task. In this study, performance refers to the Mbizana grade twelve learner academic achievements.

### **1.9.2 Poor performance**

According to this study poor performance means low academic achievement of NSC Mbizana learners as expressed in table 1.1.

### **1.9.3 Grade twelve**

Grade twelve is the third grade in the FET band in all South African Senior Secondary Schools. It forms the final grade of the schooling system that the NSC is written at the end of this grade; and the performance of learners in these examinations open or close doors to further learning and / or employment.

### **1.9.4 Learners**

A learner is any person, whether a child or adult who receives education (South African schools Act, 1997: viii). So, in the context of this study, this learner is doing the final grade of the schooling system which is grade twelve in Mbizana district.

## **1.10 PLAN OF THE STUDY**

This thesis is organised as follows:

### **1.10.1 Chapter One**

This chapter introduces the whole study and consists of motivation for the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study and a plan for the organisation of the whole study.

### **1.10.2. Chapter Two**

A theoretical background to the study is provided in this study. Theories related to factors contributing to poor learner performance are discussed in this chapter. A review of previous and relevant research findings in this chapter is also provided. Review of previous research focuses on empirical studies of factors contributing to low performance in other countries where such studies have been conducted, as well as those undertaken within South Africa.

### **1.10.3. Chapter Three**

Chapter three details the research design and methodology of the study. This involves descriptions of target and accessible populations, research samples collection and analysis of data.

### **1.10.4. Chapter Four**

This chapter presents the major findings of the study, as well as a discussion of these findings.

### **1.10.5. Chapter Five**

This chapter presents a summary of the whole study, conclusion and recommendations.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter, a theoretical background of the study is presented. Three theoretical perspectives of looking at classroom processes and practices, which could offer improved learner performance are presented, namely Carroll's model of school learning, Huitt's model of teaching/learning processes and Slavin's QAIT model of effective classroom practice. The researcher has chosen Huitt's model of teaching and learning process to guide and direct her research. Theories about factors affecting learner performance are also presented and discussed. The literature review focuses on previous empirical studies related to factors considered to affect learner performance.

A review of previous and relevant research findings is also undertaken in line with the research questions of this study. Similarities and differences in the perceptions of the various stakeholders are also discussed. A summary and conclusion are also presented at the end of this chapter.

#### **2.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

Low academic performance of grade twelve learners is one of the major concerns in South African education (MacMillan & Schumacher, 2008:8).

Mbizana district's academic performance fell as low as 42.7% in 2009, although it has subsequently showed a trend of steady improvement from 2011 to 2013 in Cluster A

(Mabona, 2013:2), as reflected in Table 2.1. Cluster A school districts have hereby been used because Mbizana district forms part of this cluster.

**Table 2.1 Cluster A pass rate improvement from 2011 to 2013**

<b>DISTRICT</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>
Mbizana	54.9%	57.6%	58.7%
Lusikisiki	58.4%	59.4%	59.1%
Mount frère	47.2%	49.6%	58.8%
Qumbu	59.4%	49.6%	52.6%
Libode	39.8%	59.4%	60.1%
Maluti	39.8%	71.8%	70.4%
Mount Fletcher	68.5%	67.4%	65.4

(Mabona, 2013:2)

With regard to the type of passes for Mbizana district over the three year period, Table 2.2 shows that there has been a steady improvement in the number of the learners that wrote the NSC examinations as well as the number of Bachelor and Diploma endorsement passes. These improvements show that although there is a lot of work that needs to be done in further equipping learners to maximize their academic potential, there is also a visible improvement in how learners in Mbizana district perform in the NSC examinations.

## 2.2 Bachelor and Diploma endorsement passes between rates 2011 and 2013

	2011	2012	2013
Wrote	2929	3190	3200
Passed	1609	1490	1885
Bachelors	223	400	469
Diplomas	410	700	711

(Mabona, 2013:2)

Earlier, a committee set up by the former Minister of Education, Naledi Pandor, reported that teachers were spending less time in classrooms than they were expected (Sokopo & Hans, 2010:9). It appeared that in most rural and township schools, the culture of teaching and learning had diminished, and that this impacted negatively on learner performance (Sokopo & Hans, 2010: 9).

The Ministerial committee also found that schools complained that teachers were constantly absent from schools, school principals were incompetent and district officials were underprepared. Further, it was reported that Mbizana curriculum advisors did not provide enough support to teachers when they visited schools (Sokopo & Hans, 2010:9). Accordingly, Kuppan (2009) and Prew (2008) argued that the onus was on departmental officials to support schools as required in order for them to deliver quality learning and teaching, and thus improve learner performance.

## 2.3 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

As this study focused on the main challenges preventing Mbizana district grade twelve learners from performing well in the NSC examinations, it needed to be housed in a theoretical or conceptual framework related to processes and factors affecting learner

performance. According to Imenda (2014:185) the researcher's point of view or point of reference forms his/her conceptual or theoretical framework and it is the soul of his/her research because it directs how the research is conducted as well as the meaning that is attached to the data accrued. Although the terms conceptual framework and theoretical framework are often used interchangeably, Imenda (2014:185) argues that these terms are not conceptual synonyms and that a deductive approach to a literature review typically uses a theoretical framework which is deduced from a single theory while an inductive approach usually leads to the development of a conceptual framework, induced from a set of related theoretical perspectives, principles and concepts. According to Imenda (2014:185) a theoretical framework is the theory that a researcher chooses to guide his or her research and thus can be defined as applying a theory or a set of concepts taken from one theory to explain a particular phenomenon. On the other hand, a researcher may seek an integrated way of looking at a problem and thus create a model or conceptual framework that synthesizes the existing views in the literature regarding the problem (Imenda, 2014:189). Imenda (2014:189) posits that a conceptual framework can then be defined as the end result of combining numerous related concepts from various theories in order to explain, provide a better understanding or predict a particular event, phenomenon or research problem.

In this literature review, three theoretical perspectives of looking at classroom processes and practices, which could offer improved learner performance are presented, namely Carroll's model of school learning, Huitt's model of teaching/learning processes and Slavin's QAIT model of effective classroom practice. These are now briefly described below.

### **2.3.1 Carroll's Model of School Learning**

John Carroll's model of school learning, as shown in Figure 1, serves as a seminal basis for most models of school learning (Carroll, 1963; Huitt, 2006; McIlrath & Huitt, 2003:1).

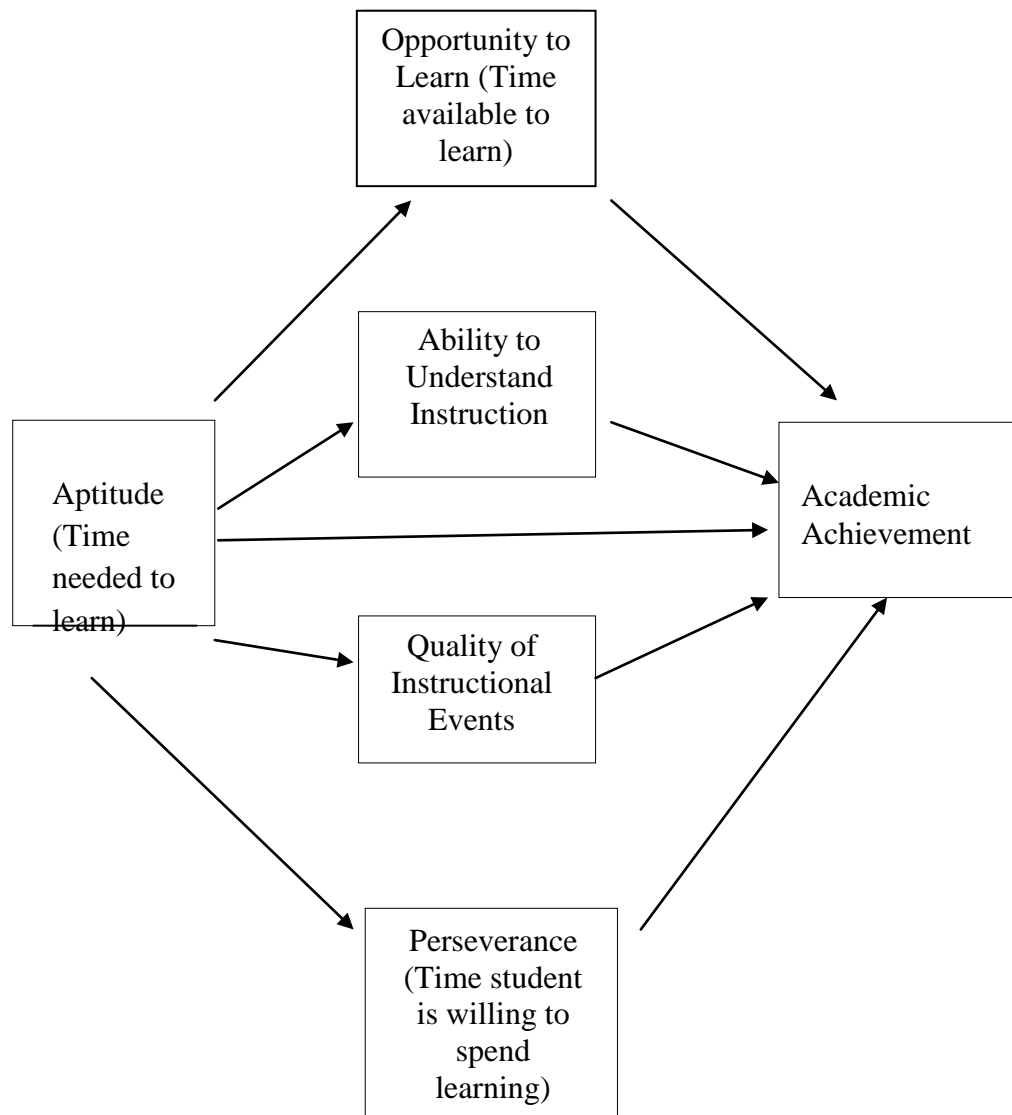


Figure 2.1: Carroll's model of school learning McIlrath and Huitt (2003: 2).

According to Huitt (2006:1) as well as McIlrath and Huitt (2003:2) John Carroll's model is based on the major premise that school is a function of time, so time is seen as the most significant variable to school learning. In addition, the model defines learning as a function of efforts spent in relation to school learning, therefore it proposes the following formula, school learning(time spent/ time needed) (Huitt&McIlrath, 2003:1).

Despite being limited in its focus by concentrating only on the learners and educators in the classroom context, Carroll's model offers valid arguments under its six elements, namely aptitude, opportunity to learn, quality of instruction, ability to understand instruction, academic achievement and perseverance (Huitt&McIlrath, 2003:1). Carroll's model proposes firstly, that academic achievement is the output of the learning process, while secondly, the ability to understand instruction relates to learning skills, the information needed to understand instruction and language comprehension (Huitt&McIlrath, 2003:10). The third element of Carroll's model is quality of instruction, which focuses on the need for good instructional design and delivery because bad quality instruction increases the amount of time needed for learning (Huitt, 2003:1; McIlrath&Huitt, 2003:1). The fourth element of Carroll's model is perseverance, which is the amount of time a student is willing to spend on a given task (Huitt&McIlrath, 2003:1).

Perseverance offers a measurable definition for motivation for learning and it is seen in the fifth element of Carroll's model, i.e., the learner's academic achievement, which is an output of all the other elements (Huitt&McIlrath, 2003:1). According to Huitt (2003:1) as well as Huitt&McIlrath (2003:1) the sixth element of Carroll's model, aptitude, is the main explanatory variable. High aptitude is indicated when a learner needs a fairly short period of time to learn, whilst a low aptitude is indicated when he/she requires much more than an average period of time to learn.

### **2.3.2 Slavin's QAIT Model of Effective Classroom Practice**

A revision of John Carroll's model is Slavin's QAIT model, of effective instruction which was developed by Slavin (1995) (Huitt, 2006:1). This model eliminates elements that are not controlled by educators and keeps or redefines elements that could be changed or modified by educators. Slavin proposes a model that combines the vital elements that educators must



arrange in order to optimize student learning. However his model does not consider learners' behaviour in the classroom as an important factor (Huitt, 2006:1). Slavin's QAIT model is made up of four elements which must all be present for effective classroom learning, namely quality of instruction, appropriate levels of instruction, incentive and time (Figure 2.2) (Huitt, 2006:1)

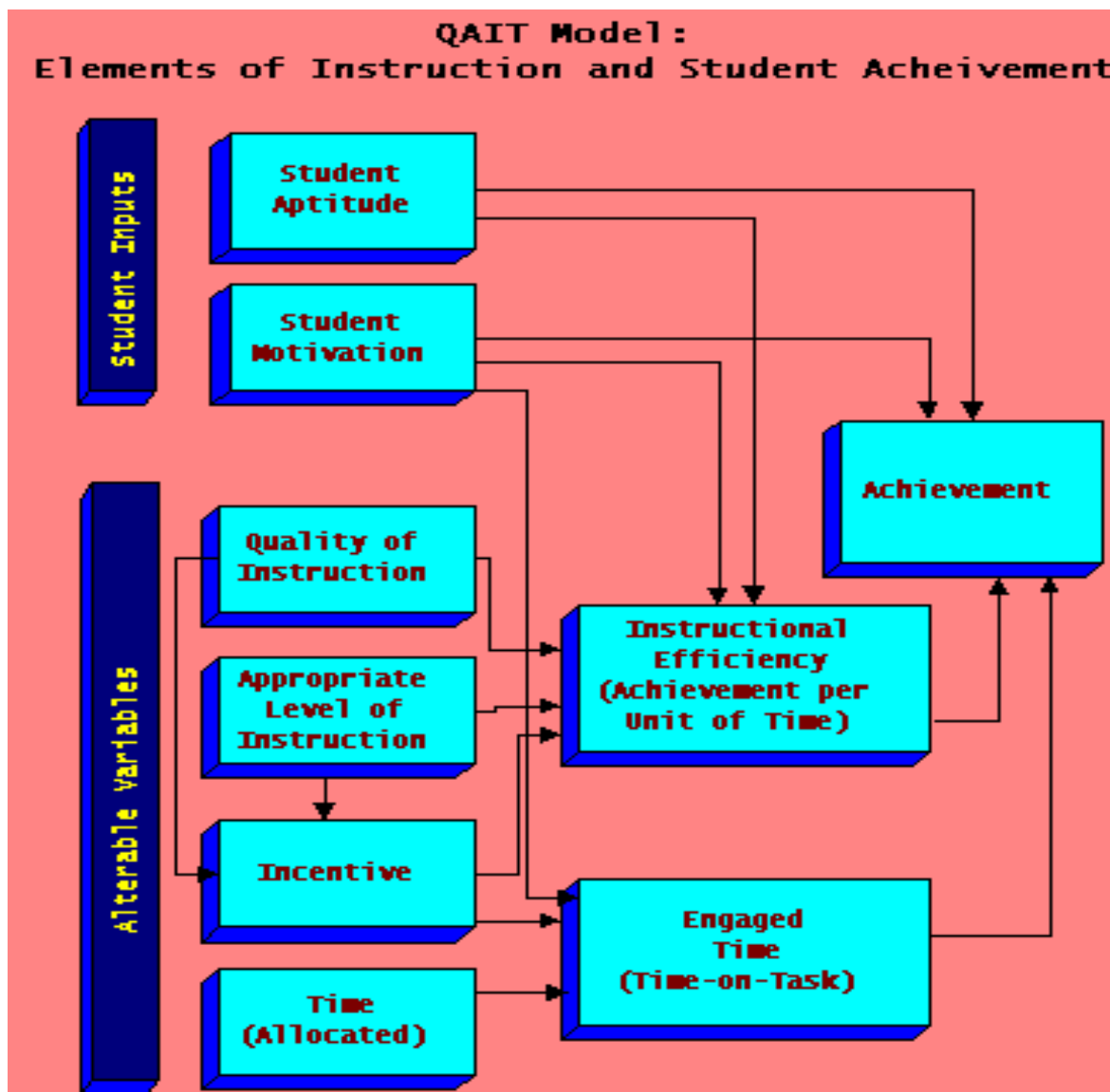


Figure 2.2: Slavin's QAIT model of effective classroom practice, Huitt (2000: 1)

The first element in Slavin's QAIT model is **quality of instruction** which is the degree to which information or skills are presented in order for students to easily learn them (Huitt, 2000:1). The second element of the model is **appropriate levels of instruction** which is the degree to which the teacher ensures that students have the required skills and knowledge to learn what they are about to learn (Huitt, 2006:1). **Incentive** is the third element of the model and can be defined as the degree to which the educator ensures that the learners are motivated to work on instructional tasks and to learn the material at hand (Huitt, 2006:1). The last element in Slavin's QAIT model is *time* which is essentially the degree to which students are afforded enough time to learn the material that they are being taught (Huitt, 2006:1).

### **2.3.3. Huitt's Model of Teaching/Learning Process**

Huitt's model, (see Figure 2.3), explains the teaching or learning process using four variables namely context, input, classroom process and output (Huitt, 2003:2). In terms of this model, **context** refers to all the factors that fall outside the classroom that might influence teaching and learning; **input** includes the qualities or characteristics that educators and learners bring to the classroom experience, **classroom processes** refer to the teachers' and the students' behaviour in the classroom and other variables, such as classroom climate as well as teacher/student category relationships (Huitt, 2003:2). The last category in Huitt's model is the **output** category which refers to the student achievement or the measure of student learning (see Figure 3), (Huitt, 2003:2).

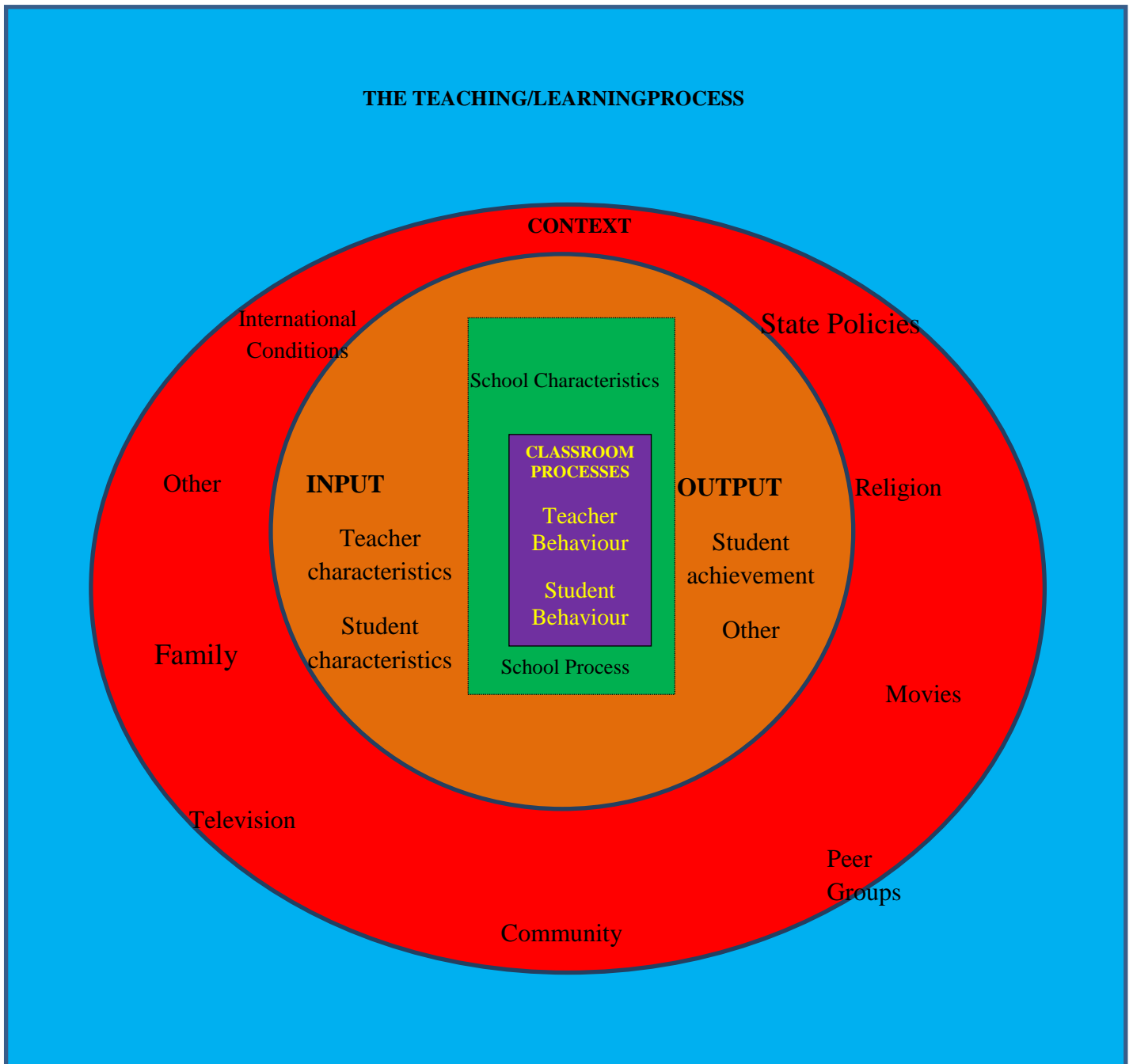


Figure 2.3: Huitt's model of teaching/learning process, Huitt (2003: 2)

In consideration of these models, the researcher has adopted Huitt's model of teaching/learning to direct her study because it presents a broader perspective which

considers classroom factors as well as factors that are outside of the classroom that could influence learner performance.

Factors such as a lack of electricity and shortage of textbooks can be aligned with context category in Huitt's model. The issues of lack of effective management and leadership skills amongst school principals which Coetzee (2003:30) identified in the Eastern Cape, can be applied to the category of school characteristics in Huitt's model. School processes include factors related to activities such as leadership, supervisory practices and school climate.

Factors such as the lack of parental support, the education levels of parents and family income and socio-economy can be classified under context variables in Huitt's model because they fall outside the classrooms. Although these context variables fall outside the classroom, they impact learner performance.

The educators' low morale which could be seen in their high levels of absenteeism and truancy (Letlogoet al., 2002:116) could be attributed to teacher characteristics which fall under input variables in Huitt's model.

Overcrowding in classrooms which results in high learner-teacher ratio impacts student achievement and it falls under output variables in Huitt's model. The abovementioned factors were seen as potentially contributing to low student achievement under one or the other of the categories of Huitt's model, thereby justifying the adoption of this model for the purposes of this study.

## **2.4 FACTORS CONSIDERED BY LEARNERS TO BE MAJOR CONTRIBUTORS TO LOW LEARNER ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN MBIZANA SCHOOLS**

The first research question of this study sought to find out the major factors which grade twelve learners saw as contributing to relatively low academic performance of learners in the

NSC. Thus it became important to review literature pertaining to learners' views on factors that may impede academic success and this is the focus of this section. However, the researcher found that there was paucity of empirical studies on this topic which targeted learners as principal respondents.

Several factors such as learners' diet, inadequate instructional resources, motivation and their socio-economic status have been identified by various researchers to influence learners' performance levels (Angelis & Wilcox, 2011:27; Asbridge, Florence & Veugelers, 2008:210; Walker-Dalhouse & Risko, 2008:422; Hendricks, 2008:2). More specifically, the effect of learners' socio-economic status on academic performance was identified by Sokopo & Hans (2010) when they conducted research in schools in Mbizana. Sokopo & Hans (2010) reported that a grade twelve learner at Nomagqwathekana Comprehensive Technical High School, revealed that learners were assigned research assignments which required them to travel by taxi's, yet they did not have money to support such activities. As a result of having no money, because of low or no household income, learners failed to submit these assignments and this had a negative impact on their performance.

Context variables identified in Huitt's model such as family income were also identified by Sokopo and Hans (2010) when they conducted research in schools in Mbizana district. It was found that most parents in Mbizana had low or no steady income. The above-mentioned factors that prevent learners from performing well academically, namely poor diet and socio-economic status can be classified by Huitt's model under the context category because they are variables outside of the classroom that impact student characteristics and classroom processes such as concentration and access to the education required for learning. Motivation to achieve academic success amongst learners is a vital factor in this section of the literature review and can be attributed to the input category in Huitt's model as this is what the learner brings to the classroom process.

The investigation conducted at Nomagqwathekana Comprehensive Technical High School also found that in addition to low or no household income, the lack of some vital instructional resources and infrastructure at schools were some of the factors considered by learners to be major contributors to low academic learner performance in schools (Sokopo & Hans, 2010). Sokopo and Hans (2010) report further that in Mbizana district there were many overcrowded classrooms with up to 120 pupils in a classroom. Fontana (1992:61) contends that cramped classrooms reduce learner achievement because there is insufficient space for learners to *inter alia* carry out practical activities. Overcrowded classrooms negatively affect the quality of learning because they have seating arrangements which prevent learners from easily seeing the work being demonstrated by the teacher and therefore learners cannot follow the lesson (Fontana, 1992:61). Achilles, et al (2002:25) also found that students in small classes misbehaved less and performed better, therefore small learning communities seem to achieve better than their larger counterparts.

Hall and De Lannoy (2012) emphasize the impact of overcrowded classrooms on the learners by stating that these classrooms result in a high Learner-to-Educator Ratio (LER) which hampers learning. The LER is the average number of learners per educator at a certain level of education or for a certain type of school, in a given year (Hall & De Lannoy, 2012).

They further warn against a high LER by stating that large classes make it difficult for learners to ask questions when they do not understand the work being taught. In addition, learners get only limited attention due to the large number of learners assigned to one educator (Hall & De Lannoy, 2012). A classroom with a smaller learner-teacher ratio has better ability of combining modern technology, the latest teaching practices and can achieve camaraderie among the learners for better learning, which improves learner academic performance (Coetzee, 2003).

Sokopo and Hans (2010) reported that an investigation conducted in four High Schools in Mbizana district found that amongst the schools that were researched, none of them had science laboratories, libraries and the sufficient learning material necessary for the Outcomes Based Education (OBE) system.

Several South African researchers such as Taylor, Muller and Vinjevold, (2003:4) regard reading material as a particularly significant resource for children's literacy and writing development. The value of reading material in a child's academic development highlights the implications of the shortage of reading material reported in some schools in the Eastern Cape. In most homes in rural Eastern Cape, there is little for children to read besides the bible (Hendricks, 2008:5). According to Bot (2005:7) the lack of reading material is also a nationwide problem for communities in rural areas because over three quarters of schools nationally have no libraries. These circumstances leave learners almost completely dependent on their schools to provide them with books to help them develop grade-appropriate literacy levels (Bot, 2005:7).

A learner not having access to instructional resources such as books at home is at a particular disadvantage and may not develop intellectually at the normal rate. Learners' access to technological instructional resources such as computers at home and at school is a vital focus of the context category and the school characteristics category of the Huitts' model because this model emphasizes the influence of the modern information age on learning.

Another factor that has been raised in this section of the literature review is inadequate instructional resources such as reading material, libraries, science laboratories and classrooms at schools. Huitt's model can classify the lack of instructional resources under school characteristics and under classroom processes because they influence educator and learner behaviour.

The relationship between learners' diet and academic performance has often been stated by many researchers to be a factor that is considered by learners to be a major contributor to low academic learner performance in schools (Asbridge, Florence & Veugelers, 2008:209; Hall & De Lannoy, 2012; MacMillan & Schumacher, 2001). MacMillan and Schumacher (2001) also concur and aver that poverty is a severe barrier to education because when a learner comes to school hungry; he/she cannot concentrate, therefore resulting in poor performance. Black et al (2010:429) on the other hand identify the disadvantage at which a low socio-economic status places students because they struggle with various issues such as hunger and are still assessed on common standards with schools that serve different populations. Asbridge, et al (2008:209) advocate for the implementation of and investment in school nutrition programmes that can improve students' access to a quality diet and thus lead to better academic achievement.

Hendricks (2008:2) recognizes the South African governmental school feeding scheme as an attempt by the national government to provide a way to alleviate the adverse effects of poverty so that poor academic performance due to students being hungry is eradicated or at least minimized (Tomlinson, 2007: 14). The Primary School Nutrition Programme (PSNP) was later taken over by the Department of Education, which had identified 938,574 learners who qualified for food at various schools, in 2005 (Tomlinson, 2007:14). The PSNP is reported not to be operating effectively in the Eastern Cape despite this province having the highest percentage of impoverished people in South Africa, with unemployment standing at 43.6 per cent (Tempest, 2006:175). Tomlinson (2007:14) describes the situation in the Eastern Cape as being unlike that of other provinces, as not all Eastern Cape farm schools are covered by the overall Governmental Nutrition Programme (GNP) and the schools that are covered, receive food three times a week. In 2006, public outcry and student demonstrations about hungry learners still not receiving food led to a review and a forensic investigation of



the PSNP (George, 2006; Tempest, 2006; Tomlinson, 2007). The main finding of this review and forensic investigation was that, Eastern Cape Education Department officials had fraudulently awarded tenders to the food suppliers that they personally preferred (George, 2006; Tempest, 2006; Tomlinson, 2007).

According to Huitt's model the fraudulent awarding of tenders to food suppliers by the Education Department can be classified under the context category because it relates to flaws in government policies, programmes and funding which in turn negatively influence student characteristics and thus results in low student achievement.

Another factor considered by learners to be a major contributor to low academic learner performance in schools is the fact that learners who are physically and mentally challenged are expected to join main stream schools (Department of Education, 2001). This has an impact on the concerned learners' performance since the education system and infrastructure in ordinary public schools, do not make provision for them (Department of Education, 2001).

Various studies have shown that motivation has a positive and significant impact on successful learning (Walker-Dalhouse&Risko, 2008; Angelis & Wilcox, 2011: 30). If a learner is not motivated he/she does not co-operate and participate fully in learning activities and in assessments (Walker-Dalhouse&Risko, 2008 and Angelis & Wilcox, 2011: 30). This implies that the amount of motivation that a learner gets from the people who surround him/her, for example their teachers who challenge them to expect more of themselves, friends and parents can positively or negatively affect their academic performance (Badenhost et al., 1987; Farrant, 1986; Khathi, 1990; Walker-Dalhouse&Risko, 2008: 422). Sokopo and Hans (2010) contend that the low academic performance amongst learners in schools in Mbizana district has led to some learners becoming de-motivated and believing that there is no hope for grade twelve learners in Mbizana. The high dropout rate in Mbizana could be a testament

to the above-mentioned sentiments amongst learners (Sokopo& Hans, 2010). Walker-Dalhouse and Risko (2008) reiterate the point that students who are de-motivated by their problems at home and the resultant difficulties in learning, usually drop out of school when they feel that no one in their school cares about them.

The negative learning environment furthermore instills hopelessness in students as there are many taverns around senior secondary schools, from which some learners get drunk and become unruly (Sokopo& Hans, 2010). Halland De Lannoy (2012) acknowledge the importance of a positive learning environment on a learner's academic performance by stating that it is a vital factor that impacts a learner's ability to learn. Sokopo and Hans (2010) postulate that another factor that may affect the learning environment in Mbizana thus also impacting matric learners' performance, is the high rate of pregnancies amongst girls. In the light of the problem statement of this study, the researcher had a concern about the academic performance of grade twelve learners at the Mbizana district.

Based on Huitt's model the taverns around schools in Mbizana and the trend of a high rate of pregnancies amongst young girls can be categorized as context variables, which serve as an input into student characteristics.

Mkhize (2002:7) reports that 50% of parents in South Africa have further relevant training beyond matric. Further, MacMillan and Schumacher (2001) conducted research on the cooperation of parents from informal settlements in the performance of their children. The results showed that most parents could not help their children because of their poor education. Those learners could not really perform well even if they were highly intelligent and resorted to truancy and crime. The results also showed that parents living under poor conditions lose interest even in their children's education. Some even feel too inferior to mix

with other parents in school meetings pertaining to their children's performance (MacMillan & Schumacher, 2001).

Huitt's model classifies a learner's community, family and peer groups as important parts of the context category variables. The motivation, co-operation and support that a learner gets from these subcategories can serve as an input into student characteristics and their behaviour in the classroom (Huitt, 2007:8).

## **2.5 FACTORS CONSIDERED BY SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAM (SMT) MEMBERS TO BE MAJOR CONTRIBUTORS TO LOW LEARNER ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN MBIZANA SCHOOL**

To identify other contributors to low learner performance in school, apart from intelligence, MacMillan and Schumacher (2001) conducted a study amongst 60 School Management Team members (20 principals, 20 Heads of Department and 20 educators). MacMillan and Schumacher's (2001) findings support studies that revealed that intelligence cannot be the only reason for poor learner performance (Mohammed, 1997; Mkhize, 2002; MacMillan & Schumacher, 2001). MacMillan and Schumacher (2001) found that there could be other reasons which could affect an intelligent learner and cause him/her to perform badly. The SMT's researched by MacMillan and Schumacher (2001) mentioned that unfavourable lifestyle and socio-economic factors are possible contributors to poor learner performance.

According to Huitt's model, lifestyle and socio-economic factors, as noted above by MacMillan and Schumacher (2001) are attributed to the subcategory of community, which is within the context category.

To identify and address the various challenges that a school encounters, such as socio-economic and infrastructural issues, the Eastern Cape Department of Education (2001:2)

expected all schools to have a School Management Team. All stakeholders must participate in managing the school but ultimately it is the principal in collaboration with the School Management Team who has the responsibility of ensuring that quality teaching and learning occur (Eastern Cape Department of Education, 2001:2). In the light of the problem statement of this study, the researcher questions whether school principals at schools with low NSC pass rates purposefully empower all school stakeholders to create practices that improve learner academic achievement.

The principal is the main leader of the SMT and it is therefore imperative that he/she communicate their vision and academic goals to other stakeholders of the team which include educators and parents (Coetzee, 2003; Hoy&Miskel, 1996). Establishing a direct effective communication system in a school should be the first and foremost task of school's principals because successful information exchange between school principals and the school stakeholders is imperative for efficient management. Hence communication cannot be isolated from decision-making, the motivation of stakeholders or the learning process and the achievement of learner academic goals (Coetzee, 2003; Hoy &Miskel, 1996; Noguera, 2003:450).

Research based on standardized tests in American schools that consistently produced high levels of academic achievement found that these schools had the following characteristics, namely a clear sense of purpose, core standards within a rigorous curriculum, high expectations, a commitment to educate all students, a safe and orderly learning environment, strong partnerships with parents and a problem-solving attitude Noguera (2003:450). These effective schools also attributed their success to supportive relations that existed between teachers and students as well as the ethos of caring and accountability (Noguera, 2003:450). Consequently, Noguera (2003:450) suggests that educational reformers, School Management Teams and researchers must focus more on investigating ways to adopt strategies that have

proven to be successful at schools where achievement was less likely because it has been proven that when optimal conditions for teaching and learning are ensured, high levels of academic success is possible (Noguera, 2003:450).

Several research findings state that principals of schools that perform well academically are usually driven by a vision for their schools to be an ideal place where teaching and learning can take place in a safe and orderly school atmosphere (Coetzee, 2003; Glatter et al, 1988; Poston et al, 1992; Whitaker, 1995). Potter and Powell (1992:13) referred to a good school as being one that values quality in teaching, learning and has high expectations as well as encourages learner academic achievement. Duigan and Macpherson (1992:97) also opine that school principals should permit and facilitate the necessary changes in a school system, in order to ensure learner academic achievement. Sokopo and Hans (2010) reported that contrary to the said studies, some principals of the sampled schools in Mbizana district were dissatisfied with the new school curriculum and claimed that the new system demanded a lot of paperwork which resulted in educators having more work in addition to their normal class work.

Research conducted by Letlogo et al (2002: 117) aimed at assessing what stakeholders, such as district officials, perceived to be the reasons for poor performance in grade 12 at a Northern Tshwane school, discovered that policies of government had a great impact on learner performance because in an attempt to reform the education system, government enacted many laws and adopted some new policies, which were not all easy to implement. The Provincial Department of Education faced many challenges that prevented it from efficiently implementing the new policies and these factors included poor management procedures as well as unclearly distributing responsibilities for decision-making at various levels. There was also weak communication between various departmental levels, districts,

schools as well as districts and the provincial and national departments of education (Letlogo et al, 2002: 117).

Schools were uncertain about how they should appoint, transfer or right size educators, thus leading to a shortage and oversupply of relevant educators in schools (Letlogo et al, 2002: 117).

Letlogo et al (2002: 116) further reported that the school principals and district officials surmised that a major contributor to poor performance at schools was ineffective policies at school level, weak organisational structures and undeveloped managerial skills. Letlogo et al (2002:116) found that the principals and district officials contended that the responsibility and accountability of the principal needed to be clearly defined because their authority and power had somehow been decreased by the powers of unions and rights of the learners. Issues raised by Letlogo et al (2002:116) included an increased necessity for principals to be involved in decision-making that impacted student learning and also having more control over agreements that influenced the daily running of the school. It appeared that not all school principals had a wide range of management skills and union leaders were more informed and empowered in terms of collective agreement issues than some of the school principals.

Principals in Mbizana district schools being dissatisfied with the education system can be classified under the context category of Huitt's model and specifically under the government policies and management, decision-making as well as communication issues which influence the teaching or learning process.

## **2.6 FACTORS CONSIDERED BY SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY (SGB) MEMBERS TO BE MAJOR CONTRIBUTORS TO LOW LEARNER ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN MBIZANA SCHOOLS**

The South African School's Act (SASA) of 1996, which came into operation at the beginning of 1997, stipulates that all state schools in South Africa should have Governing Bodies composed of the school principal, parents, teachers, learners and non-teaching staff (Department of Education, 1996). The active and responsible role of the SGB is to encourage rational and collective decision-making. Du Preez and Glober (1998) along with Harber and Trafford (1999) concur that parents serving in School Governing Bodies (SGBs) create more efficiently functioning schools. In terms of article 20 of SASA, the SGB should promote the best interests of the school and simultaneously ensure learner academic achievement through the promotion of assessment standards which conform to National Standards (Department of Education, 1996).

Hendricks (2008:8) states that the primary purpose of SASA was to decentralize decision making and expand parents' democratic participation in schools' activities through creating SGBs. The act required parents to play an active role in appointing teachers, resolving disciplinary matters, deciding on matters related to school financial management and school budgets. However, fulfilling these SGB functions effectively requires parents with time and more importantly, high levels of literacy and numeracy (Hendricks, 2008:8).

According to Balindlela (2006), local government officials must develop a communication strategy between schools and the community in order to strengthen the status of SGBs. According to Hendricks (2008) on the other hand, it is ultimately, the school principal's responsibility to ensure that decisions of the SGB are properly carried out by the relevant stakeholders. In order to fulfil this responsibility, school principals should provide adequate

and correct information regarding the school policies and pertaining to the school buildings, funds and other important issues to their governing bodies. School principals' relationships with their SGBs are crucial to processes related to finalization of all school related priorities and goals (Jones, 1993; Levacic, 1995; Spengler & Calitz, 1999).

According to Black et al (2010) parental involvement in a learner's education can result in significant improvement in academic performance. Therefore, parents cannot be exempted from contributing to the quality of education that their children receive and whether these learners find time and opportunities to study (Black et al, 2010). Studies carried out by various researchers indicate that parental involvement in the education of their children enhances learner performance inside and beyond the classroom, but this is dependent on the parents' education levels (Cockburn, 1997; Luthuli, 1990; Mohammed, 1997; Schreurs & Moreau, 2006). The level of parents' education has an impact on learner performance as they are, *interalia*, expected to motivate and assist their children with their homework.

Research conducted by MacMillan and Schumacher (2001) on parents' involvement from informal settlements in the performance of their children showed that most parents could not help their children because of having low education, therefore their children could not really perform well even if they were highly intelligent. The results of this study also showed that parents living in poor conditions mostly lost interest in their children's education. Some even felt too inferior to mix with other parents in school meetings pertaining to their children's performance (MacMillan & Schumacher, 2001). A survey (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005) found disturbingly low literacy levels especially among women in three rural provinces of Eastern Cape, Kwazulu-Natal and Limpopo. These findings highlight, like other various studies have cited, that mothers more than fathers, play a more active and supportive role in their children's schooling (Agus & Makhbul, 2002; Ermisch & Francesconi, 2001). Ermisch



and Francesconi (2001) reported that there was a positive relationship between parents' education levels and their children's educational achievements. Agus and Makhbul (2002) in their research also found that a mother's education levels had a stronger influence on the academic achievement of a child as compared to the father's education levels. In rural South Africa, this was especially relevant as there are remnants of the long standing migration labour system meaning that a large percentage of households are headed by women (Mkokeli, 2005; Soudien, 2004). The Nelson Mandela Foundation survey (2005:28) also found that 25 percent of female household-heads in the Eastern Cape had no formal schooling at all. For those who did have a school education, their levels of schooling were mostly too low to enable them to play the meaningful or active role in their children's education as envisioned in the SASA for parents and SGBs. As a result, in rural schools, SGBs continue to be dominated by principals or teachers (Mkokeli, 2005; Soudien, 2004).

Research conducted by Mkokeli (2005) and Soudien (2004) shows that the new curriculum and the SASA continue to assume that parents play an active role in their children's education, yet teachers, especially in rural areas, complain that only a few parents attend parent meetings and get involved in school matters, such as checking that their children do their homework (Department of Education, 2006; Hendricks, 2008; Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005). In light of the problem statement of this study, a contributing factor to the relatively low pass rate in grade twelve in the Mbizana district can be identified, in Coetzee's (2003) statement that the SGB and parent components of most rural schools in the Eastern Cape do not have a sense of ownership when it comes to their schools. This indifference affects the learning process and the quality of learning produced because issues like vandalism and policies guiding the schools' operations are not corporately prioritized and properly handled (Coetzee, 2003; Sokope and Hans). According to Coetzee (2003:66), in

February 2003, 1500 schools were reported to be vandalized in the Eastern Cape Province and the main kinds of vandalism that were rife in Eastern Cape Province schools were:

- Windows being broken
- Classrooms being burnt down
- Notice boards being ripped off
- Doors and lockers either stolen or broken (Sokope& Hans; 2010)

In the light of the problem statement of this study, the researcher questions whether grade twelve learners' results can be improved. The SGBs and learners' parents fail to secure school buildings and facilities. The state of dilapidated schools in which the quality of learning is deteriorating has led to non-governmental sources spending R1 billion annually since 1994 on school improvement programmes (Lawrence &Moyo, 2006; Taylor, Muller & Vinjevold, 2003; Taylor, 2007). There are varying perceptions about whether this enormous amount of money is contributing to really improving results in school or not.

The following SGB-related contributors to low learner academic achievements that have been raised in this literature review can be classified under the context category of Huitt's model, namely;

- The SGBs and learners' parents fail to secure school building and facilities
- The community and learners' parents do not have a sense of ownership of the school
- Majority of the learners' parents have no formal schooling and therefore show no concern for issues related to their children's schooling such as school meetings.

The view point that the involvement of parents and the community is vital in efficiently running schools that offer learners high academic achievement is also aligned with Huitt's model as it considers that there is value in involving the community in school processes in

order to have parents, family and community members all play a role in student achievement and maintenance of the school.

## **2.7 FACTORS CONSIDERED BY EDUCATORS TO BE MAJOR CONTRIBUTORS TO LOW LEARNER ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN MBIZANA SCHOOLS**

Studies have reported that in rural schools, there is usually a large number of under-qualified and unqualified teachers (Chisholm, 2004; Ono & Ferreira, 2010; Elliot, 1984; Khathi, 1990). Khathi (1990:69) states that most times learners are taught by educators with limited knowledge of the subjects that they are teaching. Another contributing factor to poor teaching and thus the resultant high failure rate amongst learners is the lack of motivation and interest amongst teachers to study further about the subjects that they are responsible for (Khathi, 1990:69). The incompetence of these educators in teaching effectively frustrates them and portrays them as useless in the eyes of the learners that they teach and thus contributing to the high rate of teacher absenteeism (Elliot, 1984). Research conducted by Letlogo et al (2002:116) affirmed the findings by Sokopo and Hans (2010) that major factors contributing to poor performance are low educator discipline, commitment and morale. Letlogo et al (2002:116) reported that the sampled educators' morale was very low and this could be seen in their high rates of absenteeism and truancy. The implication of the educators' low motivation levels were that when educators were late or absent, teaching time was reduced, learners were left without educators in some subjects for days, especially towards month-ends (Letlogo et al, 2002:115). On their part, the educators blamed their low morale on the poor working conditions, inadequate curricular materials, unclear and confusing government policies, in particular, as well as on the right-sizing policy (Letlogo et al, 2002:115).

The issue of un-qualified or under-qualified educators who are frustrated by their incompetence and are thus not motivated to expand their knowledge can be categorized under

the classroom processes category as well as the teacher behaviour and teacher efficacy categories of the Huitt model.

On the other hand, Letlogo et al (2002:115) provide a contrary viewpoint to Elliot (1984) from their research aimed at assessing the perception of stakeholders, such as educators. Letlogo et al (2002:115) essentially found that educators in the sampled schools were of the view that some learners were performing poorly because they were ill-disciplined and were difficult to work with. Uncontrollable behaviour amongst learners affected the relationship between educators and learners and created an unproductive learning environment, thus making academic success during NSC examinations, close to impossible (Letlogo et al, 2002:115).

Research conducted by Mji and Magkato (2006:261) amongst grade eleven learners and educators, found that learners did not understand some educators teaching strategies, while the educators accused the learners of not putting effort. Another reason that educators should consider when learners perform poorly is that some learners find it hard to understand the language of instruction and the concepts used in some subjects such as Mathematics and Physical Sciences which are too abstract to fully grasp (Mji & Makgato, 2006:261). Therefore, educators need to interpret students' emotional, academic and social deficits accurately despite coming to school with a narrower range of appropriate responses than educators expect (Jensen, 2009).

Jensen (2009) highlights the importance of educators in the lives of students by emphasizing that the relationships that educators build with students, forms the single strongest access to student goals, socialization, motivation and their academic performance. Jensen (2009) further advises that if a school aims to improve student achievement, a strategy that educators and principals can try is to make academic success become culturally acceptable among

students. One informal way that educators can use to make academic success become culturally acceptable among students is to include classroom strategies that build relationships, strengthen peer acceptance and social skills in class (Jensen, 2009). Jensen (2009) explains that there is a complex interplay between cognition and emotions, so learners perform better academically when they feel socialized and accepted.

According to Huitt's model ill-disciplined student behaviour indicated by learners not understanding the language of instruction, the content of the lesson or a school culture of not valuing academic achievement can be classified under the input, classroom processes and school processes categories.

In order to address the above mentioned instructional and learning issues introduced by Letlogo et al (2002:115) as well as Mji and Magkato (2006:261), Huitt's model requires that the classroom processes category of student behaviour be addressed.

Hendricks (2008) and Mkokeli (2005) highlight that another challenge faced by the South African Education Department is that they cannot just fire lazy, uncommitted and incompetent teachers because the Department is experiencing a shortage of teachers due to well qualified teachers leaving due to being poorly paid, among other reasons (Balindlela, 2006; Hendricks, 2008; Mkokeli, 2005). Thus Hendricks (2008) and Mkokeli (2005) aver that in the Eastern Cape Education Department, for instance, there are systemic problems that manifest in, inter alia, a high number of vacant posts. This shortage of officials in, amongst others, education district offices leads to key staff such as subject advisors and education development officers not being available to serve as the crucial district-level links to school classrooms, in the chain from the national and provincial education structures. There are not enough subject advisors and education development officers in rural Eastern Cape to ensure that the curriculum is understood by teachers and is implemented in their

classrooms. The numbers of these officials in the past have not changed much since 2005 when the superintendent advisors rolled out OBE (Hendricks, 2008; Mkokeli, 2005).

The abovementioned systemic issues that the Department of Education along with schools in the Eastern Cape, are experiencing can be classified under the State Policies, as well as School Characteristics sub-category of Huit's model. These issues can have an effect on classroom and school processes, because they negatively affect teaching and learning. Such issues include the following:

- A shortage of teachers due to well qualified teachers leaving because they are being poorly paid
- Low educator discipline, commitment and morale
- Educator absenteeism and truancy
- Poor educator working conditions
- Inadequate curricular materials
- Unclear and confusing government policies
- An adverse school climate
- A high number of vacant posts such as subject advisors and education development officers

Balindlela (2006) opines that the Department of Education has also failed in ensuring that rural Eastern Cape schools have enough classrooms. The latter failure has been to the detriment of learner performance because classrooms are the most vital resources for learning and the lack of enough classrooms is one of the factors that most negatively influence the learning environment of a school (Balindlela, 2006). The Eastern Cape Survey Research of 2006 showed that the Mbizana district had more learners in a classroom than the required norm and the average learner-teacher ratio of 30 learners to one teacher did not realistically

reflect the class sizes in most rural schools in the Eastern Cape province (Balindlela, 2006). Cluster A which includes Mbizana, Lusikisiki and Libode had the highest number of learners and was found to have high deviance from the average learner-teacher ratio (Balindlela, 2006).

In Mbizana alone, the learner-teacher ratio was 41:1; the learner-classroom ratio was 60:1 against the expected learner-classroom ratio of 30:1. Essentially, this means that for every one teacher, there are forty-one learners in the school and for every one classroom, there are sixty learners, which doubles the expected ratio, thus causing overcrowding in classrooms (Balindlela, 2006). Sokopo and Hans (2010) opine that another factor that affects the learning environment and contributes to poor learner performance in a school is the practice of some learners and educators engaging in romantic and sexual relationships. Learners are unable to cope with such situations as they cannot even face the teacher in the classroom, therefore their learning and academic performance are disturbed (Sokopo & Hans, 2010).

## **2.8 SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES IN THE PERCEPTIONS OF THE VARIOUS STAKEHOLDERS**

Some of the perceptions of the different stakeholders (i.e. learners, SMTs, SGBs and educators) have been identified as being similar. Similar perceptions among the four groups of stakeholders studied in this research include the influence of low socio-economic factors, such as low household income, unemployment, lack of a quality diet and lack of resources at school (Black et al., 2008; Hall & De Lannoy, 2012; Hendricks, 2008; Sokopo & Hans, 2010).

Socio-economic factors such as low household income, unemployment and a poor diet can all be classified under the context category of Huitt's model.

According to MacMillan and Schumacher (2001) as well as Sokopo and Hans (2010), learners from low or no income homes usually struggle to perform well academically due to a lack of resources for effectively completing their school tasks, such as not being able to accurately complete research assignments which require money for travelling. Research conducted by MacMillan and Schumacher (2001) amongst SMT members also found that poor socio-economic factors such as poor living conditions were more of a determiner of learner performance than intelligence because they can cause an intelligent learner to perform badly.

In addition to the similarities in the opinions of learners and SMTs about the influence of financial resources on learner poor performance, there was also consensus about the negative impact of the lack of classrooms and qualified teachers on teaching and learning (Fontana, 1992:61; Hall & De Lannoy; 2012, Sokopo& Hans, 2010). Sokopo& Hans (2010) reported that in Mbizana district, there were overcrowded classrooms with up to 120 pupils in a classroom. Balindlela (2006), Fontana (1992:6), Hall and De Lannoy (2012) as well as Sokopo and Hans (2010) agree that both teaching and learning are hampered when there is a lack of sufficient classrooms and learners are taught in overcrowded classrooms, as the two parties cannot interact in a way that facilitates effective learning.

Bot, (2005:7), Hendricks (2008:5) as well as Taylor, Muller and Vinjevold (2003:4) add that another factor that teachers and learners accept as contributing to poor learner performance is a lack of reading material. Taylor et al (2003:4) highlight that reading material is a particularly significant resource for children's literacy and writing development; therefore it impacts greatly on learners' academic performance. Teachers in rural areas also view a lack of reading material as a problem because most learners do not have books at home and they depend on the limited reading material in school libraries and in most cases many rural schools do not even have libraries.



Despite the aforementioned viewpoints of teachers, learners and SMT's solely blaming poor learner performance on a lack of resources and a low socio-economic status, it is not a common viewpoint amongst all of these stakeholders (Angelis & Wilcox, 2011:27; Asbridge et al., 2008:210; Hendricks, 2008:2; Walker-Dalhouse&Risko, 2008:422). Angelis and Wilcox (2011) conducted a study to identify the factors that made some schools with low socio-economic status consistently perform better than was expected of them. Their findings indicated that these successful schools created three common conditions, namely:

- Teachers, administrators and staff collaborated and shared responsibility
- Teachers made decisions based on a variety of evidence

Unlike SGBs and learners, SMTs and educators perceive that learners' background and their socio-economic status had an impact on the NSC examinations (Asbridge, et al, 2008). In addition, Asbridge, et al (2008) in their study which they conducted in Canada, found that students with decreased overall dietary quality were considerably more likely to perform poorly in school than those with increased overall dietary quality. The results of the two above mentioned studies suggest that future research should concentrate on the impact of a learners' background and their socio-economic status on their performance.

Asbridge et al's (2008:210) findings about the impact of decreased dietary quality on a learner's academic performance can be categorized under the context category of Huitt's model.

Both SGBs and SMTs reported that educators in underperforming schools were mostly demotivated (Balindlela, 2006; Calitz et al, 1987; Elliot, 1984; Hendricks, 2008; Khathi, 1990; Mkokeli, 2005). Motivation is one of the most important tools for successful teaching and learning, if learners are not motivated, they do not effectively co-operate in the process of teaching and learning (Calitz et al, 1987; Khathi, 1990). Calitz et al (1987) and Khathi (1990)

further stated that a demotivated teacher could result in learners being demotivated and ultimately developing a negative attitude towards their school work and as a consequence, they perform poorly.

The Department of Education (2001) acknowledges the challenge that different learner's aptitudes pose on classroom learning by stating that a major contributor to poor learner performance in schools was the fact that learners with physical and mental challenges were expected to join main stream schools. Educators like SMTs asserted that a lack of specialized attention being given to learners with learning difficulties, which were sometimes undiagnosed, had an impact on the learners' performance since the education systems and infrastructure in ordinary public schools, did not make provision for them (Department of Education, 2001).

The following stakeholders, SMTs, learners, educators and SGBs have similar perceptions in that infrastructural and human relationship factors such as a lack of classrooms, unprofessional sexual relationships and teacher shortages contribute to low learner performance (Kuppan, 2009; Mohala, 2000; Spady, 1996; Van Nierkerk & Killen, 2000).

In addition, Marna (1997) and Mohlala (2000) also opine that there are also challenges that are posed by the curriculum of the senior secondary school system.

Both educators and SMTs opine that the new curriculum demands that they do a lot of paperwork thus consuming their teaching time (Kuppan, 2009; Mohlala, 2000). Again, some research studies have characterised the curriculum of the senior secondary school system as being unsuitable for preparing learners for life in their communities because it is bookish, orientated towards high levels of education, beyond the reach of the people and divorced from the life and culture of local people (Kuppan, 2009; Mohala, 2000).

In terms of Huitt's model, curriculum that is divorced from the life and culture of local people is attributed to the context category.

## **2.9 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

This chapter has addressed literature which discusses factors that are understood to contribute to the low academic performance of grade 12 learners, generally, and within the Mbizana district, in particular. Again, in this chapter, a theoretical background of the study has been presented. Tables showing Mbizana district's academic performance over a three year period i.e. 2011, 2012 and 2013 are presented and discussed.

Three theoretical perspectives which could offer improved learner performance are also presented, namely, Carroll's Model of School Learning, Slavin's QAIT Model of Effective Classroom Practice. The researcher has chosen Huitt's Model of Teaching/Learning Process to guide and direct her research.

The literature review focuses on previous empirical studies related to factors considered to affect learner performance. A review of previous and relevant research findings are also undertaken in line with the research questions of this study.

Factors considered by grade twelve learners to be major contributors to their low academic performance in Mbizana schools are presented.

A lack of infrastructure, parental support, physical and human resources are identified as some of the factors that impede the academic performance of learners in the NSC. Factors considered by School Management Team members to be major contributors to low learner academic performance in Mbizana schools are also explained in this chapter. Grade twelve socio-economic status, insufficient material resources and shortage of teachers are mentioned and explained as contributors to low academic performance in Mbizana schools.

Factors considered by educators to be major contributors to low academic performance in Mbizana schools are presented and discussed. Incompetent, demotivated, under qualified and unqualified educators are identified as factors that may impede academic success. Factors considered by the School Governing Body to be major contributors to low learner academic performance in Mbizana schools are presented in this chapter. Lack of parental support, socio-economic background of learners, shortage of human and material resources and negative relationships between SGBs and the school principals are noticed as major contributors to low academic achievement in the NSC. Similarities and differences in the perceptions of various stakeholders are presented and expounded in this chapter.

In conclusion, I am glad that Huitt's contextual variables related to the home environment such as education levels of parents and family socio-economic status are reflected as having an influence on teaching and learning. They concur with what I have noticed that well educated parents assist their children in their academic performance. They are keen to buy the necessary learning resources. It is true that learners coming from poverty stricken homes sometimes do not perform well because their aim is to leave school and earn a living. Schools that are not well managed and are in crises usually do not perform well. This idea is also reflected in Huitt's model category of context variables, in which school processes related to activities such as leadership, supervisory practices and school climate are said to have an impact on teaching and learning.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODS**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents the research methods followed in this study for the purpose of collecting data about possible factors contributing to the underperformance of grade twelve learners in the Mbizana district. In presenting the research methods of this study, the researcher first introduces the research paradigm in order to give an overall methodological context to the study. This is then followed by a presentation of the research design and then the target and accessible populations. The data collection techniques then follow, as well as the data analysis techniques. The final section deals with the issues for ethical considerations.

#### **3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM**

The researcher used a mixed research method approach which involves qualitative and quantitative research methods. The rationale behind the respective methods and instruments in the quantitative and qualitative orientations will hereby be explained.

By definition, the mixed methods research design combine both qualitative and quantitative research approaches to data collection. According to Olbrecht and Klein (2011: 343) using mixed methods research techniques provides richer data and therefore leads to a deeper understanding of the underlying phenomena. One of the general purposes for using the mixed methods technique offered by Daley, Mihalas, Onwuegbuzie, Powell and Suldo (2008: 293) who aver that this technique allows for triangulation. According to Daley et al (2008: 293) triangulation entails seeking to convergence of findings from different methods that examine similar phenomena.

According to Lemmer (1992: 294) qualitative research methodology has a tradition which focuses on the in-depth, the detail, the process and the context of schooling and therefore offers education a valid and worthwhile research method. Holiday (2002:4) adds that qualitative research invokes the need to discover as much about how the research subjects feel about the information itself. Quite importantly, it was envisaged that the qualitative research methodology in the present study would systematically provide answers to questions related to the problem statement of a research study. Holiday (2002: 4) further postulates that the aim of qualitative studies is to generate as much information as possible which, in turn, could lead to further research questions on a qualitative or quantitative basis. In a complementary way to the qualitative research approaches, it was also envisaged that quantitative data would enrich the data collected to address the research questions of this study. Mixed methods research is an intellectual and practical synthesis based on qualitative and quantitative research, it is the third methodological approach or research paradigm (along with qualitative and quantitative research). It recognizes the importance of traditional qualitative and quantitative research but also offers a powerful third paradigm choice that often will provide the most informative, complete, balanced and useful research results (Johnson, et al, 2007: 129).

The researcher had aligned herself with the “mixed methods” (blended) research paradigm which is defined as an approach to knowledge (theory and practice) that attempts to consider multiple viewpoints, perspectives, positions and standpoints (always including the standpoints of qualitative and quantitative research) (Johnson, et al, 2007: 113). The reasoning behind the overall research orientation that combines the above mentioned methods is that, the researcher wanted to simultaneously employ the benefits offered by all these methods.

### **3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN**

This study followed a Descriptive Survey research design (Salaria, 2012). According to Salaria (2012:1), a descriptive survey is a “method of research which concerns itself with the present phenomena in terms of conditions, practices, beliefs, processes, relationships or trends.” In concurrence, Aggarwal (2008 – in Salaria, 2012:1) posits that “descriptive research is devoted to the gathering of information about prevailing conditions or situation for the purpose of description and interpretation” in ways that not simply amass and tabulate information but also include “proper analysis, interpretation, comparisons, identification of trends and relationships.”

According to Hopkin (1992: 134), the main feature of qualitative research is its emphasis on understanding the context of the research. Other researchers have earlier explained that the purposes of descriptive-survey investigation include (a) collecting evidence concerning an existing situation or current condition, (b) identifying standards with which to compare the present conditions in order to plan for the next step, and (c) determining where a particular situation currently is and where it ought to be (Behr, 1983; Good&Scates, 1972; Hopkin, 1992). It is therefore held that this type of research method precedes others on account of the fact that before any progress can be made in solving the problem under investigation; the researcher should know the prevailing conditions and facts of the areas to be studied (Behr, 1983; Good& Scates, 1972; Hopkin, 1992).

Accordingly, given that this was largely an exploratory study, this research orientation was judged to be suitable for this study.

### **3.4 TARGET AND ACCESSIBLE POPULATIONS**

The target population was defined as comprising all grade twelve learners, Educators, School Management Team and School Governing Body members in the Mbizana district. The target population was accessible to the researcher, and the research sample was arrived at as explained below.

### **3.5 RESEARCH SAMPLE AND SAMPLING PROCEDURE**

The researcher made use of random sampling as opposed to probabilistic sampling. According to Salaria (2012), sampling is the process by which a relatively small number of individuals, objects or events is chosen and analysed in order to find out something about the entire population from which it was chosen. A group chosen from a larger population with the aim of yielding information about this population as a whole is termed as sample. It is a miniature picture of the entire group or aggregative from which it has been taken. It is a smaller representation of a larger whole.

In the present study, the sample consisted of ninety participants. Forty grade twelve learners, twenty five subject educators, fifteen School Management Team members and ten School Governing Body members. The participants were randomly selected from nine sample senior secondary schools. The researcher asked for class lists from which learners were randomly selected, also from different streams, namely the Commercial, Sciences and General streams. From a total of twenty five sample educators, three educators were selected from seven sample schools and two educators were selected from two schools. Out of fifteen SMT members, two SMT members were randomly selected from six schools and one SMT member from three schools. Out of ten SGB members, one SGB member was selected from eight sample schools and two SGB members from one sample school. All participants were randomly selected from the above mentioned streams.



To ensure that the sample used in this research study is representative of the larger population, a random sample of participants was drawn specially, to include bias (Johnson & Christenson, 2000: 176; Jacobs & Razavieh, 1979: 132).

### **3.6 DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES**

This study makes use of two main data-gathering techniques, namely, use of questionnaires and interview schedules that enable face-to-face interviews. The Likert-type Scale questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data (see appendix 1). Furthermore, open-ended questions were included in the questionnaire. The questionnaire was used as an instrument to assess what the respondents thought about issues relating to factors that contribute to the underperformance of grade twelve learners in the Mbizana district.

The second main research instrument was an interview schedule (see Appendix 2). Open ended face-to-face interviews were used because they offered the researcher or interviewer an opportunity to observe the interviewee's body language. The interviewer could also probe for clarity and further information because of the direct contact with the interviewee. The interviewee on the other hand could also ask for clarity if he/she did not understand the questions presented to him/her. The merits, benefits and advantages of using these two types of data collection instruments are explained below.

#### **3.6.1 Questionnaires**

Mason and Bramble (1978:303) argue that, in conducting an investigation, the researcher should select from among a variety of procedures available. Ary, et al (1979:193) list and discuss some methods of data collection, namely questionnaires, interviews, tests etc. In this study, the researcher decided to use questionnaires and interview schedules principal as means of collecting data. In particular, as Ary, et al aver, if properly constructed and

administered, the questionnaire is the best available instrument for obtaining information from a widely spread course. In this regard, questionnaires continue to be commonly used by education researchers, as well as others within Humanities. Interviews are also very important in complementing trends that normally emerge from questionnaire-generated data, by giving a voice to the numbers produced.

In view of the wide investigation anticipated, the questionnaire and interview became the prime research tools in this study. A written questionnaire provides a vehicle for expression without fear of embarrassment to the respondent. An effective questionnaire should be attractive in appearance, neatly arranged and clearly printed (Borg & Gall, 1983; Olrich, 1978). As a result of the above mentioned characteristics of an effective questionnaire, considerable attention was paid to the design of the questionnaire for this study. The following received major attention: content of the questions, wording, order, form of response as well as the format and presentation of the questionnaire (Burroughs, 1983). The researcher sent letters and consent forms to the district director and circuit managers to request permission for conducting a research (Appendix G& H).

According to Good and Scates (1972: 278), an effective questionnaire must be brief, interesting and must obtain some depth from the response in order to avoid superficial replies; it must not be too suggestive and not embarrass the respondent as an individual; the questions should not elicit ambiguous responses, and should be arranged in a logical and psychologically proper order – that is, if both general and specific questions are to be asked on a topic, the general questions should be asked first. This order helps the respondent to organise his or her own thinking, so that his/her own answers are logical and objective. These criteria were followed, in-as-much as possible and applicable to this study.

In this study, questionnaires were designed for the different stakeholders who participated in this study: grade 12 learners (Appendix 1A). School Management Teammembers (Appendix 1B), School Governing Body members (Appendix 1C), as well as subject educators (Appendix 1D). Taken together, the questionnaires consisted of a section on biographical information (Section A) and a section focusing on factors considered to be contributing to the poor performance of grade twelve learners (Section B). In addition, the respondents were asked to respond to closed-ended questions in a Likert-type scale with four response categories, namely, strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree.

The questionnaires were administered personally by the researcher, to the population sample selected. The face to face administration of the questionnaire was meant to reduce the possibility of misinterpretation of questions because this gave the researcher an opportunity to explain each item thoroughly.

### **3.6.2Interviews**

As mentioned earlier, the researcher used open-ended interviews as a data collection strategy. Walker (1993:117) and Walford (2001:84) state that interviews can be perceived as data-collection devices which attempt to capture the varying perspectives of participants to standardised questions that intend to be minimally interventional. MacMillan and Schumacher (1997:447) add that interviews are open-response questions that are meant to obtain data from participants about the given phenomena of interest, how individuals conceive of their world and how they make sense of important events in their lives. As Johnson and Christensen (2000:144) further state, during qualitative interviews, in-depth information about the participant's thoughts, beliefs, knowledge, reasoning, motivations and feelings about the topic can be obtained.

Due to the nature of this study, the researcher decided to use structured and open-ended questions during interviews. The open-ended questions started with a broad statement and then narrowed down to more specific questions. The prepared questions, embodied in the interview schedule, were meant to allow for further, unplanned questions to be asked in order to clarify participants' responses. All interview questions were set in light of the problem statement of this study and based on the issues identified in the literature study in chapter 2.

In a sense, an interview is an oral questionnaire (Best, 1977:182). In this study, these 'oral questionnaires' were administered to SMT members (Appendix 2A), SGB members (Appendix 2B) grade 12 learners (Appendix 2C) and subject educators (Appendix 2D) of nine sampled schools in Mbizana district.

Cohen and Manion (1995:277) point out that open-ended questions have several advantages – including being flexible and allowing the interviewer to probe and test the limits of respondents' knowledge; encouraging co-operation and helping to establish good rapport between the interviewer and the interviewee and allowing the interviewer to make a true/accurate assessment of what the respondents believe.

Gummerson (2000:29) and Johnson and Christensen (2000: 147) add that the opportunity to observe the interviewee's behavioural patterns enables the researcher to collect additional information about the participant as people do not always do what they say. Thus, during the interviews in this study the researcher directly observed the participants, focusing on their (a) feelings, (b) thoughts and intentions, (c) facial expressions of approval or disapproval, (d) general thinking styles, frame of reference, and (e) organisation of their words.

In this study, the actual administration of the interviews started with the researcher pointing out the purpose of the study to the interviewees, and explaining that the information collected would be used solely for research purposes and the advancement of education.

### **3.6.3 Coding of Interview Responses**

The one-on-one interviews with each respondent were scheduled to last an hour and were conducted in the respondents' familiar surroundings (their schools) for purposes of ensuring measures of easiness and comfort in their sharing of information.

The responses to the one-on-one interviews were recorded, using pen and paper for purposes of noting down key issues. The interviews were conducted based on how well they corresponded with the topic and variables under study as well as on the themes that were established under discussions in Chapter Two, and also as reflected in this chapter.

The respondents who were School Management Team Members were name-coded SMT. Respondents who were in the School Governing Body were name-coded SGB. Respondents who were grade twelve learners were name-coded L and those who were subject educators were name-coded E.

### **3.6.4 Data Collection Process and Ethical Considerations**

Following the selection of the respondents, the researcher's first task was to make interview appointments during which she briefed the participants, regarding the purpose of the interviews. This was the point at which their consent to participate in the project was requested. Further, the participants were assured that the information they would provide would be held in strict confidence, and that it would be used solely for the purpose of the study, and that whatever they said would not prejudice them in any way. They were also informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time, if they felt that, for any reason, they wished not to continue their participation.

At the time of administering the questionnaire and the interviews, the researcher requested the respondents to answer truthfully and honestly, in order to ensure that the research

objectives were achieved on the basis of valid and reliable data. According to Cohen and Manion (1995:274-275) interviews, in particular, inevitably may be biased and that this needs to be recognised and controlled by both the interviewer and the interviewee. In trying to curtail bias, the researcher tried as much as possible to establish rapport with each respondent in order to promote frank and spontaneous responses from the interviewee.

### **3.7SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

In this chapter, the research methods used in this study have been presented with regard to the purpose of collecting data on factors considered to contribute to the underperformance of grade twelve learners at Mbizana district. The researcher used a mixed-methods research approach which involved collecting both qualitative and quantitative research data. The chosen research design was Descriptive Survey, and the data gathering techniques were questionnaires and interview schedules for face-to-face interviews with the respective respondent groups.

The questionnaires consisted of section A, which included the biographical information of the respondents and section B which focused on factors that could contribute to low learner academic performance. The Likert-type scale questionnaire was used as a research instrument. Open-ended questions were also included to the questionnaire.

The target and accessible populations were also described, as well as the research sample and sampling procedures. Overall, ninety randomly selected respondents participated in this study. The ninety participants were comprised as follows: forty grade twelve learners, fifteen SMT members, twenty five subject educators and ten SGB members.

In conclusion, the researcher strongly believe that using both qualitative and quantitative methods would provide her with comprehensive results, and enable her to encounter various stakeholders under their different but normal day-to-day situations.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter covers the interpretation of the responses to the questionnaire and the interviews. By way of triangulation, the research results from the various qualitative and quantitative instruments were presented together in order to have comprehensive answers to the research objectives of this study. Klein and Olbrecht (2011:343) also contend that triangulation is an integrative approach that brings both quantitative and qualitative data to arrive at a more comprehensive response to a research question.

The main study consisted of ninety respondents who were randomly selected from the nine sampled schools. The sample of respondents consisted of forty (40) grade twelve learners, twenty five (25) subject educators, fifteen (15) School Management Team (SMT) members and ten (10) School Governing Body (SGB) members. At the end of this chapter, there will be a summary and conclusion.

The researcher used questionnaires and interviews to:

- a) Ascertain what grade twelve learners considered to be the main challenges preventing Mbizana district grade twelve learners from performing well in the NSC examinations
- b) Find out what SMT members considered to be the main challenges preventing Mbizana district grade twelve learners from performing well in the NSC examinations
- c) Find out what educators considered to be the main challenges preventing Mbizana district grade twelve learners from performing well in the NSC examinations



d) Find out what SGB members considered to be the main challenges preventing Mbizana district grade twelve learners from performing well in the NSC examinations

e) Assess whether or not there were similarities and differences in the factors considered by the various stakeholders to be the main challenges preventing Mbizana district grade twelve learners from performing well in the NSC examinations.

By way of triangulation, the research results from the various qualitative and quantitative instruments were presented together in order to have comprehensive answers to the fore-referenced research objectives. Klein and Olbrecht (2011:343) also contend that triangulation is an integrative approach where more quantitative and more complete findings are identified, than could be arrived at using one of the methods alone.

## **4.2 ANSWERS TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS:**

### **4.2.1 BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION OF GRADE 12 LEARNERS**

As already stated, there were forty (40) grade twelve learners who participated in this study. The first instrument which was used to collect information from these participants was a questionnaire. The first part of the questionnaire sought to establish some important basic demographic attributes of the respondents. This information is presented in Table 4.1 and Figures 4.1 to 4.7.

#### **4.2.1.1 Age of respondents**

The age profile of the respondents is presented in Table 4.1

Table 4.1 Age distribution of learner participants (n=40)

Age (Years)	Number	Percent
16	03	7.50
17	05	12.50
18	17	42.50
19	12	30.00
20	03	7.50
Total	40	100

With regard to grade twelve learners' age groups, Table 4.1 shows that 12.50 % and 42.50% of the respondents were aged 17 and 18 years, respectively, while 30% and 7.50% of respondents reported that they were not in the appropriate grade twelve cohort (19-20 years).

#### 4.2.1.2 Home language

As seen in Figure 4.1, most of the respondents (70%) reported isiXhosa to be their home language, while (30%) spoke other languages at home.

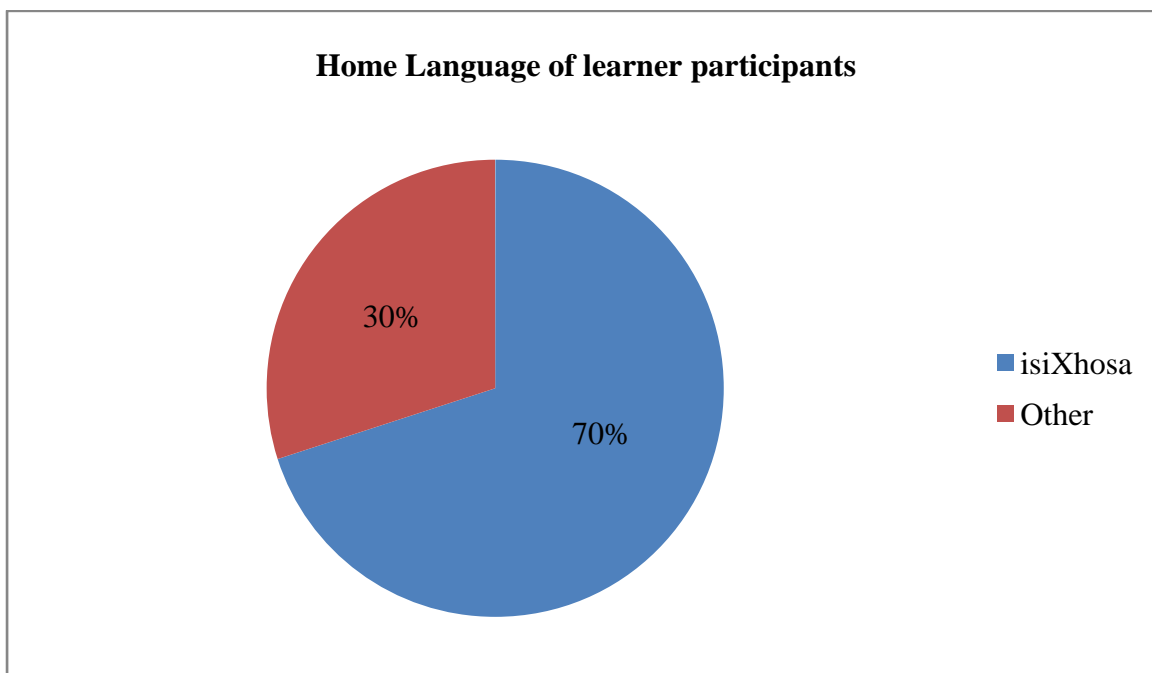


Figure 4.1 Home language of learner participant

70% of the respondents agreed that isiXhosa was their home language therefore; they could communicate well with educators. Only 30% of the learner participants reported that their home language was not isiXhosa.

#### 4.2.1.3 Whether or not parents are alive

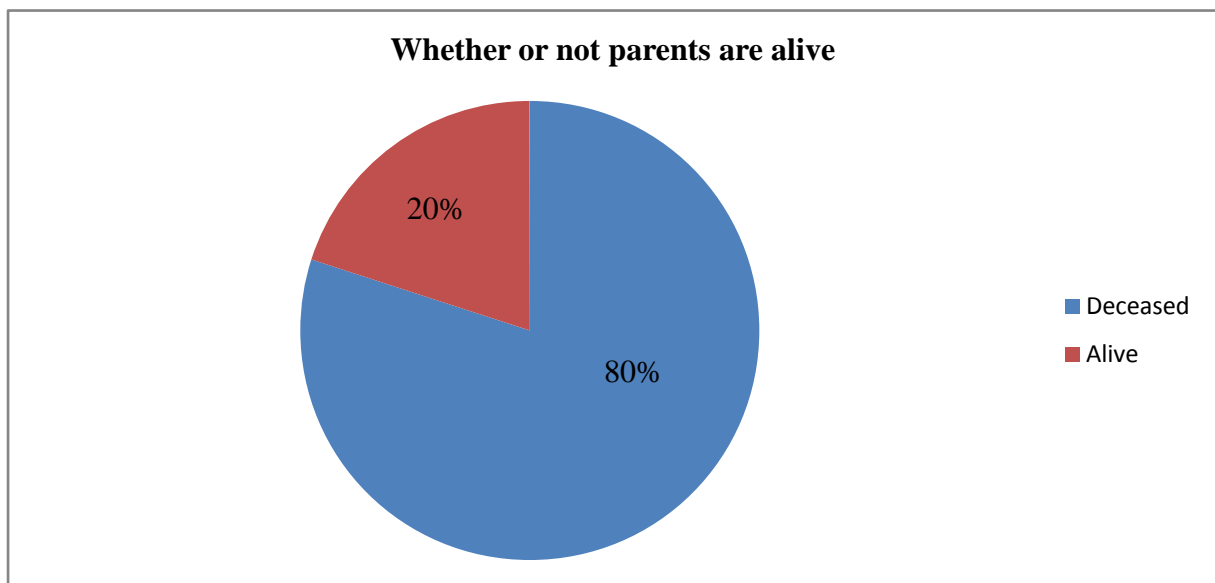


Figure 4.2 Whether or not learner's parents are still alive

As seen in Figure 4.2 above, most respondents (80%) reported that their parents were deceased while (20%) asserted that their parents were alive.

#### 4.2.1.4 Respondents' access to electricity in their home

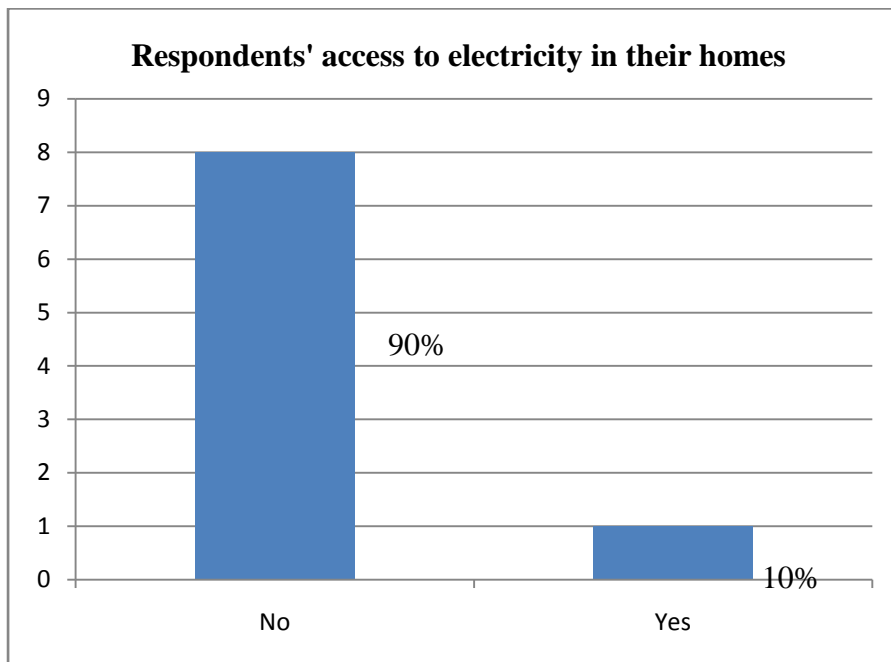


Figure 4.3 Home status with regard to electrification

Figure 4.3 illustrates the response profile with regard to whether or not the homes of the respondents were electrified; 90% of the respondents reported that their homes were not electrified while 10% lived in electrified homes.

#### 4.2.1.5 Parents/Guardians' highest level of education attained

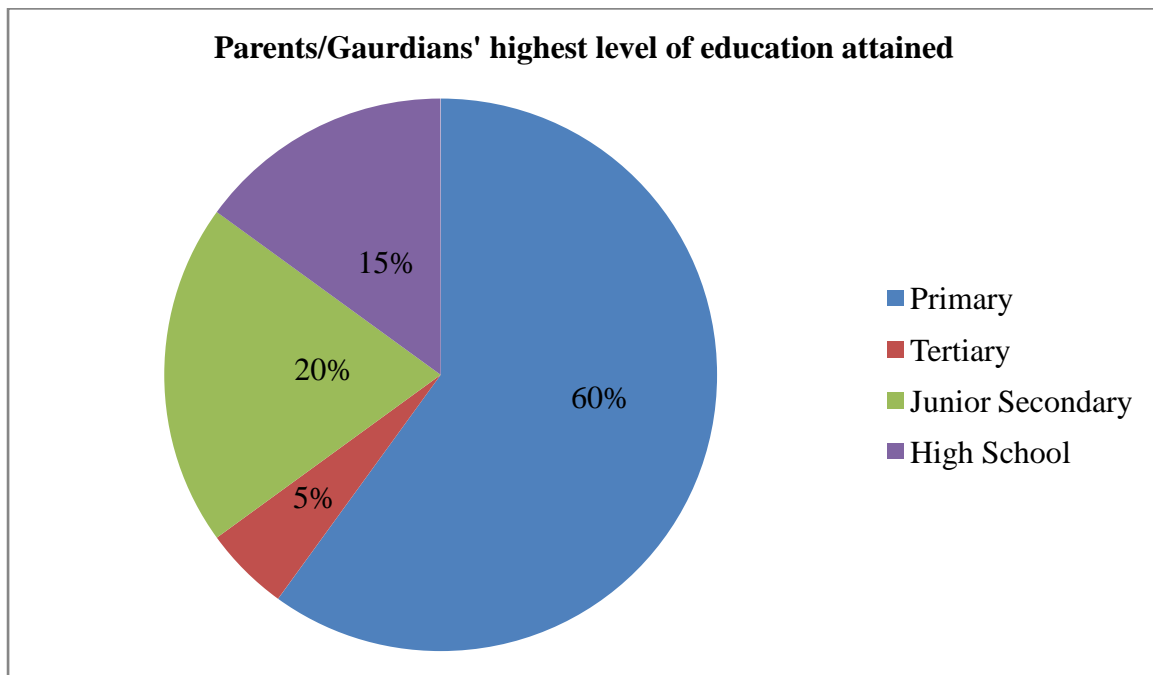


Figure 4.4 Parents/guardians' highest level of education attained

Figure 4.4 shows that 60% of the grade twelve learners reported that their parents had primary school education, 20% reported that their parents'/guardians' highest education attainment was junior secondary school level. There were relatively fewer parents and guardians who were reported to have had high school (15%) and tertiary (5%) levels of education.

#### 4.2.1.6 Parents/guardians' employment status

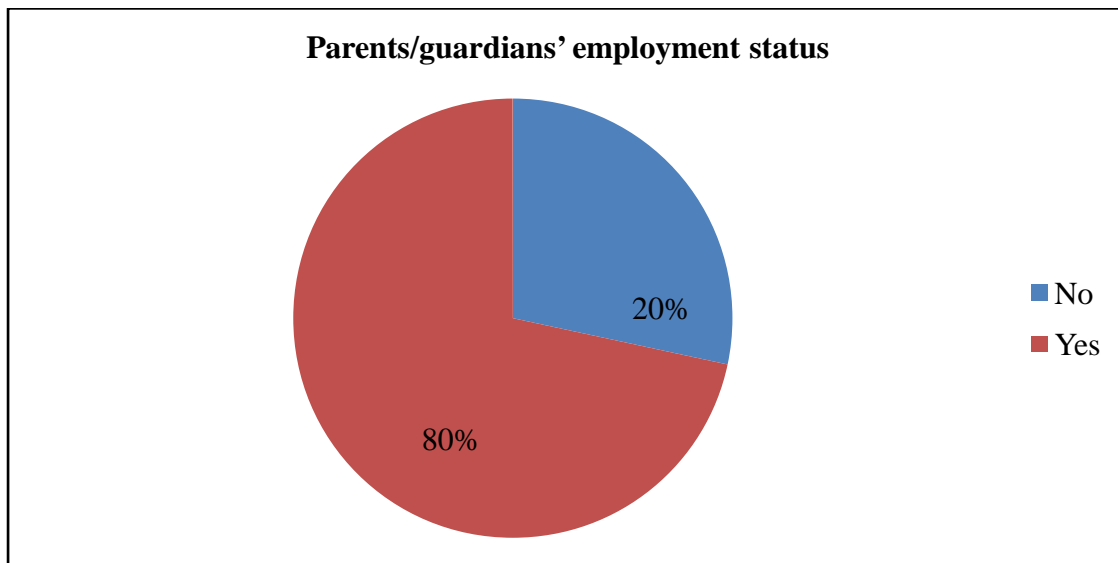


Figure 4.5 Pie chart for parents/guardians' employment status

As shown in Figure 4.5 80% of the grade twelve learners reported that their parents/guardians were employed while 20% reported that their parents/guardians were not in gainful employment.

#### 4.2.1.7 Whether or not parents/guardians assisted learners with homework

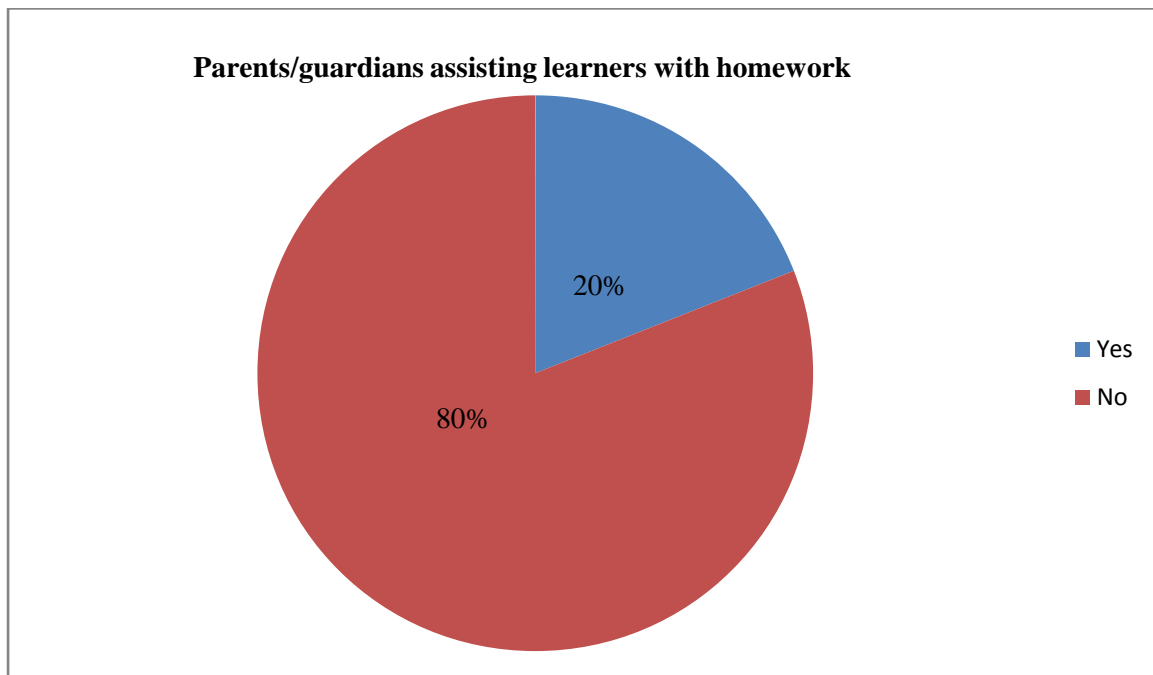


Figure 4.6 Pie chart for whether or not parents/guardians assist learners with homework

Concerning whether or not the parents or guardians assisted the respondents with homework, Figure 4.6 shows that 20% of learners reported that their parents or guardians did assist them, while an overwhelming majority, i.e. 80%, reported that their parents or guardians did not assist them with homework.

#### 4.2.1.8 Whether or not learners came from poverty-stricken home

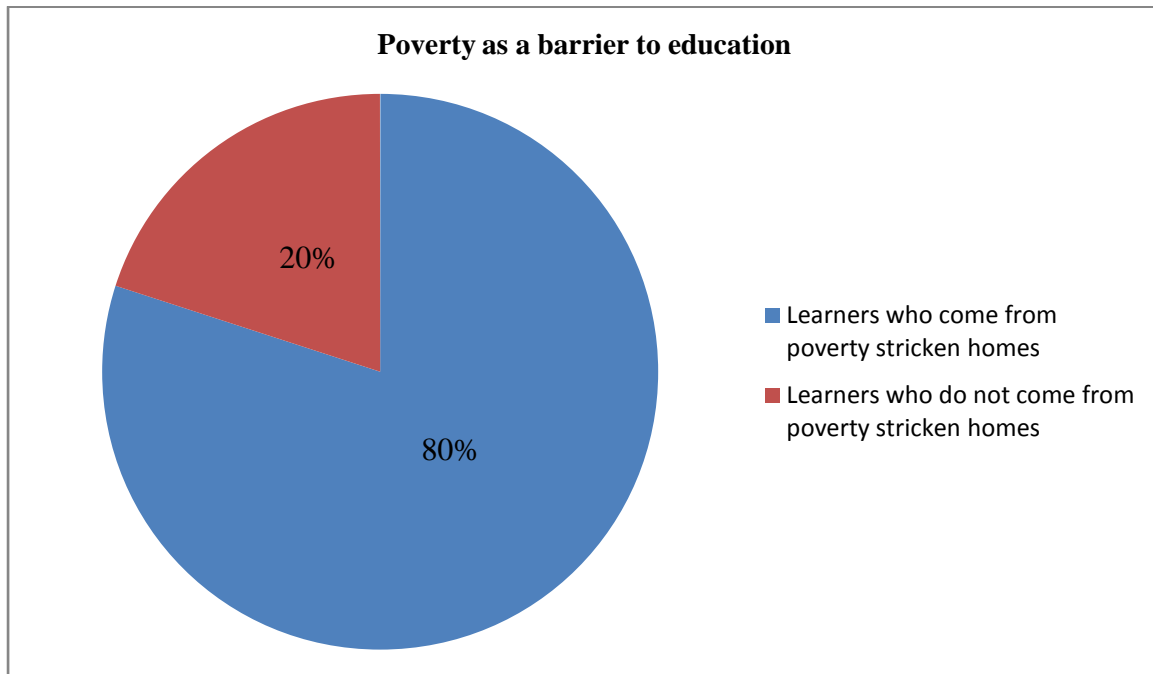


Figure 4.7 Whether or not learners came from poverty stricken homes,

Concerning whether or not learners came from poverty stricken homes, as shown in Figure 4.7 most respondents (80%) reported that they did, while 20% reported that they did not.

#### 4.3 Responses to the questionnaire: Learner's views about the challenges preventing good performance in the NSC examinations

This section presents the results to the first research question concerning grade twelve learners' views about the challenges that prevented learners from performing well in the NSC examinations.



[Key: SA-Strongly Agree; AG-Agree; DA-Disagree; SD-Strongly Disagree]

#### 4.3.1 What grade twelve learner respondents considered to be the main challenges they face with regard to the NSC examinations

Table 4.2 Results from the questionnaire (n=40)

Possible challenges	SA	A	SD	D
1. Working in a group makes me feel more confident about my academic abilities.	75	20	5	0
2. Overcrowding prevents us from doing some classroom-based activities.	20	40	20	20
3. Lack of science laboratories and libraries contribute to low academic performance in my school	20	60	0	20
4. Late delivery of textbooks contributes to low academic performance in my school.	20	40	20	20
5. There is no reading material at home. I depend completely on school books.	40	40	10	10
6. My parents do not attend parent meetings called by the school.	60	40	0	0
7. My parents do not help with homework.	45	30	10	15
8. Other family members disturb me while I am studying at home.	40	45	05	10
9. Lack of learning material contributes to low academic performance in my school.	35	50	5	10
10. Travelling to and from school is a big challenge.	35	40	10	15

For ease of comparison the first two columns of Table 4.2 were collapsed to form the agree column and the third and fourth columns made the disagree column (see Table 4.3). This was done to enable a quick comparison between the two contrasting sets of responses.

Table 4.3 Main challenges faced by learners

<b>Possible challenges</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>
1. Working in a group makes me feel more confident about my academic abilities.	95	05
2. Overcrowding prevents us from doing some classroom-based activities.	60	40
3. Lack of science laboratories and libraries contribute to low academic performance in my school.	80	20
4. Late delivery of textbooks contributes to low academic performance in my school.	60	40
5. There is no reading material at home. I depend completely on school books.	75	25
6. My parents do not attend parent meetings called by the school.	100	0
7. My parents do not help with homework.	80	20
8. Other family members disturb me while I am studying at home.	80	20
9. Lack of learning material contributes to low academic performance in my school.	80	20
10. Travelling to and from school is a big challenge.	75	25

## **Working in Groups**

According to Table 4.3, 95% of learner respondents agreed that they felt confident about their academic abilities when they were working in groups, while 5% disagreed with this statement. From the interviews, three of the five learners interviewed, said that lack of space made it difficult for them to work in groups during class. The remaining two reported that they would prefer working in groups if they could be placed outside the classroom, in the playground.

One learner who complained about lack of classroom space as a constraint regarding group work had the following to say:

*“Lack of space makes it difficult for me to work although I enjoy group work.*

*It will be better if my class teacher would get a bigger classroom” [L-R1]*

On the other hand, the two learners who said that they would prefer working in groups if they could be placed outside the classroom, in the playground, put it in the following way:

*“I would prefer working in groups if I could be placed outside the classroom, in the playground.*

*My classroom is too congested. I could not get time to do other activities”. [L-R2]*

## **Overcrowding**

According to Table 4.3 60% of learner respondents reported that overcrowded classrooms prevented them from doing some classroom activities while 40% of learner respondents disagreed. Three of the five learners interviewed, said that their classroom had insufficient space for them to do group discussions without disturbing other groups. The remaining two

reported that they were not happy to discuss in a congested classroom because their mistakes would be heard in other groups.

The learners who complained about insufficient space in the classroom as a problem regarding group work had the following to say:

*“Our classroom has insufficient space for us to do group discussions without disturbing other groups.*

*My classroom has no space for me to do many activities well.*

*I enjoy working in groups but my classroom is overcrowded.*

*My classroom has insufficient space for me to participate in group discussions without disturbing other groups”. [L-R3]*

One of the two students who said that their teachers confused them with regard to their group discussions put it in the following way:

*“We are not happy to discuss in a congested classroom because our mistakes would be heard in other groups”. [L-R4]*

### **Lack of Science Laboratories**

According to Table 4.3 80% of learner respondents reported that there was a lack of science laboratories in Mbizana district while 20% of learner respondents disagreed that there was a lack of science labs in Mbizana district. Four of the five learners interviewed, said that there was a lack of science laboratories in Mbizana schools. The remaining one said that she wanted to be transported to the nearby school science laboratory.

The learners who complained about the lack of science laboratories had the following to say:

*“There is no science laboratory in my school; as a result, I do not have any insight into chemicals.*

*There is a shortage of science laboratories at my school as well as at neighbouring schools.*

*My school is not well equipped in terms of resources. If I need to visit a well-equipped science laboratory, I have to go to a KZN school.*

*There is a shortage of science laboratories at my school as well as at neighbouring schools”. [L-R1]*

One learner who said that she wanted to be transported to the nearby science laboratory put it in the following way:

*“I want to be transported to the nearby school laboratory which is well equipped”.*  
*[L-R2]*

### **Late Delivery of Textbooks**

According to Table 4.3 60% of learner respondents agreed that the textbooks were delivered very late while 40% indicated that they were not delivered late. From the interviews, three of the five learners interviewed reported that there was a shortage of textbooks; that new textbooks were delivered very late. The other two respondents said they had no hope of good results at the end of the year.

One of the learners who complained about late delivery of textbooks had the following to say:

*“I share my textbook with Zola because the textbooks will be delivered late. Zola is waiting for his textbook”. [L-R1]*

One of the two learners who said that they had no hope of good results put it in the following way:

*“I have no hope of good results at the end of this year, as a result of lack of textbooks”. [L-R2]*

### **Lack of Reading Material**

According to Table 4.3 75% of learner respondents indicated that there was no reading material at their homes, whilst 25% disagreed. From the interviews, three of the five learners who had been interviewed, reported that their parents promised to buy them material to read at home but failed due to financial constraints. The remaining two reported that they needed more material to supplement their prescribed textbooks.

The learners who complained about lack of reading material had the following to say:

*My parents promised to buy material for me to read at home. However, they failed to do this due to financial constraints.*

*There is a lack of learning material at my school as well as at my home. [L-R3]*

The two learners who said that they needed more material to supplement their prescribed textbooks put it in the following way:

*I need more reading material to supplement my prescribed textbooks.*

*I do not have reference books to read at home [L-R4]*

### **My parents do not attend school meetings**

According to Table 4.3 100% of learner respondents agreed that their parents did not attend school meetings. From the interviews, three out of five respondents, interviewed reported that

their parents did not attend meetings. The remaining two reported that they did not have parents and their guardians did not co-operate.

The learners who complained about their parents who did not attend school meetings had the following to say:

*My parents do not want to attend school meetings. They say that they are not learners.*

*My parents do not want to attend school meetings. They said they are busy.*

*My parents do not attend school meetings. They claim that they are busy. They are busy looking after cattle and goats. [L- R1]*

One of the two learners who said that they did not have parents and their guardians were not co-operating put it as follows:

*I do not have parents, my guardian does not want to co-operate. [L-R2]*

### **My parents do not help me with homework**

Table 4.3 shows that 80% of learner respondents agreed that their parents did not help them with homework, while 20% disagreed. From the interviews, four out of five learners interviewed reported that their parents did not help them with homework while the remaining one reported that her parents helped her.

The learners who complained about parents who did not help with homework had the following to say:

*My parents do not help me with homework because they do not have a high school education.*

*My parents do not help me with homework. They say that they are busy.*

*My parents do not support me when I am doing my homework. They tell me that they do not know grade twelve works.*

*My parents do not know how to assist me in Maths and Science. [L-R1]*

The learner who complained about teachers who did not do their work put it in the following way:

*I am not willing to ask for help, because the teachers do not want to do their work.  
[L-R1]*

### **Family member disturbance in studies**

According to Table 4.3 80% of learner respondents agreed that other family members disturbed them while they were studying, 20% disagreed. From the interviews, three out of five learners interviewed reported that they could not study well at their homes because it was noisy. The remaining two reported that they needed hostels at their schools.

The learners who complained about noise at home had the following to say:

*“It is very noisy at home. I cannot get enough study time because other family members disturb me.*

*I wish my parents could have quiet study rooms at home so that I could study without any disturbance, this would not have any negative impact on my academic performance”.[L-R1]*

*“There are no student residences or hostels at my school, and I do not have enough study opportunities at home because there is a lot of noise”. [L-R2]*



One of the two learners who needed residences at school put it the following way:

*I need the DOE to provide us with hostels at school in order to study well. [L-R3]*

### **Lack of Learning Material**

According to Table 4.3 80% of learner respondents agreed that a lack of learning materials contributed to low academic performance, while 20% disagreed. From the interviews, three of the five learners interviewed reported that a lack of learning materials contributed to their low academic performance.

Learners who complained about the lack of learning material had the following to say:

*“There is a serious lack of learning material at my school. The Department supplies high passing schools with learning material, and forgets us”. [L-R5]*

*Most of us do not return our books at the end of the year. The new ones are delivered very late.*

*We have been running short of learning material for a long time. [L-R6] There is a lack of learning material at my school. [L-R7]*

*There is no library in my school. The one in town has insufficient books. [L-R8]*

### **Travel to and from School**

According to Table 4.3 75% of learner respondents indicated that travelling to and from school was a very big problem, whilst 25% disagreed. From the interviews, four out of five learners interviewed reported that travelling to and from school was a big challenge for them, while the remaining one reported that the OBE approach did not give her enough time for independent study.

The learners who complained about the problem of travelling to and from school had the following to say:

*The School Management Team does not address our problems, such as building hostels for us. I have to travel a long distance to go to school. By the time I arrive, I am tired and hungry. [L-R1]*

*I have a problem with transport. I have to travel on foot to school and it is a long distance. On rainy days I do not go to school. [L-R2]*

Some learners complained about other factors not covered under the above subheadings, the new education approach, and put it in the following way:

*The new education approved (OBE) does not give me enough time to study independently instead it prefers group work. [L-R1]*

Another student complained about teacher absenteeism and said:

*Teacher absenteeism is the root cause of my low academic performance.*

*My classmates are selling drugs in order to get money. Use of drugs during school hours may impact on our performance.*

*I always use drugs that are available at my school. This could be one of the factors impacting negatively on my performance.*

*The Department allows teachers to transfer to schools next to town. We are left without teachers. [L-R1]*

#### 4.4 SMT MEMBERS' VIEWS ABOUT THE CHALLENGES PREVENTING GOOD PERFORMANCE IN THE NSC EXAMINATIONS

The second research question sought to find out what SMT members considered to be the main challenges preventing Mbizana district grade twelve learners from performing well in the NSC examinations.

##### 4.4.1 SMT members' biographical information

SMT members consist of a principal, a deputy principal and three head of divisions.

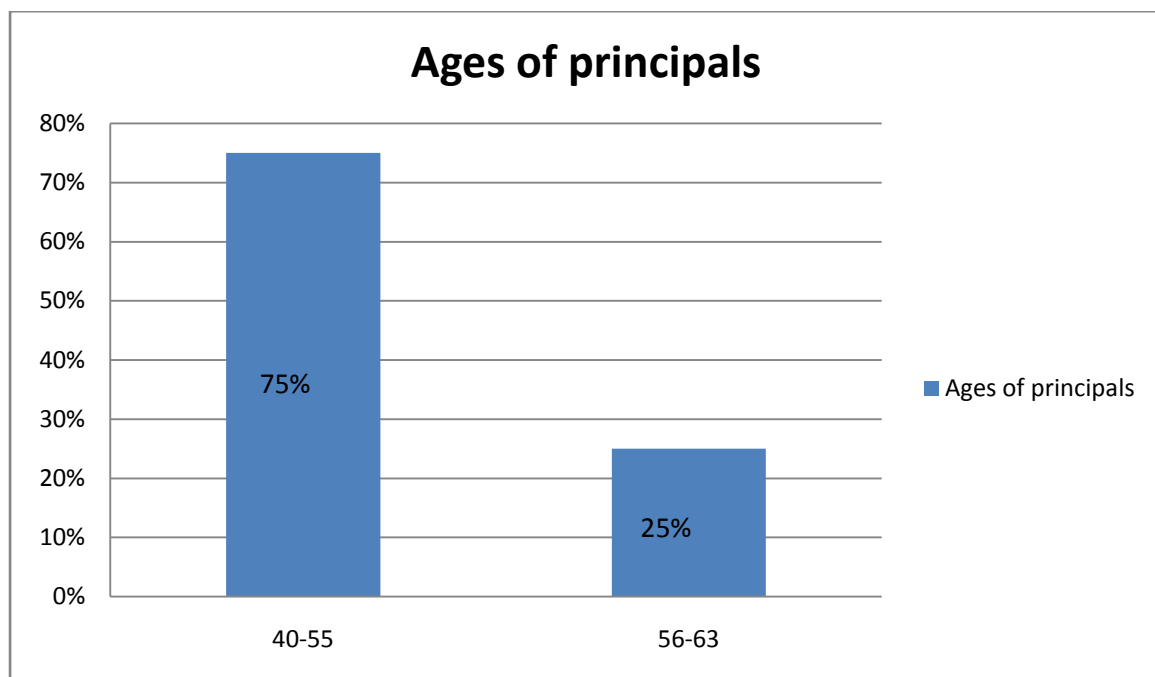


Figure 4.8 Ages of principals (n=15)

Figure 4.8 above illustrates that most of the respondents (75%) reported that they fell between the ages of (40-55 years). (25%) fell between 56 and 63 years.

#### 4.4.2 SMTs' work experience

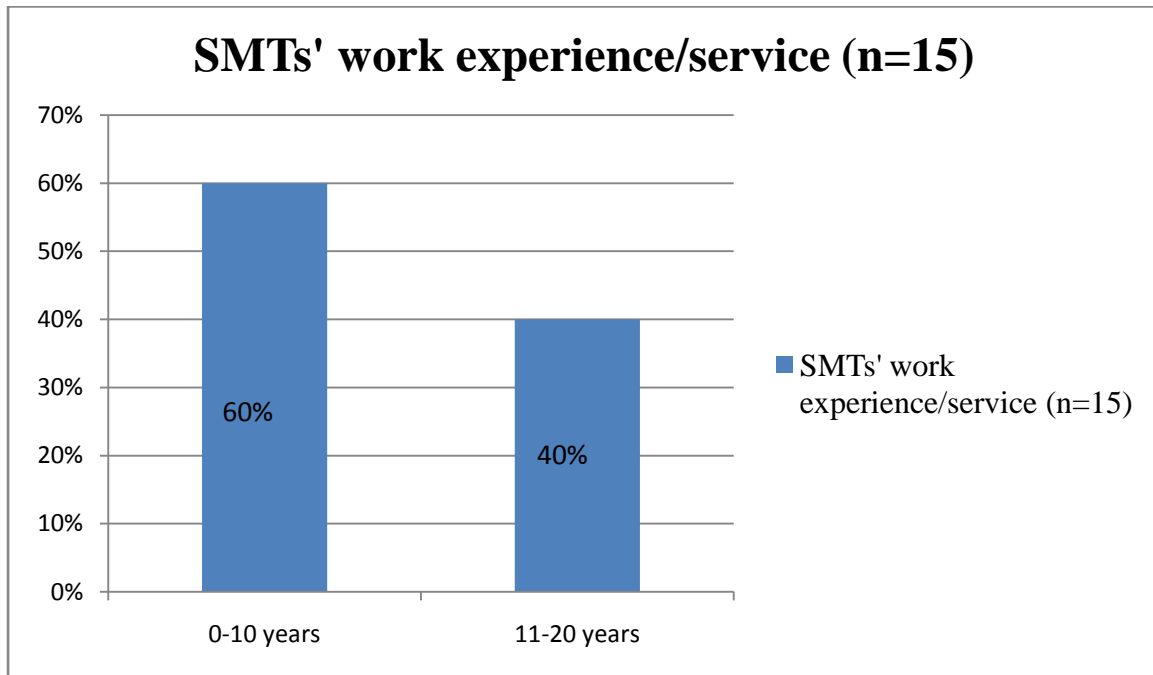


Figure 4.9 SMTs' work experience/service (n=15)

With regard to the length of service, many respondents (60%) reported that their service ranged between 0-10 years, while 40% reported that their service ranged between 11-20 years. This is illustrated in Figure 4.9

#### 4.4.3 Road access to schools

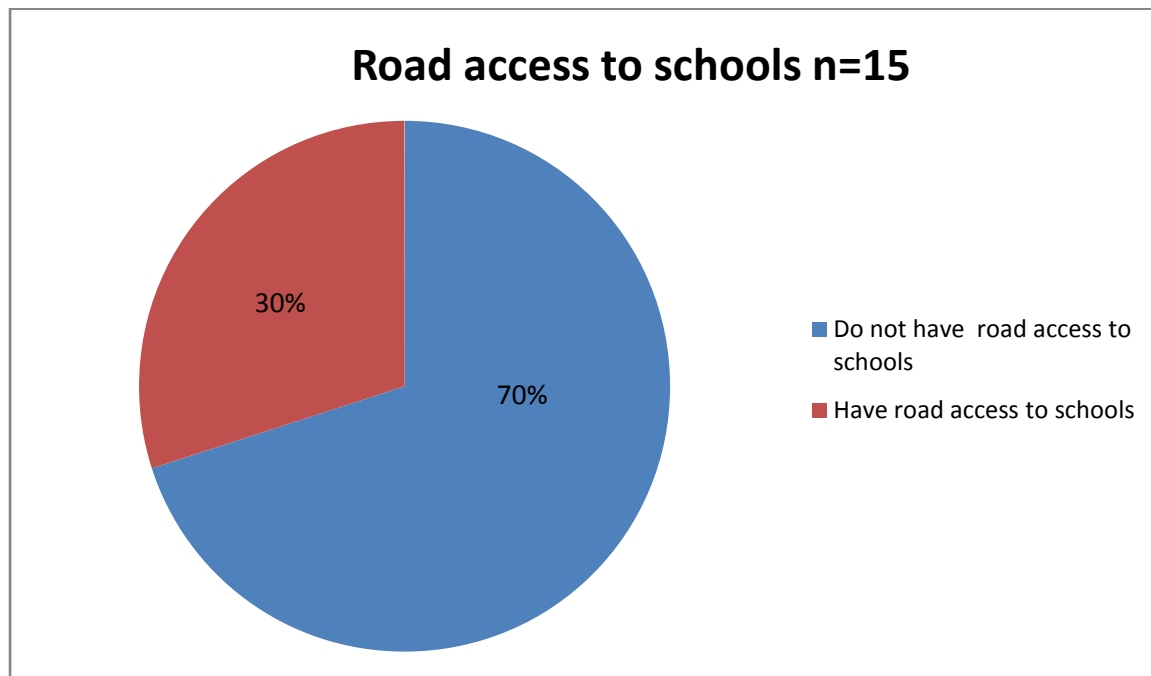


Figure 4.10 Road access to schools

Concerning road access to schools, as shown in Figure 4.10, most respondents, 70% reported that their schools were inaccessible on rainy days, while 30% reported that they had good roads.

#### 4.4.4 Capacity building in managerial and leadership skills

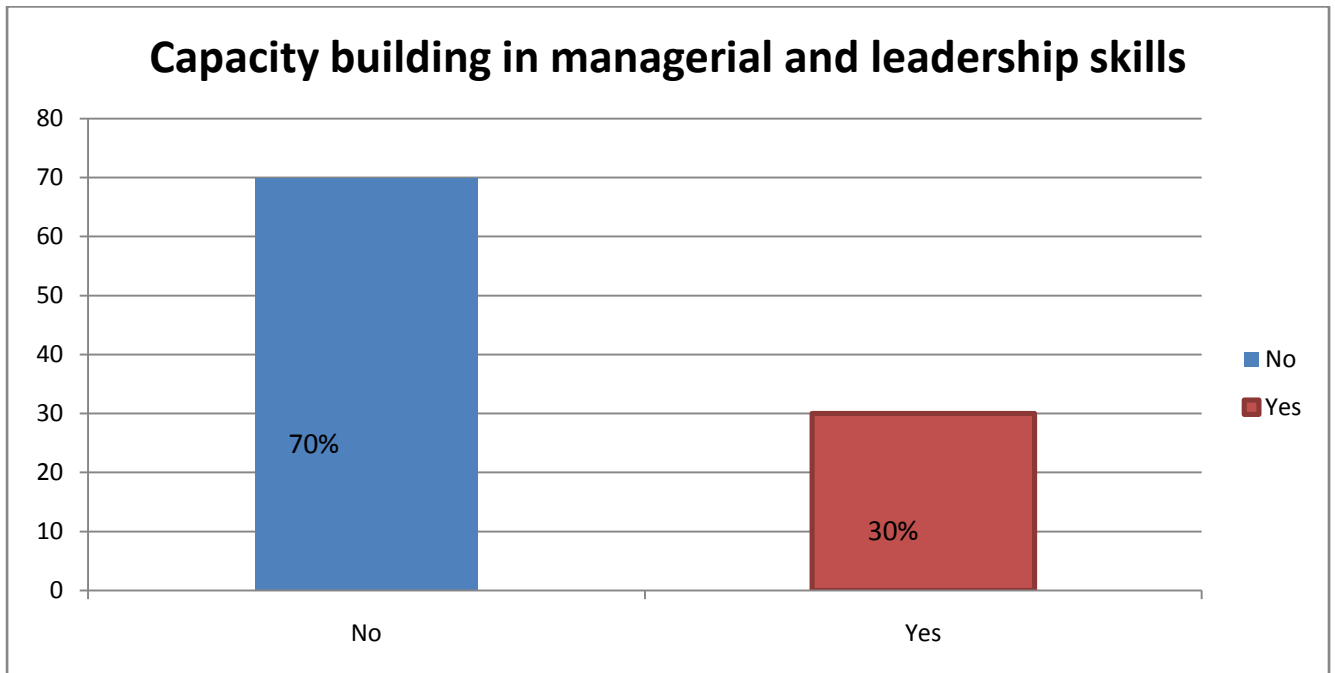


Figure 4.11 Capacity building in managerial and leadership skills

With regard to capacity building programmes in managerial and leadership skills, 70% of the respondents reported that the Department of Education did not provide them with opportunities for capacity development, while 30% indicated that they were frequently capacitated with managerial and leadership skills. This response profile is presented in Table 4.4 below

#### 4.4.5 Responses to the Questionnaire

This section presents what SMT member respondents considered to be the main challenges facing Mbizana NSC learners. Table 4.4 presents the results of the questionnaire for SMT members.

Table 4.4 Results from the questionnaire (n=15)

<b>Possible Challenges</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>AG</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>DA</b>
1. Teacher absenteeism is common in this institution.	40	20	20	20
2. Learner-teacher ratio for grade twelve is too high and classrooms are overcrowded.	40	20	40	0
3. My school does not have enough teachers for mathematics.	20	40	20	20
4. My school does not have enough teachers for physical sciences.	20	40	20	20
5. Lack of water supply makes learning and teaching difficult.	20	20	40	20
6. There is a lack of science labs in my school.	20	20	20	40
7. There is a lack of sufficient learning materials that are necessary for the Outcomes Based Education system to be effective.	20	40	20	20
8. There is late delivery of text books in my school.	20	40	20	20
9. Classrooms are overcrowded in this institution.	60	40	0	0
10. There is a shortage of furniture such as desks.	20	80	0	0
11. Very few parents attend parents' meetings in this institution.	60	40	0	0
12. Very few parents assist their children with homework.	20	40	20	20
13. Poverty is a great barrier to education in my school.	20	40	20	20
14. Nutrition programmes in my school are properly conducted and monitored.	0	40	40	20

For ease of comparison, the above Likert scale was reduced to show the affirmative (Agree and Strongly Agree) versus the non-affirmative responses (Disagree and Strongly Disagree).

The combined data are presented in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5 Results from the questionnaire (n=15)

<b>Possible challenges</b>	<b>AG</b>	<b>DA</b>
1. Teacher absenteeism is common in this institution.	60	40
2. Learner-teacher ratio for grade 12 is too high and classrooms are overcrowded.	60	40
3. My school does not have enough teachers for mathematics.	60	40
4. My school does not have enough teachers for physical sciences.	60	40
5. Lack of water supply makes learning and teaching difficult.	40	60
6. There is a lack of science labs in my school.	80	20
7. There is a lack of sufficient learning materials that are necessary for the Outcomes Based Education system to be effective.	80	20
8. There is late delivery of text books in my school	80	20
9. Classrooms are overcrowded in this institution	100	0
10. There is a shortage of furniture such as desks	100	0
11. Very few parents attend parents' meetings in this institution	100	0
12. Very few parents assist their children with homework	100	0
13. Poverty is a great barrier to education in my school	80	20
14. Nutrition programmes in my school are properly conducted and monitored	40	60

### **Teacher Absenteeism**

According to Table 4.5 60% of SMT member respondents agreed that teacher absenteeism was common at their schools, whilst 40% disagreed. From the interviews, four out of five



SMT members interviewed reported that the roads to their respective schools were not accessible and this promoted teacher absenteeism, particularly on rainy days. One SMT member reported that learner strikes were common in her school.

One of the SMT members who complained about teacher absenteeism on rainy days had the following to say:

*If the DoE could construct good roads, all schools would be accessible, and this would prevent teacher absenteeism on rainy days. [SMT-R1]*

*The road to my school is not accessible; as a result, teachers do not come to school on rainy days. There is also high learner absenteeism at the school. [SMT-R2]*

The SMT member, who reported learner strikes to be a contributory factor to low learner achievement, put it in the following way:

*At my school, learner strikes are common especially towards the end of the year. [SMT-R1]*

### **High Learner-Teacher Ratio**

According to Table 4.5 60% of SMT member respondents agreed that the learner-teacher ratio was too high at their schools while 40% disagreed. From the interviews, three out of five SMT members reported that the learner-teacher ratio was too high at their schools, while the remaining two reported that poor infrastructure at their schools impacted negatively on learner performance.

The SMT members who complained about high learner-teacher ratio had the following to say:

*The Department of Basic Education does not supply us with desks each year. My classrooms are congested. The Learner-Teacher ratio is too high. [SMT-R1]*

*Grade 12 classes at my school are overcrowded. This results in high learner-teacher ratios. [SMT-R2]*

*My school is characterized by the shortage of classrooms which results in high learner-teacher ratio. [SMT-R3]*

One of the two SMT members, who complained about poor infrastructure, put it in the following way:

*“Poor infrastructure impacts negatively on learner performance.” [SMT-R1]*

### **Insufficient Mathematics Teachers**

According to Table 4.5 60% of SMT respondents reported that their schools did not have mathematics teachers, whilst 40% reported having some. From the interviews, three out of five SMT member respondents reported that there was a shortage of mathematics teachers at their schools while the remaining two reported that the redeployment process removed many teachers from their schools.

The SMT members who complained about the lack of mathematics teachers had the following to say:

*“There is a shortage of educators at my school, especially for Mathematics.” [SMT-R1]*

*“At my school there is a major shortage of qualified teachers especially in Mathematics and Science.” [SMT-R2]*

*“I do not have enough Mathematics and Science teachers. This is due to the termination of temporary teachers at the end of each year and their late appointment.” [SMT-R3]*

One of the two SMT members who complained about the redeployment process put it in the following way:

*“The redeployment process removed many teachers from my school.” [SMT-R1]*

### **Insufficient Physical Science Teachers**

According to Table 4.5, 60% of SMT member respondents agreed that their schools did not have enough physical science teachers, whilst 40% indicated that they had some. From the interviews, four out of five SMT member respondents reported that they did not have enough teachers for physical science while the remaining one said that the fact that FET starts from grade ten to twelve, instead of starting from grade eight to twelve did not prepare their learners well.

The SMT members who complained about insufficient physical science teachers had the following to say:

*“At my school, there is a shortage of educators, especially in Physical Sciences and Mathematics, so the learner-teacher ratio is very high.” [SMT-R1]*

*“Many schools in this district are offering Mathematics and Physical Sciences as a result I cannot request any mathematics or physical science teacher from any school to assist in my school.” [SMT-R2]*

*“The Eastern Cape Department of Education (ECDoE) does not employ many teachers, as a result I have a shortage of mathematics and science teachers. The lack*

*of qualified teachers in these two subjects has a negative impact on learner performance at my school.” [SMT-R3]*

One of the SMT member respondents who complained about the education system had the following to say:

*“The fact that our matric starts with grade ten to twelve instead of starting from grade eight to twelve, did not prepare our learners well.” [SMT-R1]*

### **Lack of Water Supply**

According to Table 4.5 40% of SMT member respondents agreed that lack of water supply made it difficult to teach and learn at their schools, whilst 60% disagreed. From the interviews, only one SMT member respondent reported that there was a lack of water supply at her school. The remaining four reported that they wanted the Department of Education to supply them with water tanks.

Specifically, one SMT member respondent, who complained about the lack of water supply, had the following to say:

*“At my school, I am currently running short of water. I do not have any water system. I cannot afford to buy many water tanks”. [SMT-R1]*

The SMT members, who complained about poor career guidance, put it in the following way:

*“We need more water tanks and taps in my school premises. The water tanks that are available are too old.”*

### **Lack of Science Laboratories**

According to Table 4.5, 80% of SMT member respondents agreed that there were no science laboratories in their schools, whilst 20% indicated that they had some. From the interviews,

four out of five SMT member respondents reported that there were no science laboratories at their schools. The remaining one said that the Department of Education needs to provide them with science laboratories. As SMT members, we need to meet and discuss means of getting funds to build a science laboratory. We think of using the maintenance funds to build the laboratory.

The SMT member respondents who complained about a lack of science laboratories had the following to say:

*“There is poor infrastructure such as a lack of science laboratories at my school. I am running short of the most important facilities such as a library and a science laboratory.” [SMT-R5]*

*“The Department of Education has taken such a long time to respond to my application for the construction of a science laboratory and other structures.” [SMT-R6]*

### **Insufficient Learning Materials**

According to Table 4.5 80% of SMT member respondents agreed that there were insufficient learning materials necessary for the outcomes-based education system to be effective, while 20% disagreed. From the interviews three out of five SMT member respondents reported that there was insufficient learning material at their schools. The remaining two reported that parents cannot afford to buy learning material for their children.

The SMT member respondents who complained about insufficient learning materials had the following to say;

*“Learners, parents as well as educators are affected by the shortage of learning material. They have no money to buy them.” [SMT-R1]*

*“At my school, most learners did not return books at the end of the year. I used retrieval funds to buy new books, however they usually arrive very late. According to departmental policy learners do not pay fees. This results in a shortage of the learning material necessary for OBE at my school”. [SMT-R2]*

*“On rainy days, roads to my school are not passable. This encourages teacher absenteeism and frustrates the delivery of learning material.” [SMT-R3]*

The one SMT member who complained about parents who could not afford to buy learning material for their children put it in the following way:

*“Many learners come from poverty-stricken homes; as a consequence their parents cannot afford to buy learning materials for them.”*

### **Late Delivery of Textbooks**

According to Table 4.5, 80% of SMT member respondents agreed that textbooks were delivered late at their schools, whilst 20% disagreed. From the interviews, four out of five SMT members interviewed reported that there was late delivery of textbooks at their schools, while the remaining one said that the lack of incentives for the teachers who excelled in their work demotivated them.

Specifically, one of the four SMT member respondents who complained about late delivery of books had the following to say:

*“Lack of incentives for the teachers who excel in their work demotivates them.”*  
*[SMT-R1]*

## **Overcrowded Classrooms**

All of the SMT member respondents reported that classrooms at their schools were overcrowded. From the interviews, they all reiterated the point that classrooms were overcrowded at their schools.

One of the five SMT members had the following to say:

*“The important factors such as overcrowded classrooms at my school result in high learner-teacher ratios.” [SMT-R1]*

## **Shortage of Furniture**

According to Table 4.5, 100% of SMT member respondents agreed that there was a shortage of furniture such as desks at their schools. From the interviews, all the SMT members confirmed that there was a shortage of furniture, such as desks, at their schools.

One SMT member explained the situation as follows:

*“There is a shortage of furniture at my school. The DOE provides us with desks after three or four years. There is no clear policy of how desks are distributed. I need to receive written instruction that will tell me when I get new desks will be distributed.” [SMT-R1]*

## **Few Parents Attend Parents Meetings**

According to Table 4.5 all the SMT members agreed that very few parents attended school meetings at their schools. From the interviews, four out of five SMT members interviewed, reported that most parents did not attend school meetings. The remaining one reported that parents did not attend school meetings due to financial constraints. They thought that the

SMT would expect them to pay school fees for their children if they attend a meeting. They said that they were busy with their businesses. They did not have time to attend meetings.

Four SMT members who complained about the parents who did not attend meetings had the following to say about this situation:

*“Most parents do not co-operate at my school. When I convene parents’ meetings, they do not turn up. Parents say that they did not receive invitations.” [SMT-R1]*

On the other hand, one SMT member interviewed who complained about the parents who did not attend school meetings due to financial complaints, had the following to say:

*“Parents do not attend school meetings due to financial constraints. They think that they are expected to pay school fees for their children when they attend meetings. They say that they will not attend meetings because they are very busy.” [SMT-R1]*

### **Few Parents Assist with Homework**

According to Table 4.5, 100% of SMT member respondents reported that very few parents assisted their children with homework. From the interviews, four out of five SMT interviewed reported that parents did not help their children with homework. The remaining one said that I do not assist my children with homework because my level of education is very low.

One SMT member, who complained about his low level of education that prevented him from assisting his child with homework, had the following to say:

*“My level of education is low. I cannot help a grade twelve learner. I do not know grade twelve content frameworks.” [SMT-R1]*



The four SMT members interviewed who complained about parents' assistance had the following to say:

*“At my school, parents do not assist their children with homework. They claim that it is not their responsibility to teach learners. Teachers must do their work. They do not assist their children with take-away tasks.” [SMT-R4]*

The one SMT member, who complained about a lack of qualified teachers, put it in the following way:

*“The lack of qualified teachers in Maths and Science has a negative impact on learner performance at my school.” [SMT-R1]*

### **Poverty as a Barrier to Education**

According to Table 4.5, 80% of SMT member respondents agreed that poverty was a great barrier to education at their schools against 20% who disagreed. From the interviews, three out of five SMT members interviewed reiterated the point that poverty had a negative impact on the education of their children. The remaining two members reported that they did not receive food parcels for quite a number of days although they lived in a poverty-stricken location. As a consequence their children went to school hungry.

In this regard, the SMT members who regarded poverty as a major barrier to education had the following to say:

*“Many learners come from poverty-stricken homes; as a consequence their parents cannot afford to buy learner material for them.*

*Yes, children are coming from poverty stricken homes; as a result, it is difficult for them to concentrate on their studies.” [SMT-R1]*

On the other hand, one of the SMT members interviewed, who indicated that the government did not supply them with food parcels, put it as follows:

*“I did not receive food parcels for quite a number of days although I live in a poverty-stricken location. As a consequence, my child went to school hungry and lost concentration.”*

### **Nutrition Programmes**

According to Table 4.5, 40% of SMT member respondents agreed that nutrition programmes were properly conducted and monitored at their schools, against 60% who disagreed. From the interviews, two of the five SMT members interviewed reported that nutrition programmes were properly conducted and monitored at their schools. The remaining three reported that they wished for these programmes to be transferred to the Department of Health.

The SMT members who complained about the bad management and poor monitoring of the nutrition programme, had the following to say:

*“At my school, I have a problem of nutrition programme. An approved service provider does not deliver food for a couple of days.*

*There are other factors such as the chaotic nutrition programme at my school. The approved service provider supplies my learners with insufficient food. Learners wait in queues for a long time due to the shortage of bread.” [SMT-R2]*

One of the three SMT members interviewed who wanted the transfer of the programme put it in the following way:

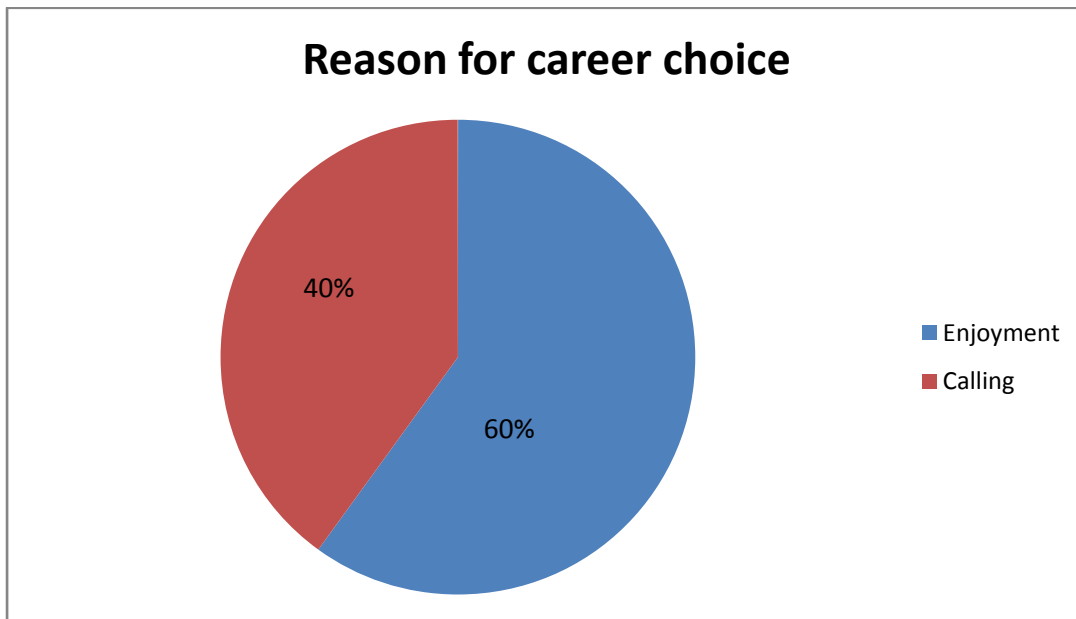
*“Parents and the entire community are most affected by the chaotic nutrition programme at my school because most learners come from poverty-stricken homes.*

*I wish this programme could be transferred to the Department of Health where it will be properly managed and monitored.” [SMT-R1]*

#### **4.5 EDUCATORS BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION**

Figure 4.12 shows the response of the educator respondents concerning their reasons for choosing teaching as a career. Most respondents (60%) reported that they had chosen the teaching career for employment purposes, while 40% stated that they had chosen it as a calling.

**Figure 4.12 Reason for career choice (N=25)**



##### **4.5.1 Previous employment**

Figure 4.13 shows that, all respondents had not been previously employed; they started working for the Department of Education.

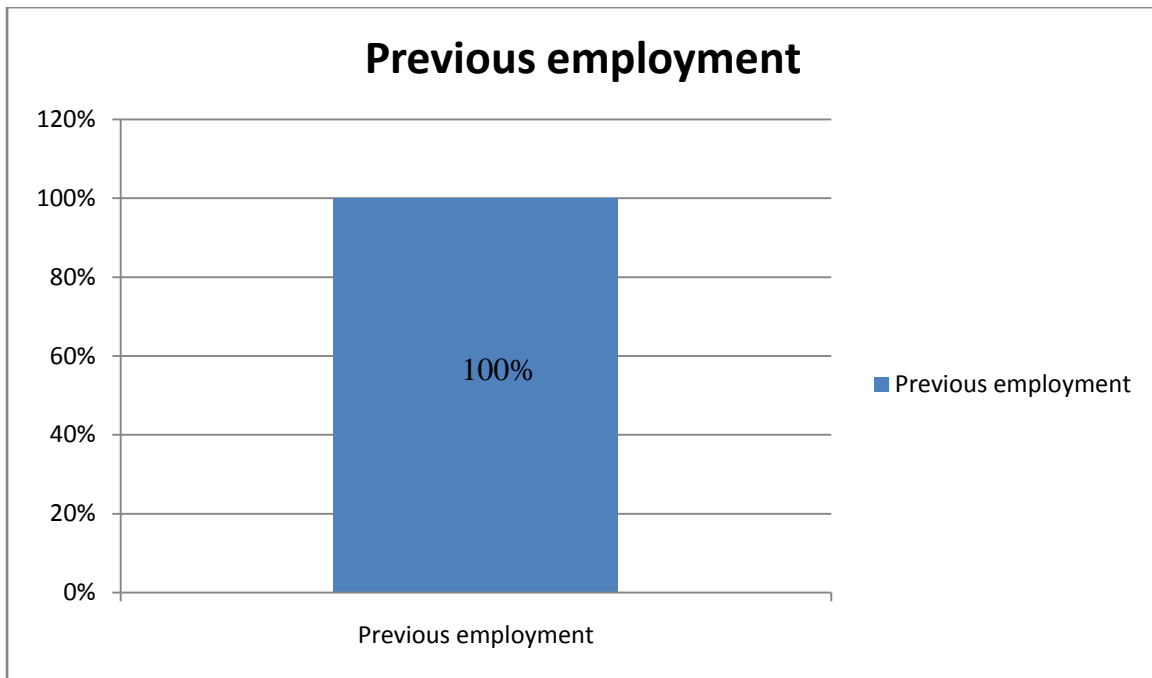


Figure 4.13 Previous employment (n=25)

#### 4.5.2 Teaching experience in the subject

Figure 4.14 illustrates that 10% of the respondents had more than five years of teaching experience in the subject that they were teaching in grade twelve, while the majority of the respondents (90%) indicated that they had less than five years of teaching experience in their teaching subjects.

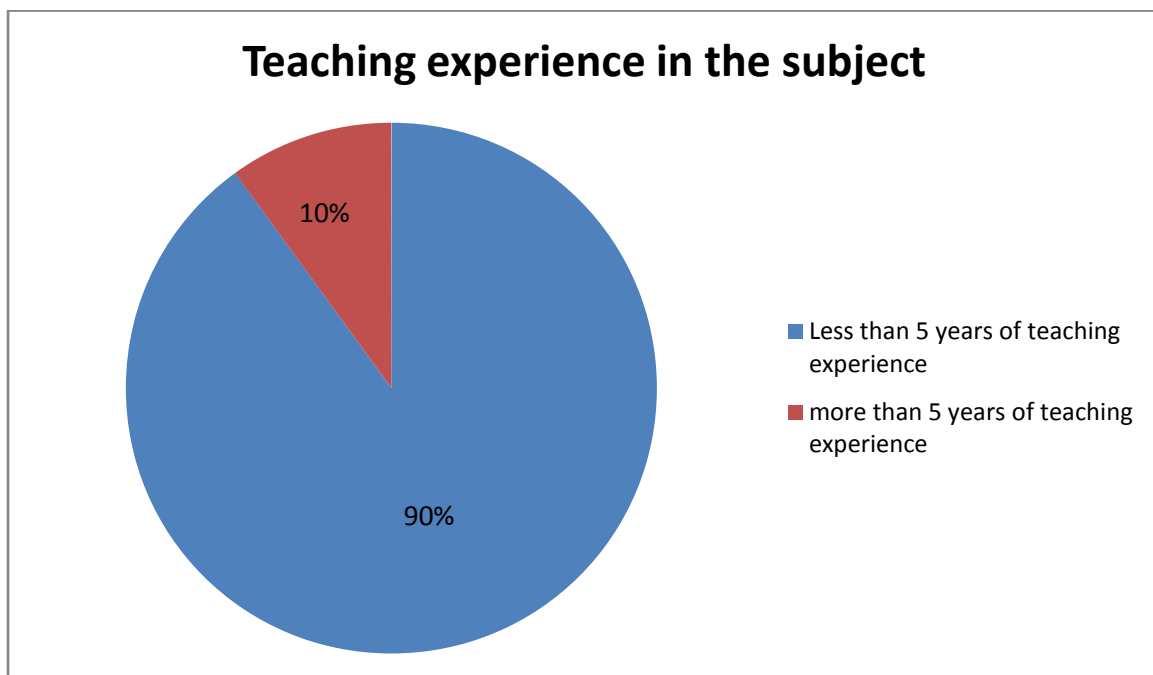
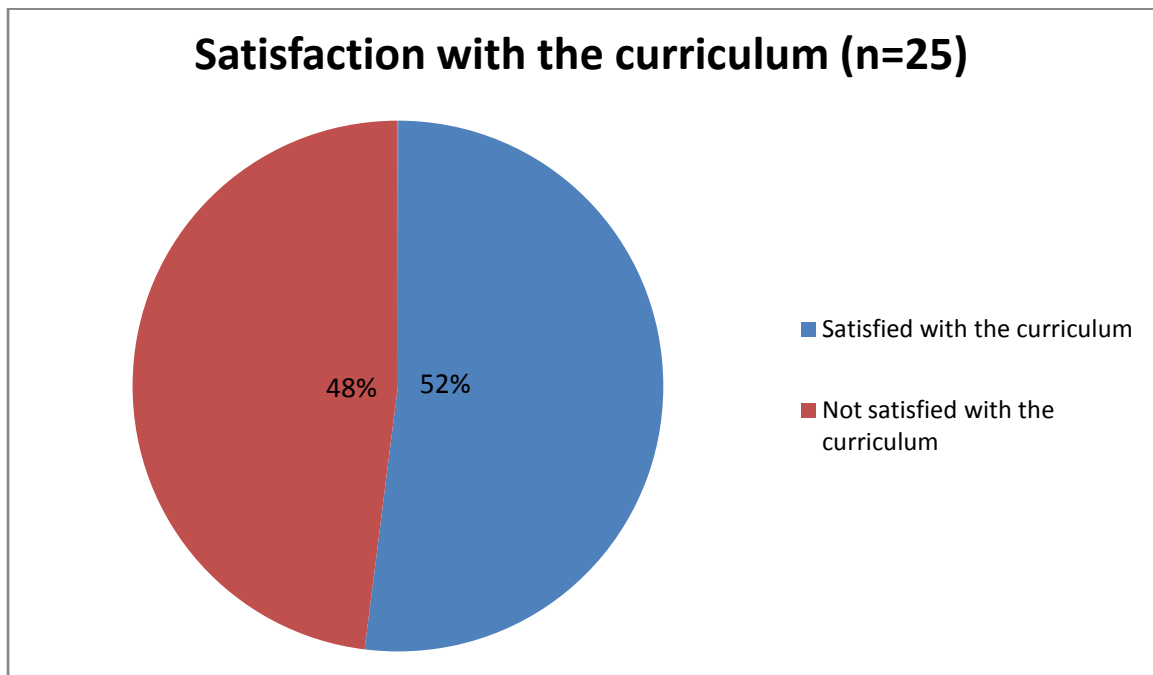


Figure 4.14 Teaching experience in the subject (N=25)

### 4.5.3 Satisfaction with the curriculum

Concerning whether or not educators were satisfied with the NCS curriculum and the OBE approach, Figure 4.15 shows that, 52% were satisfied while the other 48% were not satisfied.

Figure 4.15 Pie chart for satisfaction with the curriculum (n=25)



### 4.5.4 Responses to the Questionnaire

This section focuses on what grade twelve educator respondents considered to be the main challenges facing Mbizana learners.

Table 4.6 Educators' responses to the questionnaire (n=25)

<b>Possible challenges</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>AG</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>DA</b>
1. I did not experience any content gap problem ever since I taught this subject	10	60	20	0
2. I have not received enough support from the curriculum advisors	30	40	30	0
3. The new education system itself, its practices and procedures have contributed to low academic learner performance in my school	10	40	40	0
4. Learners are expected to learn in different ways at different times and we are expected to allow for these differences. This is impossible in my situation	40	40	10	10
5. Some people do not assist their children in doing their homework	40	40	20	0
6. Some parents do not buy the required learning material for their children	40	40	10	0
7. Learners are demotivated	40	40	20	0
8. Learners come from poverty stricken homes so they come to school hungry	40	30	20	10
9. Lack of science laboratories necessary for OBE contributes to low academic performance	30	40	30	0
10. Lack of libraries necessary for OBE contributes to low academic performance	30	50	20	0
11. Lack of sufficient learning material necessary for OBE contributes to low academic performance	30	40	0	30

Again the information in Table 4.6 was collapsed into two columns to facilitate easy comparison between positive and negative responses (see Table 4.7)

**Table 4.7 Teachers' response profile on the questionnaire (n=25)**



<b>Possible challenges</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>
1. I did not experience any content gap problem ever since I taught this subject	60	40
2. I have not received enough support from the curriculum advisors	70	30
3. The new education system itself, its practices and procedures have contributed to low academic learner performance in my school	52	48
4. Learners are expected to learn in different ways at different times and we are expected to allow for these differences. This is impossible in my situation	90	10
5. Some parents do not assist their children in doing their homework	90	10
6. Some parents do not buy the required learning material for their children	80	20
7. Learners are demotivated	90	10
8. Learners come from poverty-stricken homes so they come to school hungry	80	20
9. Lack of science laboratories necessary for OBE contributes to low academic performance	80	20
10. Lack of libraries necessary for OBE contributes to low academic performance	80	20
11. Lack of sufficient learning material necessary for OBE contributes to low academic performance	80	20

## **Experiencing Content Gap**

According to Table 4.7 60% of educator respondents agreed that they did not experience any content gap, whilst 40% disagreed. From the interviews three out of five grade twelve educators reported that they did not read extensively about their subject although they did not experience any content gap. The remaining two reported that they need to be capacitated although they had no content gap.

One of the three grade twelve educators had the following to say about the content gap:

*“At my school, I need a library to read more about the subject I teach.*

*I need to read extensively about my subject although I do not experience any content gap in relation to them.*

*The Department of Education frequently capacitates me. I am happy about that, though I do not have any content gap in my subject.” [E-R1]*

On the other hand, one of the two grade twelve educators who needed capacitation had the following to say:

*“I need to be capacitated although I do not have any content gap. The new knowledge will help my learners.” [E-R1]*

## **Insufficient Support from Curriculum Advisors**

With regard to support from curriculum advisors, Table 4.7 shows that 70% of the grade twelve educator respondents contended that they did not receive sufficient support from the curriculum advisors, while 30% said they did. From the interviews, four out of five grade twelve educators interviewed reported that they did not receive support from their curriculum

advisors. The remaining one said that the DoE did not employ curriculum advisors for the three consecutive years that is why we lacked support from them.

Four of the grade twelve educators who complained about the lack of curriculum advisor support had the following to say:

*“I do not have a curriculum advisor in my subject, Physical Science. The circuit manager told my principal that there will be no employment of curriculum advisors until 2017. It means that I will not have a subject advisor from now until 2017.*

*On rainy days my school is not accessible, as result of this; subject advisors fail to visit us for a couple of days. Lack of curriculum advisors’ support indirectly affected learner performance.” [E-R1]*

The one educator, who complained about unemployment of curriculum advisors, put it in the following way:

*“The DoE did not employ curriculum advisors for the three consecutive years that is why we lacked support from them. We need curriculum advisors in order to develop us in our area of specialization.”[E-R1]*

### **Contribution of the New Education System**

According to Table 4.7 52% of the grade twelve educator respondents agreed that the new education system itself, its practices and procedures had contributed to low learner academic achievement in their schools, while the other 48% disagreed. From interviews, four of the five grade twelve educators interviewed, reported that the new education system had demanded a lot of work from them. The remaining one blamed student strikes which routinely took place towards the end of the year, as major contributors to the low NSC pass rate.

The four grade twelve educators interviewed had the following to say:

*“The new education system, its policies and procedures demand a lot of work from me. It engages me with paperwork. I have insufficient time to teach my learners.” [E-R1]*

On the other hand, one grade twelve educator interviewed, who complained about common strikes, had the following to say:

*“Strikes are common at my school especially towards the end of the year. This has a negative impact on learner performance. Learners do not get sufficient time to revise their work.” [E-R1]*

### **Learners Are Expected To Learn In Different Ways**

According to Table 4.7, 90% of the grade twelve educator respondents agreed that learners were expected to learn in different ways at different times, and that they are expected to allow these differences. However, 10% disagreed. From the interviews three out of five grade twelve educators interviewed reported that learners are expected to learn in different ways and they are also expected to allow those differences, however, this was impossible in their situation. The remaining two reported that a lack of resources was the root cause of low learner academic achievement.

Specifically, one of the three grade twelve educators interviewed who complained about new education approach had the following to say:

*“This new education approach has a lot of work, learners are expected to learn in different ways, I am expected to allow these differences and this is impossible in my situation.”*

*No, it [DoE] introduced OBE which expects learners to learn in different ways yet classrooms are overcrowded. It is not easy for me to teach under these conditions.”*

*[E-R1]*

On the other hand, one of the two grade twelve educators who complained about a lack of resources put it the following way:

*“Lack of resources is the root cause of our low academic achievement.” [E-R1]*

### **Parents Assisting Children with Homework**

According to Table 4.7, 80% of the educator respondents reported that some parents did not assist their children with homework; 20% disagree. From the interviews, three of the five grade twelve educators interviewed, affirmed the position that parents did not assist their children with homework. The remaining two reported that parents' education level caused them not to assist their children with homework. They said that they were unable to assist their children with grade twelve work due to their limited education.

The grade twelve educators, who complained about non-cooperation of parents, had the following to say:

*“There is a lack of parental support in this school. Parents do not assist their children with homework. As a result, their children are demotivated. It is not easy to teach demotivated learners.”*

On the other hand, one of the two grade twelve educators who complained about parents' level of education put it in the following way:

*“Most parents in deep rural areas are not highly educated. This is the reason why Mbizana learners are not assisted with homework by their parents. Parents assert*

*that they are unable to assist their children with grade twelve work due to their limited education.” [E-R2]*

### **Parents Buying Learning Material for Their Children**

According to Table 4.7, 80% of the grade twelve educator respondents agreed that some parents did not buy the required learning material for their children; 20% disagreed. From the interviews, three of the five grade twelve educators who had been interviewed reported that parents did not buy the required learning material for their children. The remaining two said that learners had no parents and their guardians told them that education is free in South Africa. As a result, they were not willing to buy learning material for their children.

The grade twelve educators who complained about parents, who did not buy learning material, had the following to say:

*“At my school, some of the learners come from poverty- stricken homes. Their parents cannot afford to buy food and learning material for them. They claim that education is free in South Africa. This non-cooperation of parents demotivates their children.” [E-R3]*

One of the two grade twelve educators, who complained about some learners not having parents to assist them, put it in the following way:

*“Learners have no parents, and their guardians tell them that education is free in South Africa. As a result, they are unable to buy learning material for their children.” [E-R2]*

### **Learners Are Demotivated**

According to Table 4.7, 90% of the grade twelve educators agreed that learners were demotivated, against 10% who disagreed. From the interviews, four of the five grade

twelve educators reported that learners were demotivated. The remaining one said that the DOE needed to give all top achievers incentives such as certificates of excellence or any award on a term basis, in order to motivate them.

Two of the four grade twelve educators who complained about demotivated learners had the following to say:

*“Interruption caused by district officials visit during teaching hours, demotivate us as well as learners.*

*We are teaching demotivated learners. The DoE needs to employ motivational speakers.” [E-R4]]*

The other grade twelve educator interviewed who came up with the issue of a lack of incentives to top achievers, put it the following way:

*“The DoE needs to give all top achievers incentives in order to motivate them.” [E-R1]*

### **Learners Come From Poverty Stricken Homes**

According to Table 4.7 90% of the grade twelve educators agreed that learners were demotivated against 10% who disagreed. From the interviews, four of the five grade twelve educators who had been interviewed affirmed the position that learners came from poverty-stricken homes. The remaining one said that the DoE needed to provide all learners coming from poverty-stricken homes with money and food.

One of the four grade twelve educators, who complained about learners coming from poverty-stricken homes, had the following to say:

*“Most learners come from poverty-stricken homes at this school. They come to school hungry. As a result, they do not concentrate on their work. Thus, their academic performance was negatively impacted.” [E-R4]*

The other grade twelve educator who stated that the DoE was expected to provide learners with financial assistance, put it in the following way:

*“The DOE needs to give all learners coming from poverty-stricken homes with money and food.” [E-R1]*

### **Lack of Science Laboratories**

According to Table 4.7, 80% of grade twelve educator respondents reported that lack of science labs contributed to low learner academic performance; 20% disagreed. From the interviews, four of the five grade twelve educators who had been interviewed reported that there was a lack of science laboratories at their schools. The remaining one said that lack of science laboratories resulted in low learner academic performance. Learners did not know chemicals due to the lack of laboratories.

Specifically, one of the four grade twelve educators who complained about the lack of science laboratories had the following to say:

*“There is a lack of science laboratories in my school. This impacts negatively on learner performance.” [E-R4]*

On the other hand, one grade twelve educator who said that lack of science laboratories resulted in low learner performance put it in the following way:



*“In this school, learners do not know chemicals because there is no laboratory. We do not get any assistance from the neighbouring schools because they have no laboratories.” [E-R1]*

### **Lack of Libraries**

According to Table 4.7, 80% of grade twelve educator respondents agreed that the lack of libraries necessary for OBE contributed to low learner performance in Mbizana schools; 20% disagreed. From the interviews, four of the five grade twelve educators who had been interviewed reported that there was a lack of libraries at the schools. The remaining one said lack of libraries which supplemented the prescribed books frustrated learners as well as educators.

Specifically, one of the four grade twelve educators interviewed who complained about lack of libraries had the following to say:

*“I feel that the Department of Education is not doing enough for my school. This makes teaching and learning very difficult.” [E-R4]*

On the other hand, one grade twelve educator respondent who asserted that libraries supplemented textbooks in terms of knowledge put it in the following way:

*“Learners are frustrated and demotivated by the absence of a library and science laboratory. The availability of the library is very important because learners will get more information. At the present moment, they depend entirely on their textbooks.”*  
*[E-R1]*

## **Lack of Learning Material Necessary OBE**

According to Table 4.7, 80% of grade twelve educators' respondents agreed that lack of learning material necessary for OBE contributed to low learner academic performance; 20% disagreed. From the interviews, three of the five grade twelve educators reported that lack of learning material necessary for OBE contributed to low learner academic performance. The remaining two reported that educators were regarded as failures by the parents and municipalities due to the lack of learning material which resulted in low learner academic performance. In addition, the availability of learning material was necessary because this new education system, its policies and procedures demanded a lot of work from educators.

One the three grade twelve educators who complained about lack of learning material necessary for OBE had the following to say:

*“Lack of learning material necessary for OBE contributes to low learner academic performance.” [E-R3]*

One of the two grade twelve educator respondents, who asserted that educators were regarded as failures due to the lack of learning material, put it in the following way:

*“I, as an educator, am regarded as a failure by the parents and municipalities due to the high failure rate of NSC learners. I am the most severely affected by the lack of learning material necessary for OBE. This new education system, its policies and procedures demand a lot of work from me. It engages me with paper work yet there is a lack of learning and teaching material.” [E-R2]*

#### 4.6 SGBs Views about the Challenges Preventing Good Performance in the NSC Examinations

The fourth research question of this study was directed towards finding out what SGB members considered to be the main challenges preventing Mbizana district grade twelve learners from performing well in the NSC examinations.

The SGB consisted of an educator, principal, one learner and three parents. One parent served as a chairperson. The questionnaire was supplied to the parents because the educators, principals and learners had their own questionnaires

##### 4.6.1 Biographical information of SGB members (n=10)

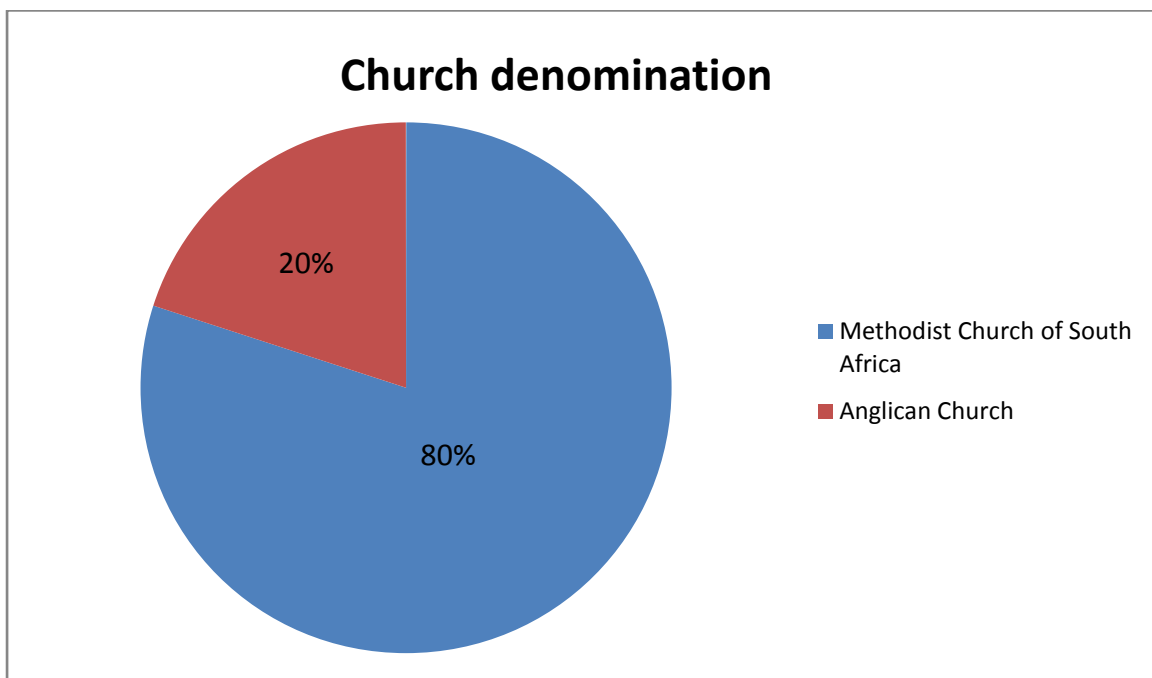


Figure 4.16 Respondents church denomination

With regard to the church, which the SGB members belong to, most respondents 80% reported that they belonged to the Methodist Church of South Africa, while 20% reported that they belonged to the Anglican Church. It was important to report on church affiliation

because church members assisted schools in maintaining discipline and motivated demotivated learners.

#### **4.6.2 Employment status of SGB members**

Concerning whether or not SGB members were employed, as illustrated by Table 4.8, 80% of them reported that they were not employed whereas 20% of them were employed.

Table 4.8 Occupation distribution of SGB members (n=10)

<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
1. Unemployed	06	60%
2. Self-employed	02	20%
3. General Worker	01	10%
4. Professionals	01	10%
Total	10	100%

#### **4.6.3 SGB Members' Responses to the Questionnaire**

This section focuses on what SGB member respondents consider to be the main challenges facing Mbizana learners.

Table 4.9 SGBs responses to questionnaire (n=10)

Possible challenges	SA	AG	SD	DA
1. There is a good relationship between the principal and the SGB members in this institution	10	10	60	20
2. SGB plays an active role in appointing teachers	20	20	20	40
3. SGB plays an active role in resolving disciplinary matters	20	30	30	20
4. Parents' attendance at school meetings is bad. Very few (less than 2%) parents attend meetings	60	40	0	0
5. Parents are willing to assist their children with homework	20	0	40	40
6. Parents provide grade 12 learners (their children) with study rooms so that they are not disturbed by their friends when studying	20	0	80	0
7. Mbizana homes have no reading material for their children to read as a result grade 12 learners depend only on school material	30	60	10	0
8. As SGB members, when realising that a child has an academic problem, we call the child's parents	20	20	30	30
9. Parents own this school, they prevent any form of vandalism (They are securing the school buildings)	0	20	40	40
10. This school has a shortage of furniture	60	20	10	10
11. This school has a shortage of classrooms	60	20	10	10
12. A system of re-admitting grade 12 failures has a negative impact on NSC results	40	40	0	20

Again the information in Table 4.10 was collapsed into two columns to facilitate easy comparison between positive and negative responses

Table 4.10 SGB member responses to the questionnaire (n=10)

Possible challenges	Agree	Disagree
1. There is a good relationship between the principal and the SGB members in this institution	30	70
2. SGB plays an active role in appointing teachers	60	40
3. SGB plays an active role in resolving disciplinary matters	40	60
4. Parents' attendance at school meetings is bad. Very few (less than 2%) parents attend meetings	100	0
5. Parents are willing to assist their children with homework	20	80
6. Parents provide grade twelve learners (their children) with study rooms so that they are not disturbed by their friends when studying	20	80
7. Mbizana homes have no reading material for their children to read as a result grade twelve learners depend only on school material	90	10
8. As SGB members when realising that a child has an academic problem, we call the parents of the child	40	60
9. Parents own this school, they prevent any form of vandalism (They are securing the school buildings)	20	80
10. This school has a shortage of furniture	80	20
11. This school has a shortage of classrooms	80	20
12. A system of re-admitting grade twelve failures has a negative impact on NSC results	80	20

### **The Relationship between the Principal and the SGB Members**

According to Table 4.10, 30% SGB member respondents agreed that there was a good relationship between them and the principals, whilst 70% disagreed. From the interviews, four of the five that they were not fully involved in school activities. The remaining one said that the principal did not appoint relevant teachers at that school. Four of the five SGB members who complained about not being involved in school activities had the following to say:

*At this school, the principal does not involve us in the appointment of teachers. As school governing body members we need to first discuss vacant posts because the principal does not appoint relevant teachers at this school. He usually appoints Geography teachers in mathematics vacant posts. This strains our relationships.*  
[SBG-R4]

On the other hand, one SGB member who complained about appointment of inefficient teachers put it in the following way:

*At this school, the principal usually appoint teachers who are specializing with other subjects such as accounting in mathematics vacant posts.* [SGB-R1]

### **SGB Plays an Active Role in Resolving Disciplinary Matters**

According to Table 4.10, 40% of SGB member respondents agreed that SGB members played an active role in resolving disciplinary matters while 60% disagreed. From the interview, one SGB member interviewed indicated that he played an active role in resolving disciplinary matters. The remaining four reported that when the school was vandalized, they caught a thief, however, the school could not support them in resolving that matter. About this, one SGB member interviewed had the following to say:

*I am always assisting the school in resolving disciplinary matters. [SGB-R1]*

On the other hand, one of the four SGB members complained about lack of support from her school put it in the following way:

*When the school was vandalized, I caught one boy; however, the school could not support me. [SGB-R4]*

### **Parents Attendance School Meetings Bad**

According to Table 4.10, all the SGB member respondents reported that parents' attendance at school meetings was bad. From the interviews, all the five SGB members reported that most parents did not attend school meetings. All the five interviewees had the following to say:

*There are no clear policies about school meetings. I do not attend many school meetings. I usually get invitations very late; the school principal calls me on the day of the meeting. Parents in rural areas do not attend school meetings to ensure their children's performance. [SGB-R5]*

### **Willingness of Parents to Assist with Homework**

According to Table 4.10, 20% of SGB member respondents agreed that parents were willing to assist their children with homework while 80% disagreed. From the interviews, three out of five SGB members reported that parents did not assist their children with homework. The remaining two said that the DoE did not motivate parents with regard to school work. Many parents in rural areas are uneducated and, as a consequence, they do not assist their children with homework.



Two of the SGB members interviewed who complained about parents who did not support their children, had the following to say:

*When my child requests me to assist her with mathematics homework, I cannot help her due to the level of my education. [SGB-R2]*

On the other hand, one of the two SGB members interviewed who complained about lack of parental support, put it as follows:

*The DoE does not motivate me with regard to school work. This is the reason why I do not help my child with homework. [SGB-R1]*

### **Parents Provide their Children with Study Rooms at Home**

According to Table 4.10, 20% of SGB member respondents agreed that parents were willing to assist their children with study rooms while 80% disagreed. From the interviews, three of the five SGB members who had been interviewed reported that parents did not assist their children with study rooms. The remaining two said that the DoE did not motivate parents with regard to study rooms.

One of the SGB members interviewed who complained about parents who did not support their children with study rooms, had the following to say:

*I do not have enough rooms at home. As a consequence, I cannot give my child a room for study. [SGB-R3]*

On the other hand, one of the two SGB members interviewed who complained about lack of parental support, put it the following way:

*The DoE does not motivate us with regard to the provision for our children with study rooms. [SGB-R2]*

### **Homes Have no Reading Materials**

According to Table 4.10, 90% of SGB member respondents agreed that most homes in Mbizana lacked reading material, as a result, learners depend only on school material; 10% disagreed. From the interviews, three of the five SGB members reported that Mbizana homes had no reading materials for their children. They said that they had no money to buy reading material. The remaining two reported that the DoE told them that education was free in South Africa.

Two of the three SGB members interviewed who complained about lack of reading material in Mbizana homes, had the following to say:

*I am unemployed; I am unable to provide my child with reading material as well as study room. [SGB-R2]*

On the other hand, one of the two SGB members interviewed who complained about the lack of reading material; put it in the following way:

*I do not have money to buy reading material. The DoE informed us that education is free in our country. [SGB-R2]*

### **When a Child has a Problem, we call her/his Parents**

According to Table 4.10, 40% of SGB member respondents agreed that when a child experienced academic problems, they called that child's parents; 60% disagreed. From the interviews, three of the five SGB members interviewed reported that they were not fully involved in disciplinary matters of their schools. The remaining two reported that the DoE did not capacitate SGB members with skills to deal with disciplinary matters at schools.

One of the three SGB members who complained about being only partially involved in disciplinary matters, had the following to say:

*I am not fully involved in disciplinary matters of my school. [SGB-R3]*

On the other hand, one of the two SGB members interviewed who complained about the non-capacitation of SGB members, put it as follows:

*The DoE does not capacitate us with skills necessary to deal with disciplinary matters at my school. [SGB-R2]*

### **Parents Own Schools and Prevent Vandalism**

According to Table 4.10, 20% of the SGB member respondents reported that parents exhibited a sense of ownership of their schools accordingly, and worked to prevent vandalism; an overwhelming 80% disagreed. From the interviews, one SGB member reported that parents demonstrated ownership of their schools and prevented vandalism. The remaining four reported that teachers were frustrated and demotivated because of high rate of vandalism at their schools. They spent a lot of their time, waiting for the vandalized classrooms to be repaired.

One SGB member, who complained about parent's not securing schools, had the following to say:

*I always see to it that my school is secured. However, I do not get support from other community members. Our school is always vandalized. This school has a mobile phone network coverage problem. When the school was vandalized, I tried to phone the police but due to poor network coverage, I was not able to contact the police. Thus, the perpetrators could not be caught.[SGB-R1]*

On the other hand, one of the four SGB members who complained about the frustrated and demotivated teachers put it as follows:

*Teachers are frustrated and demotivated by this high rate of vandalism at my school. They say that it consumes a lot of their teaching time because they have to wait for the repairs of the vandalized classrooms. This results in low academic performance of learners in NSC examinations. [SGB-R4]*

### **The school has a shortage of furniture**

According to Table 4.10, 80% of SGB member respondents reported that their school had a shortage of furniture; 20% disagreed. From the interviews, four of the five SGB members who had been interviewed reported that there was reported that there was a shortage of furniture at their schools. The remaining one reported that there was no clear policy of the distribution of desks to her/his school.

Specifically, one of the four SGB members interviewed who complained about the shortage of furniture had the following to say:

*There is a shortage of furniture such as desks, in this school due to the re-admission of grade twelve failures. The department of education usually distributes furniture after two or four years. This results in overcrowded classrooms. In addition, out of school youth vandalize the school and steal desks. [SGB-R4]*

One SGB member, who complained about the unclear policy of desks distribution, put it as follows:

*There is no clear policy of desks distribution at my school. The ECDoE needs to provide us with this policy very soon. [SGB-R1]*

### **The School had a Shortage of Classrooms.**

According to Table 4.10, 80% of SGB member respondents reported that there was a shortage of classrooms at their schools; 20% disagreed. From the interviews, four of the five SGB members who had been interviewed reported that there was a shortage of classrooms at their schools. The remaining one said that overcrowded classrooms and high learner-teacher ratio were the root cause of the shortage of classrooms at his school.

Four of the five SGB members who complained about shortage of classrooms had the following to say:

*The Department of Education has failed to build enough classrooms at my school. There is a shortage of classrooms at my school due to the re-admission of grade twelve failures. When parents are called to a meeting to resolve this problem, they do not turn up. [SGB-R5]*

One of the SGB members who complained about the overcrowded classrooms and high learner-teacher ratio caused by the shortage of classrooms put it as follows:

*Shortage of classrooms makes teaching and learning to be ineffective because learners are unable to do classroom-based activities well. In addition, overcrowded classrooms as well as high learner-teacher ratio are the root cause of the shortage of classrooms. [SGB-R1]*

## **A system of re-admitting grade twelve failures**

According to Table 4.10, 80% of SGB member respondents agreed that a system of re-admitting grade twelve failures had a negative impact on NSC results; 20% disagreed. From the interviews, three of the five SGB members reported that the system of re-admitting grade twelve failures resulted in low learner performance in the NSC examinations. The remaining two reported that re-admitting grade twelve failures promoted uncontrollable learners.

One of the three SGB members who complained who complained about the system of re-admitting grade twelve failures, had the following to say:

*The policy of re-admitting grade twelve failures at my schools had a negative impact on NSC results because the newly admitted grade twelve learners cannot get individual attention. This also resulted to the shortage of furniture and classrooms.*  
[SGB-R3]

On the other hand one of the two SGB members who complained about the uncontrollable learners, put it as follows:

*Re-admission of grade twelve failures increases numbers in classes. This results in learner-teacher ratio. Thus, learners become uncontrollable. In addition, they are unable to perform well in the NSC examination.* [SGB-R2]

## **4.7 Other Factors**

This section presents other factors that emerged a posteriori from the study and therefore, could not be accommodated under the sub-headings presented thus far. These issues came from the open-ended responses obtained from the responses obtained from the respondents.

These are briefly presented below:

#### **4.7.1 Transfer of Education to Urban Schools**

Some SGB members reported that many educators had transferred from rural to urban schools, thereby leaving critical shortage of teachers in schools from which they transferred; that trend adversely affected these rural schools, particularly in scarce subjects such as mathematics and science. One SGB member expressed this as follows:

Teachers are leaving rural school in big numbers, leaving learners without teachers for a long time. Certainly, this impacts negatively on learning and learner performance in the NSC examinations.

#### **4.7.2 Impact of Initiation Schools on Learner Absenteeism**

Some SGBs complained about the high rate of learner absenteeism during the winter school session as a result of male learners attending initiation schools, on which they place a very premium as vital milestone which marks their transition from adolescence to manhood. Many of them in grade 12 miss many school hours and learning time while they are away. The SGB members were quite certain that this had an adverse effect on learner academic performance in the NSC examinations.

#### **4.7.3 Lack of Career Guidance**

The majority of SMT members averred that because of the lack of qualified career guidance practitioners, many schools depended on Life Orientation educators to guide learners on matters pertaining to career guidance. There was a view that, as a result of this, career guidance was not properly conducted in their schools. Apart from learners simply studying blindly without a definite careers in mind, there was promiscuously no proper guidance with regard to subject combinations in many schools, resulting in many learners failing to secure meaningful results in the NSC examinations that would be recognised for any post-school

careers; that it was not uncommon for learners to change subjects even while in grade twelve. To the SMT members, this explained much of the reported poor performance for the schools concerned.

#### **4.7.4 Use of Drugs**

Some SMT members reported excessive use of drugs at their schools, to which they attribute much of the poor results in the NSC examinations. The SMT members argued that the use of drugs was a distraction to the learners in a number of ways, including (a) poor concentration during class, and (b) manifestation of behavioural problems, in class and in the school, generally.

#### **4.7.5 High Rates of Learner Pregnancies**

In the eyes of SMT members, this was another major factors affecting learner performance in the NSC examinations. They explained that learners falling pregnant miss several months of school time, and by the time they return a lot has already been covered, and it is difficult for them to make up the lost time. In addition, the fact that they have additional duties and responsibilities as mothers also takes away some of the time and effort needed for success in the NSC examination.

#### **4.7.6 Strikes**

SMT members bemoaned “unnecessary and ill-timed strikes” which happened “especially towards the end of the year”. They said that towards the end of the year, as examinations are approaching, “grade twelve learners demand many things, such as farewell functions”. According to the SMT members, these strikes contribute to learners’ low academic performance in the NSC examinations.



#### **4.7.7 Poor Curriculum Management**

Most grade twelve educators complained about poor curriculum management “due to the inefficiency of Mbizana principal and SMTs in totality”. They stated that the DoE did not employ well qualified principals, and that it “only employed school principals who were members of the South African Democratic Teachers Union even if they lacked managerial skills. “According to the educators, this was demoralizing, and led to many unnecessary problems at many schools. They hoped that in future the DoE will realise that employing competent and well-prepared educators as school principals would serve the country better than the current practice of playing politics with the lives of children by exposing them to poorly managed schools.

#### **4.7.8. Re-alignment of Schools**

Lastly, but not least, the process of re-alignment of schools was reported by educators to be having a negative impact on learner performance. In the Eastern Cape Province, re-alignment of schools had not been completed. Many senior secondary schools still start from grade ten to grade twelve, instead of starting from grade eight to twelve. Grade twelve educators reported that learners were not well prepared within three years, and that if they started working with them in grade eight, this would make a big difference by the time they go to grade twelve.

### **4.8 SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES IN THE PERCEIVED CHALLENGES AS SEEN BY THE VARIOUS STAKEHOLDERS**

The final research question sought to establish whether or not there were significant similarities and differences in the factors considered by various stakeholders to be the main

challenges preventing Mbizana grade twelve learners from performing well in NSC examinations.

In order to present similarities and differences in the response profiles of the various respondent groups, Table 4.11 displays six topmost challenges reported to be facing grade twelve learners in the Mbizana district.

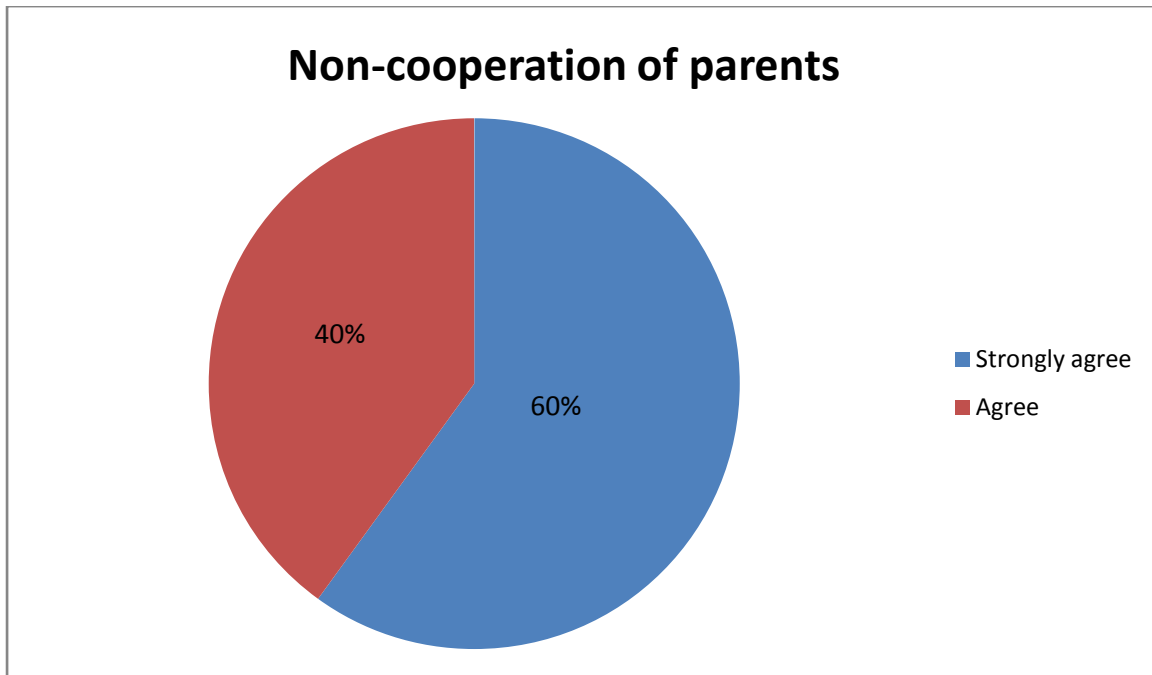
Table 4.11 Six topmost challenges reported to be facing grade twelve learners in the Mbizana district.

<b>Challenges</b>	<b>Learners</b>	<b>SMT members</b>	<b>Educators</b>	<b>SGB members</b>
Parents do not attend school meetings.	100%	100%	70%	100%
Parents do not assist their children with home works.	90%	100%	80%	80%
Parents are not willing to buy learning and reading material necessary for OBE for their children.	75%	80%	80%	90%
There is a shortage of classrooms in Mbizana schools.	60%	100%	75%	80%
Poverty has a negative impact on Mbizana learner performance	80%	80%	80%	80%
Lack of science labs and libraries at Mbizana schools contributes to low learner academic performance.	80%	60%	80%	75%

According to Table 4.11, 100% of various stakeholders, i.e. grade twelve learner respondents, SMT member respondents and SGB respondents agreed that parents did not attend school meetings. In addition, 100% of SMT member respondents, 75% of grade twelve learner respondents, 80% grade twelve educator respondents as well as 80% of SGB member respondents reported that parents did not assist their children with homework. With regard to 90% of SGB member respondents, 80% of grade twelve learner respondents, 80% of grade twelve educator respondents and 80% of SMT members agreed with the statement.

According to Table 4.11, 100% of SMT member respondents, 80% of SGB member respondents as well as 60% of grade twelve learner respondents reported that there was a shortage of classrooms in Mbizana schools. The table also shows that the majority (80%) of grade twelve learner respondents as well as 80% of grade twelve educator respondents agreed that poverty had a negative impact on learner performance. Further, both 80% of grade twelve learner respondents and 80% of grade twelve educator respondents reported that lack of science laboratories and libraries in Mbizana schools contributed to low learner performance.

Figure 4.15 Non-cooperation of parents



According to Figure 4.15, 100% of SGB member respondents and the five SGB members interviewed reported that parents' attendance at school meetings was bad. Four out of the five grade twelve learners interviewed reported that their parents did not assist them with homework.

All the SMT member respondents in the survey sample and the five SMT members interviewed reported that there was a shortage of classrooms at their schools which resulted in high learner–teacher ratios.

Up to 80% of SMT respondents and four out of five SMT members who were interviewed reported that there was a lack of science laboratories at their schools; 81% each of grade twelve learner and educator respondents and four each of the grade twelve learners and educators interviewed reported that lack of science laboratories and libraries at their schools contributed to low academic performance of learners in the NSC.

According to Table 4.11, 80% of grade twelve learner respondents, and the three learners who had been interviewed indicated that their parents did not buy material necessary for school. In the same vein, three of the SMT members interviewed and 80% SMT members' respondents constituting the survey sample reported that there was insufficient learning material necessary for the OBE education system to be effective.

With regard to Table 4.11, 80% of SMT member respondents and three of the SMT members interviewed reported that poverty had a negative impact on Mbizana learner performance; 80% of grade twelve educator respondents and the three grade twelve educators interviewed also reported that poverty had a negative impact on learner performance. Likewise, the three grade twelve learners interviewed also reported that poverty had a negative impact on their performance.

In summary, these findings indicate that the factors considered by the various stakeholders to be the main challenges preventing Mbizana grade twelve learners from performing well in the NSC examinations were generally the same.

## **4.9 DISCUSSION OF RESULTS**

Responses from stakeholders interviewed have been taken into consideration in the discussion of these results.

### **4.9.1 Grade Twelve Learners' Views about the Underperformance of Learners in the Mbizana District.**

The majority of grade twelve learners reported that their classrooms were overcrowded, as a consequence of which, there was insufficient space for them to do some classroom-based activities such as group work, Fontana (1992: 61) contends that cramped classrooms reduce learner achievement because there is insufficient space for learners to, inter alia, carry out

practical activities. He further states that overcrowded classrooms negatively affect the quality of learning because they have seating arrangements which prevent learners from easily seeing the work demonstrated by the teacher and therefore learners cannot follow the lesson. The problem of overcrowded classrooms could be addressed by the school admission committees. In addition, SMTs should adhere to the admission policy and utilize the existing maintenance funds to construct extra classes. 80% of learner respondents as well as three of the five learners who had been interviewed indicated that they lacked science laboratories and libraries. Further, textbooks were reported to be delivered very late at their schools, and they considered this to contribute to the low academic achievement of learners in the NSC examinations. With regard to this view, Huitt's model points out that contextual input variables, which include the characteristics that educators bring to the classroom experience impact on output, which is student achievement. The researcher feels that it is the responsibility of the ECDoE to explain the policy of centralised textbook delivery. In addition – and with regard to the lack of laboratories and libraries, the researcher contends that all section twenty one schools should utilize available funds to address this problem instead of waiting for government construction programmes, which may take long to materialise. Most learner respondents (75%) from the questionnaire, and three of the five learners interviewed, reported that there were no reading materials at their homes, as a consequence of which they depended completely on their prescribed textbooks. Further, they stated that their parents promised to buy learning material for them but failed due to financial constraints.

Again, according to Huitt's contextual variables, such as home environment and socio-economic status of parents could impact negatively on learner performance. Concerning this view, the researcher wondered if the learners who came from poverty-stricken homes could afford to buy learning material. Considering that many learners in the Mbizana district come

from poverty-stricken homes, SMTs could form partnerships with, for instance, non-governmental organisations and request donations. All learners reported that their parents did not attend school meetings, and also that they failed to assist them with homework. According to Soudien (2004) and Mkokeli (2005) the new curriculum and the South African Schools Act No 84 of 1996, continue to assume that parents play an active role in their children's education, yet teachers, especially in rural areas, complain that only a few parents attend meetings. With regard to parents not assisting their children with homework, Mkhize (2002:7) states that less than 50% of parents in South Africa have further relevant training after matric. Further research was also conducted by Macmillan and Schumacher (2001) on parents' co-operation vis-à-vis the performance of their children. The results showed that most parents could not help their children because of their limited education. As a consequence, the children of these parents could not perform well even if they were highly intelligent. According to Huitt's model, one of the variables that best predicts student achievement is the level of the mother's education, especially if she did not graduate from high school. Based on these findings, the researcher duly requests the ECDoE to come up with various strategies to capacitate parents in order to assist their children with homework. As cited by 81% of learners and three of the five learners who had been interviewed, they could not study well at their homes. They were disturbed by other family members who owned some shebeens. The researcher surmises that one way to address this is to build hostels at the schools in order to provide the learners with an environment conducive to self-study. However, this is compounded by the findings of the Ministerial Committee which reported that there were many shebeens near Mbizana schools, and that this could be having adverse effects on learner achievement (Sokopo & Hans, 2010: 9). So, building hostels at such schools would have the same effect as what they learners are currently experiencing at

their homes, where shebeens are close to their homes – or the shebeens are an extension of their houses.

The majority of learners (75%) and four of the five learners who had been interviewed reported that travelling to and from school was a big challenge for them. There is a transport scheme in the Eastern Cape to enable learners get to school and return home in time but, evidently, this is not happening for these learners. If getting to school is a major obstacle every day, the very thought of going to school could soon become nightmarish for some learners, let alone getting to grips with the subject matter. Huitt's model points out that school processes, which include factors such as leadership and services, need to be supervised and monitored. Evidently, the transport scheme requires close supervision and monitoring to ensure that it runs well. Furthermore, school policies regarding the distance to and school to be travelled by a learner need to be clear and where possible reviewed. The researcher is aware that the transport scheme has since been transferred to the Department of Public Works. This could improve the service of transporting learners to and from their respective schools.

#### **4.9.2 SMT Members' Views about Underperformance of Learners in the Mbizana District**

It was reported by some SMT member respondents (60%), and four of the five SMT members interviewed, that teacher absenteeism was common at their schools, and that this could be impacting negatively on learner performance. The researcher is very concerned about this, as it casts a bad shadow on the professionalism, dedication and commitment of the teachers in question. Certainly, this cuts back of teaching / learning time and could, accordingly, explain the reported low academic performance of Mbizana learners in the NSC examinations. In terms of Huitt's model, variables, such as processes which refer to teacher



behaviour in and outside the classroom, could influence learner performance. Teacher absenteeism could also strain the relationships between learners and teachers by, inter alia, engender mistrust, as well as dampen the spirits of learners – hence, the reported low learner morale. There is also a reported high incidence of learner-initiated strikes in Mbizana schools (Jenkins, 2007), which may be a reflection of issues that have defined resolution over many years.

Some SMT member respondents (60%), and three of the five SMT members interviewed, reported that there was a high learner-teacher ratio which contributed to congested classrooms at their schools. Some writers such as Hall and De Lannoy (2012) contend such crowded / congested classrooms hamper learning. They further state that large classes make it difficult for learners to ask questions when they do not understand work being taught. In addition, learners get limited attention due to the large number of learners assigned to one educator. According to Huitt's model the variable 'school processes', which includes factors such as leadership and administrative matters, calls for proper and close supervision and monitoring of the admissions process to ensure adherence to the recommended numbers of learners in a particular school – and in one classroom. Apart from poor provisioning of infrastructure, it is possible that some of the reported congestion may simply be due to poor management at the school level, and the flouting of policies that regulate school size, with reference to the number of learners.

With regard to the shortage of mathematics and physical science teachers, 60% of the SMT member respondents to the questionnaire and three of the five SMT members interviewed indicated that there was a serious challenge here. The researcher wondered whether the SMTs were aware of the Labour Relations Act No 66 of 1995 which states that a public school may establish posts for educators and employ additional educators to the establishment determined by the Member of the Executive Council (MEC) in terms of section

3 (1) of the Educators' Employment Act, 1994. One surmises that had the SMT members been aware of this, they most probably would have addressed this problem. However, the researcher is also aware that the major difficulty may lie in the paucity of mathematics and science teachers in the pool available country-wide, leading to some mathematics and science teachers being deployed to teach higher grades than they were originally prepared for. In some cases aware, teachers of other subjects were deployed to teach mathematics and science due, in part to teacher migration out of the country (South African Council for Educators [SACE], 2011). According to SACE (2011: 4) "since 1990 there has been a marked increase in the international migration of highly skilled professionals in three sectors: health, education and new technologies." SACE attributes this to "increased globalization, which has been characterized by advanced transport and information and communication systems, has brought with it renewed concern about the effects of emigration of skilled labour from developing countries to developed ones." Within the context of South Africa, SACE explains that "teacher migration escalated in the 1990s due to the perception created by the government that there was an oversupply of teachers in the country precipitated by the offering of voluntary severance packages (VSPs) to ameliorate the oversupply" (p. 5). This had the effect of reducing teacher demand, with the attendant effect that the teaching profession became "an unattractive career choice for young people who could have potentially chosen to become teachers" (p. 5).

**SACE explains that various reasons contributed this state of affairs:**

"an ever-changing education policy landscape and teachers' under-preparedness to cope with it, unattractive salaries and conditions of service leading to demoralisation and creating higher propensities to leave the profession as well as the impact of HIV and AIDS on the teaching profession. In order to address the teacher shortage problem, especially at secondary level (and particularly in mathematics and science disciplines), South Africa subsequently

turned to other countries for the provision of teachers, thereby became both a 'sending' and 'receiving' country for migrant teachers." (SACE, 2011: 6-7).

However, the net result of all this is that the country is still unable to satisfy its teacher requirements for mathematics and science subjects. Thus, according to SACE (2011: 23):

The dissatisfaction with the working environment and payment conditions, the bureaucracy, and the policies formulated that make teachers feel like they are ill-equipped to provide their services effectively, seem to be the main reasons driving teachers out of South Africa. Policy needs to focus on making the profession stable, policy wise, more appealing and ensuring that the experienced teachers are nurtured and recognised so as to provide more reasons to keep teachers in the country.

With reference to the Huitt's model, variable inputs, which include qualities that educators bring to the classroom experience, could impact negatively on both the learning experience and learner performance. Certainly a shortage of qualified teachers falls under this category of input variables.

Notwithstanding that relatively fewer SMT members (40%) and only one of the SMT members interviewed reported that water supply was a problem at their schools, it is important to emphasise the necessity of safe and clean water for all learners. Thus, wherever this is not happening, all stops must be pulled to ensure that the safety of children is not compromised.

The majority of SMT members (76%) together with three of the five SMT members who had been interviewed reported that there was insufficient learning material necessary for the proper and adequate implementation of the curriculum. A number of South African researchers (e.g. Taylor, Muller & Vinjevold, 2003: 4) have emphasised the need for both

appropriate and sufficient reading material as a particularly significant resource for children's literacy and writing development. Thus, the shortage of reading material reported in some schools could have far-reaching consequences for the proper academic development of the affected children, who may never recover from this deficit that occurs early on in their academic careers.

All SMT member respondents to the questionnaire, as well as those who were interviewed reported that there was a shortage of furniture, such as desks, at their schools. This matter may also be related to the already discussed problem of over-enrolment. The effect of this could be that some learners have to share desks, or others may not have a place to sit, save for the floor. Under such circumstances, teaching and learning become an unwieldy challenge for both educators and learners alike. As a consequence, learners would not perform well in their examinations – including the NSC. Some research findings have also cited this as a major contributing factor towards poor academic performance of learners (e.g. Letlogo, et al, 2002; Bush, Joubert, Kiggundu & Van Rooyen, 2010). Furthermore, apart from breeding ill-discipline, overcrowded classrooms (a) lead to other forms of uncontrollable behaviour amongst learners, (b) affect the relationships between educators and learners, and (c) create an unproductive learning environment, thus making academic success in NSC examinations, close to impossible (Letlogo, et al, 2002; Bush, Joubert, Kiggundu & Van Rooyen, 2010).

Most (80%) of the SMT member respondents, together with three of the five SMT members interviewed, indicated that poverty was a great barrier to education in their schools. This is described in Huitt's model as part of what he refers to as 'contextual variables'. According to the model, contextual variables include aspects such as home environment, including socio-economic status of parents, which could influence learner performance. As already discussed above, the issue of the inability of some parents to provide the necessary and required reading materials for their children, is a case in point. As a resident of Mbizana, the researcher is

aware that learners who come from poverty-stricken homes endure extreme hardships – and there is no doubt that these hardships could impact adversely on learner performance. The DoE, and government in general, need to come up with some financial strategies, in addition to the nutrition programme, in order to mitigate the extreme effects of poverty that some of the learners endure on a daily basis. It is really difficult for some of these learners to devote the necessary attention and time to learning on hungry stomachs.

The issue of poverty is related to the issue of the nutrition scheme, where 40% of SMT member respondents indicated that the nutrition programme was properly monitored and conducted, whereas it wasn't so for the rest. Just as has just been said about the effects of poverty, a poorly run nutrition scheme could have irreparable damage on some learners, who'll either drop out of school, or never self-actualise to their full potential as a result of on-going, day-to-day hardships of life. As part of the contextual variables in Huitt's model, state policies and their implementation could have a negative impact on learner performance. With regard to the nutrition scheme, it is possible that the DoE does not have a clear policy for supervising the nutrition programme. As Tomlinson (2007: 14) observes, the situation in the Eastern Cape is unlike that of other provinces in that in the Eastern Cape not all farm schools are covered by the nutrition scheme. This means that some learners worthy of support through the nutrition scheme have fallen outside this support mechanism.

#### **4.9.3 Educator's View about the Underperformance of Learners in the Mbizana District**

Some grade twelve educator respondents on the questionnaire (40%) and three of the five educators who had been interviewed complained about experiencing a content gap in the subjects they were teaching. This could be attributed to the utilisation of under- and unqualified educators which was discussed above, as well as to the paucity or inadequacy of in-service training opportunities. This is a challenge to the DoE to empower its educators

with the necessary knowledge, skills and insights in order to ensure that they perform at their best – thus, in turn, ensuring good learner academic performance. Forty per cent of grade twelve educators experiencing content gaps is a very high number. This is a cry for help, and measures need to be put in place to address this call for help.

Most (70%) of grade twelve educator respondents, together with four of the five interviewed, asserted that they did not receive sufficient support from their curriculum advisors. This is in line with the observations by Hendricks (2008) and Mkokeli (2005) that there are systemic problems in the Eastern Cape Department of Education, that manifest in, inter alia, high numbers of vacant posts. This shortage of officials in, amongst others, education district offices lead to key staff such as subject advisors not being available to serve as the crucial district-level links with school classrooms, in the chain from the national and provincial education structures. At the school level, under-staffing could also be a serious problem in the light of so many posts remaining vacant. In particular, it is reported that there are not enough subject advisors in rural Eastern Cape to ensure that the curriculum is understood by teachers and is implemented appropriately in their classrooms. The issue of inadequate support from curriculum advisors, in particular, has been a national matter – and not just something for the Eastern Cape. Bantwini (2010: 88) sums up the matter as follows:

The Revised National Curriculum Statement was developed by a committee appointed by the then Minister of Education, Professor Kader Asmal, and delivered to schools for implementation by teachers who hardly took part in the development process. Feelings of uncertainty and lack of profound understanding resulting from this was aggravated by a lack of on-going professional development that would ensure that teachers understood what was required of them. Teachers complained about their infrequent meetings with the Subject Advisors responsible for their professional development. According to the teachers, they typically met with them for orientation on the curriculum reforms and hardly saw them

afterwards. This relationship was perceived as impacting on the success of the reform process. Added to this lack of support was fact that teachers did not have time to meet with their colleagues and discuss critical classroom issues and devise ways that would ensure the implementation of the new curriculum reform in all the classrooms. This was due to the overload in the learning areas they were teaching as well as the other responsibilities assigned to them: extra-mural activities, in and out of school meetings, in and out of school committee involvement and so on.

This quotation sums up a number of issues pertaining to the difficulties experienced by teachers in implementing the NCS. Indeed, in line with this quotation, the Ministerial Committee also reported that subject advisors did not provide enough support to teachers when they visited schools (Sokopo & Hans, 2010: 9). Furthermore, and in line with the sentiments expressed by Bantwini in the above quotation, 52% of grade twelve educator respondents on the questionnaire, and four of the five educators who were interviewed indicated that the new education system had demanded a lot of work from them. Going back to our theoretical framework, we note again that this is part of the contextual variables in Huitt's model, where State policies and how they're implemented impact negatively on learner performance. Certainly, changing the country's curriculum from the apartheid one to a more democratic one was a noble and desired activity. However, the nature of the new curriculum and its evolution caused much consternation to most, if not all, stakeholders. Sokopo and Hans (2010) make reference to this when they reported that Mbizana teachers complained about the new education system which demanded a lot of paper work from them. However, it was restructured and the paper work has since been reduced.

This, notwithstanding, there are still some lingering issues because the fundamental epistemological foundation is still the same. OBE was based on constructivist educational psychological bedrock; but so is CAPS. Thus, sentiments expressed by the majority (90%) of

the educators respondents on the questionnaire, together with three of the five educators interviewed, about enabling learners to learn in different ways, at different times and at their own pace, will still continue to be relevant even under CAPS. There are some practical difficulties with this at the classroom level, particularly the type of overcrowded classrooms discussed above, where it may be impossible for them to allow for individually-based attainment of espoused learning outcomes. Sokopo and Hans (2010) have indicated that educators complained about this education system, stating that it demanded a lot of paper work from them.

Most grade twelve educator respondents from the questionnaire (80%), and three of the five grade twelve educators who had been interviewed, complained about parents who did not buy the required learning material for their children. Bot (2005: 7) also highlighted this when s/he stated that a learner not having access to instructional resources, such as books at home is at a particular disadvantage and may not develop intellectually at the normal rate. Further, learners' access to technological instructional resources such as computers at home and at school is a vital focus of the context category and the school characteristics category of the Huitt's model because this model emphasizes the influence of the modern information age on learning.

The majority (90%) of grade twelve educator respondents and four of the five educators interviewed reported that they were teaching demotivated learners and that this impacted negatively on their performance in the NSC examinations. Huitt's model places this under the input category, which includes the characteristics that learners bring to the classroom experience, as having an influence on the output category (i.e. learner achievement). Various studies have shown that motivation has a positive and significant impact on successful learning (Walker-Dalhouse & Risko, 2008; Angelis & Wilcox, 2011: 30). If a learner is not



motivated she/he does not co-operate and participate fully in learning activities and on assessment tasks (Risko, 2008; Angelis & Wilcox, 2011: 30).

Lastly, 80% of grade twelve educator respondents as well as four of the five educators who had been interviewed reported that the lack of libraries and other resources necessary for the full implementation of the NCS contributed to low learner performance in Mbizana. Bot (2005: 7) reported that the lack of learning material was a nationwide problem for communities in rural areas because over three quarters of schools nationally had no libraries. These circumstances leave learners almost completely dependent on their schools to provide them with books to help them develop grade-appropriate literacy. This is a matter of grave concern, indeed.

#### **4.9.4 SGB Members' Views about the Underperformance of Learners in the Mbizana District**

The majority of SGB member respondents (75%) and four of the five SGB members from the interviews, reported that the relationship between them and the principals was not good. This suggested that the schools were not run in accordance with the laws of the land. Hendricks (2008) avers that it is ultimately, the school principals' responsibility to ensure that decisions of the SGBs are properly carried out by the relevant stakeholders. Various stakeholders opine that school principals' relationships with their SGBs are crucial to processes related to the finalisation of all school related priorities and goals (Jones, 1993; Levacic, 1995; Spengler & Calitz, 1999). Thus, this matter requires a lot of attention to ensure that schools operate smoothly. It is worrying that this may not be the case in respect of so many schools.

Just over half (52%) of the SGB member respondents on the questionnaire, and only one of the five SGB members who had been interviewed, indicated that they played an active role in appointing teachers and resolving disciplinary matters at their schools. Again, it is worrying

that this only took place in some schools and not all. Hendricks (2008) emphasizes the need for full participation of all SGB members in the governance of schools and that, in particular, school principals should provide adequate and correct information regarding school policies pertaining to school funds and other important issues to their school governing bodies. Further, according to Balindlela (2006), local government officials must develop appropriate communication strategies between schools and the community in order to strengthen the status of SGBs. The researcher aligns this statement with the context category of Huitt's model, which includes State policies and implementation strategies and mechanisms. Overall, schools need to adhere to laid down policies for them to ensure that the hand of SGBs is strengthened and schools operate appropriately and smoothly.

It is disappointing that 20% of SGB member respondents together with one of the five SGB members who had been interviewed reported that parents (including SGBs) did not demonstrate ownership of their schools in the Mbizana district. The researcher feels that SGBs and the parent component should be reminded about their functions as prescribed in South African Schools Act No 84 of 1996, as amended by Act 100 of 1997. Subject to this act, SGB members as well as parents should maintain and improve the school's property, buildings and grounds occupied by the school children, including school hostels, where applicable.

The majority of SGB member respondents (82%) and three of the five SGB members interviewed, reported that the system of re-admitting grade twelve learners had a negative impact on the NSC results. Again, this could be aligned with Huitt's context category variable of State policies. The ECDoE needs to come up with a clear policy regarding grade twelve failures, and how they can be assisted, where and by whom. Re-admitting them to the same classrooms they should have vacated leads to overcrowding in some cases, and this places further strain on the meagre resources available in those schools. In some countries,

such students are catered for separately, after school hours as a different cohort of students – and, as the case may be, by different teachers. Furthermore, the National and Provincial Learner Assessment Directorates, that are reportedly busy writing instructions on learner promotion and progression, are urged to place this matter on its agenda and provide a better direction on it.

#### **4.9.5 Similarities and Differences in the Views of the Various Stakeholders about the Underperformance of Learners in the Mbizana District**

According to Table 4.7, 100% of various stakeholders, i.e. grade twelve learner respondents, SMT member respondents and SGB member respondents agreed that parents did not attend school meetings. In addition, 100% of SMT member respondents, 76% grade twelve learner respondents, 80% of grade twelve educator respondents as well as 81% of SGB member respondents reported that parents did not assist their children with homework. Further, 90% of SGB member respondents, 81% of grade twelve learner respondents, 80% of grade twelve educator respondents and 76% of SMT member respondents contended that parents were either unwilling or could not afford to buy learning and reading material for their children; material which was necessary for proper implementation of the NCS.

These were the major similarities in the responses of the various stakeholders.

#### **4.10 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

This chapter has addressed the responses to the questionnaire and interviews. The questionnaire consisted of Section A, which solicited biographical information of the respective various stakeholders. The results emanating from this Section have been presented in tables, pie-charts and bar-graphs. Section B consisted of structured questions focusing on

the research questions, and the results were also tabulated and illustrated using pie-charts, bar-graphs and tables.

The second main instruments were interview schedules which sought to 'give a voice' to representatives of each of the stakeholder groupings that participated in this study. The voices of the stakeholder representatives have been presented verbatim, alongside the quantitative data emanating from the questionnaire, so as to give a complete picture of the data collected to address each research question.

This chapter has also presented a discussion of the findings by looking at the results through the eyes of the theoretical model that guided this study, as well as the existing empirical evidence as reflected in chapter two. In discussing her findings, the researcher has made use of relevant literature and the chosen theoretical model, Huitt's Model of Teaching/Learning Processes, which guided her study.

In summary, the findings of this study were closely aligned with the theoretical framework, particularly with regard to the category of contextual variables, which acknowledges the influences of factors such as family, home environment, the education levels of parents and their socio-economic status on learner performance. In the main, the research results revealed major similarities in the factors considered by the various stakeholders to be the main challenges preventing Mbizana grade twelve learners from performing well in the NSC examinations. Agreement on the factors that contribute towards something is an important starting point on the road to finding effective solutions to any challenge, especially considering that in the case-in-point, such solutions can only come from a concerted effort by all the various stakeholders. Thus, to achieve positive results, the Department of Basic Education needs to work closely with the various stakeholders so that the contributions of each stakeholder are taken on board.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter deals with the summary of all chapters, and then provides a conclusion and recommendations arising from the major findings of the study.

#### **5.2 SUMMARY**

The main purpose of this study was to investigate factors that were perceived to contribute to low learner academic performance in the Mbizana district. Chapter one presented a motivation for the study, statement of the problem for investigation, brief statement of the research methods, and definitions of key concepts. Specifically, this study sought to answer the following research questions:

- a) What do grade twelve learners consider to be the major contributory factors to low learner academic performance in the Mbizana district?
- b) What do School Management Team (SMT) members consider to be the major contributory factors to low learner academic performance in the Mbizana district?
- c) What do educators consider to be the major contributory factors to low learner academic achievement?
- d) What do School Governing Body (SGB) members consider to be the major contributory factors to low learner academic performance in the Mbizana district?
- e) Are there similarities and differences on the factors considered by the various stakeholders to be the major contributors to the low learner academic performance in the NSC in Mbizana district?

Chapter two addressed literature which discussed factors that were understood to contribute to the reported low academic performance of grade twelve learners, generally, and in the Mbizana district, in particular. To give the study a theoretical base, the chapter started by presenting a theoretical framework pertinent to the study. This took the form of a presentation of three theoretical perspectives focusing on various factors affecting learner performance, namely Carroll's Model of School Learning, Slamin's QAIT Model of Effective Classroom Practice and Huitt's Model of Teaching/Learning Process. The researcher chose Huitt's Model of Teaching/Learning Process as the most appropriate to guide and direct her study. This was then followed by a literature review focusing on previous empirical studies related to factors considered to affect learner performance, in line with the research questions.

Factors considered by grade twelve learners to be the major contributors to their low academic performance included a lack of parental support; poor infrastructure, such as roads, which limited and, at times, impeded access to schools by learners, educators and support departmental officials; as well as a shortage of physical and human resources.

On their part, school management team (SMT) members considered learners' socio-economic statuses, insufficient human resources, as well as physical and material learning/teaching resources to be the major contributors to low learner academic performance among Mbizana schools. The notable physical learning/teaching resources included the total lack of laboratories and libraries.

For the subject educators, there was a view that owing to a number of factors, teacher morale and motivation were low – and that this adversely affected learner academic performance in Mbizana schools. The educators further contended that some among them experienced difficulties in adequately implementing the new curriculum; and also that many were either unqualified or under-qualified for the classes that they Overall, the educators felt that these

factors individually and collectively contributed to the low academic performance of learners in the SNC examinations in the Mbizana district.

For the school governing body (SGB) members, the major contributors to low learner academic performance in Mbizana were presented as the absence of supportive infrastructure related to proper teaching of science and mathematics; the shortage of qualified physical science and mathematics teachers; the lack of parental support; the non-supportive socio-economic background of learners; and the unstable education system, occasioned by never-ending curricular changes. Similarities and differences in the perceptions of the various stakeholders were presented and explained in the chapter.

In chapter three, the research paradigm was introduced in order to give an overall methodological context to this study. This was then followed by a presentation of the research design and a description of the target and accessible populations. Descriptions of the data collection techniques, processes and procedures then followed, as well as the data analysis techniques. The final section dealt with issues for ethical considerations. The research methods used in this study had been presented with regard to the purpose of collecting data on factors considered to contribute to the underperformance of grade twelve learners at Mbizana district. The researcher used a mixed-methods approach which involved collecting both qualitative and quantitative research data. The chosen research design was Descriptive Survey, and the data gathering techniques were questionnaires and interview schedules for face to face interviews with the respective respondent groups.

The questionnaires consisted of section A, which focused on the biographical information of the respondents; section B focused on factors that were abstracted from the study's theoretical model, as well as from previous empirical findings, understood to contribute to low learner performance. The questionnaires consisted of a Likert-type scale, as well as

open-ended questions with spaces for the respondents to supply additional information as they so wished. The target and accessible populations were also described as well as the research sample and sampling procedures. Overall, ninety randomly selected respondents participated in this study. The participants were composed as follows: forty grade twelve learners, fifteen SMT members, twenty five subject educators and ten SGB members.

In chapter four, analysed results from both research instruments – that is, quantitative and qualitative data from the questionnaires and interview schedules, respectively, were presented and discussed in line with the research questions. (Not to mention that there were also qualitative data that emanated from the open-ended questions of the questionnaires for the respective respondent groups). In discussing the major findings, the researcher made reference to the relevant literature and the theoretical model, that is, Huitt's Model of Teaching/Learning Process. Qualitative and quantitative data related to the same research question were presented together in an attempt to give full meaning to the answers being provided to answer the particular research question.

### **5.3 CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, as the main purpose of this study was to investigate factors understood to contribute to low learner academic achievement in the NSC examinations. It has been pleasing to notice that there have been notable improvements in pass rates over the period of this study. It shows that Mbizana schools have begun to positively and constructively respond to some of the challenges they face. The fact that the researcher had used both qualitative and quantitative research methods in data collection yielded comprehensive results, in such a way that qualitative information tended to offer explanations for the observed trends cast by quantitative data. However, the limitations of this study, such as financial constraints, had a negative impact on the life of the researcher. She spent a lot of



her own money travelling to and from the sampled schools during two sessions of data collection. Further, the similarities in the perceptions of various stakeholders with regard to the factors they considered to be the major contributors to low learner academic performance in the NSC examinations alerted the researcher to factors beyond the classroom. This was one of the major revelations of this study. Thus, not alone did the learners and educators have to overcome challenges related to the evolving curriculum and the attendant paucity of teacher-development opportunities and key learning/teaching resources (such as laboratories, libraries, books and other learning resources), but they also had to navigate external contextual challenges that ordinarily should not have been of concern to school children and educators – such as impassable roads connecting their homes to their schools, as well as harsh socio-economic circumstances that curtailed learner concentration in class and a lack of adequate parental support. In this regard, the researcher was satisfied with her choice of Huitt’s model which described contextual variables in the home environment that impacted learner performance – such as education levels of parents and family socio-economic status. With regard to the previous empirical studies, it seemed to be the case that children coming from poverty stricken homes sometimes did not perform well because their aim was to leave school in order to earn a living. However, no such analysis of the NSC results was undertaken to verify this. Nonetheless, school managers as well as district officials have a responsibility to monitor and advise these learners, accordingly.

#### **5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS**

The main recommendations emanating from the findings of this study are presented below under each of the research questions.

#### **5.4.1 Grade Twelve Learners' Views about Under-performance of Learners in the Mbizana District**

I recommend that Mbizana primary and junior secondary schools should have been included in this study in order to understand their impact on NSC examinations.

Since the majority of learner respondents reported that lack of space made it difficult for them to work in groups, although they enjoyed group work, future research could consider focusing on the teaching and learning strategies and the resources employed in supporting the teaching and learning process. With regard to the lack of science laboratories that the majority of grade twelve learners considered as one of the main contributors to their low academic performance in the NSC examinations, blended teaching could be considered – especially for schools that have laptops and access to the internet. However, for the other schools, motivations could be made to the ECDoE for mobile laboratories and libraries, as well as laboratory experimental kits. Another option may be to create clusters of schools, whereby whatever resources are available could be pooled together and shared.

Concerning the learner respondents' report that considered late delivery of textbooks to be one of the main challenges they faced with regard to NSC examinations, in future, data should also be collected from the district officials because delivery of textbooks was a centralised function. It was the responsibility of the district officials to monitor delivery of textbooks, and they would be the best people to offer reasons and explanations concerning the challenges they face in discharging this function. As the majority of learner respondents indicated that they had no reading material at their homes, their parents could not afford to buy them due to financial constraints, future research could focus on the economic status of the parent component as a whole, and how learners could find help with learning materials in situations where their parents and guardians could not afford to provide for them. In view of

the large number of learner responses who reported that their parents did not attend school meetings, another study could find out more information about this and the reasons for this apparent apathy. Furthermore, the majority of learner respondents reported that their parents did not assist them with homework, mainly because they held lower qualifications than grade twelve. Thus, the researcher recommends that the ECDoE provide such parents with developmental programmes that would equip them with necessary knowledge and skills in order to enable them to assist their children. However, this is a long-term measure. In the interim, hiring private tutors may be a solution – as many wealthy parents do. For these parents, however, such tutors may be hired on their behalf by the SGB's to render service to groups of learners at designated venues and times after scheduled class times.

With regard to study opportunities at home, most learner respondents reported not getting sufficient study time and opportunities at their homes as family members made a lot of noise at night. Coupled with this, is the issue of long distances that learners had to travel to and from school. The majority of learners reported that they travelled long distances to and from their schools, and arrived tired, hungry and lost concentration in class. I would recommend that their parents should assist schools in building residences. They might render assistance financially or physically.

This calls for the possibilities of providing hostel accommodation to the learners so that they could live away from the distractions and disturbances of their home environments. This would give them sufficient study time, notwithstanding that adult supervision and further resources in the forms of beds and beddings, as well as food, would have to be provided. For needy families this may pose new challenges, except that those who cannot make financial contributions could assist by donating their labour and skills – thus, pay in-kind. Furthermore, school managers could play a role, such as requesting potential donors for funds to build hostels at the schools. However, associated with this is further research to

investigate factors that led to the closing down of hostels in all Mbizana mainstream schools. Presently, it is only special schools that have hostels in Mbizana district. Furthermore, it would be important to strictly implement the retrieval policy to ensure the return of all textbooks every year.

#### **5.4.2 SMT Members' Views about the Under-performance of Learners in the Mbizana District**

Teacher absenteeism was reported by most SMT members to be common at their schools, particularly on rainy days mainly because of impassable roads. Associated with this was apparent educator incompetence. The SMT members indicated that educators' inability to teach effectively frustrated the educators and portrayed them as useless in the eyes of their learners. According to the SMT members this also contributed to high rates of teacher absenteeism. Further research to investigate factors contributing to high rates of teacher absenteeism, generally, and in Mbizana district, in particular, should be conducted. Some SMT responses cited overcrowded classrooms in Mbizana schools as another major factor, resulting in high learner-teacher ratios. The issue of high learner-educator ratios is something that the ECDoE must take seriously and address. Mobile classrooms may be a good interim solution while plans for permanent classrooms are realised. The second dimension to this is that providing more classrooms means concomitant increase in the numbers of educators appointed. Thus, an appropriate balance must be found between these two variables.

Insufficient physical sciences and mathematics teachers, as reported by the majority of SMT member respondents, was reported to be a major contributor to the low academic performance of Mbizana NSC learners. Therefore, the ECDoE should do a thorough scrutiny of teacher profiles before employment. This would assist the responsible district official to

know their area of specialization and identify the vacant posts. Teachers' skill development is also recommended in this regard.

Lack of water supply in Mbizana schools, as indicated by some of the SMT member respondents, was not a problem. Mbizana principals should maintain the existing water tanks or taps. There should also be a strict supervision of water utilization in schools. Lack of science laboratories in Mbizana schools as reported by the majority of SMT member respondents and SMT members interviewed, impacted negatively on students' achievement. The DoE should encourage the twinning of schools as well as districts. This would assist Mbizana schools to share resources with schools that are in other districts. The insufficient learning material which the majority of SMT member respondents considered to be one of the main challenges that Mbizana NSC learners faced could be attributed to the poor implementation of the retrieval policy, because some school principals reported that most learners did not return textbooks at the end of the year. Twinning of their schools with the schools in other districts would enable them to borrow resources from other institutions. However, all school principals should look after their resources properly so that they do not have to depend on the few principals who are looking after their resources well.

The majority of SMT member respondents (80%) considered late delivery of textbooks to be a major challenge faced by Mbizana NSC learners. Another study should be conducted to investigate the impact of admission policies and practices on learner performance in Mbizana schools. The reason for conducting further research is that, various stakeholders such as the learners and SMT member respondents reported overcrowding in their schools, yet there were no clear reasons for that – and whether or not any measures were concomitantly being taken to address this problem.

Had the researcher known, a priori, that all SMT member respondents would report that there was a shortage of furniture such as desks in their schools, a questionnaire would have been designed for the district officials responsible for learner-teacher support material (LTSM) to have a perspective on this matter from the point of view of the responsible officials.

The majority of SMT respondents reported that parents did not assist their children with homework, as well as not attend school meetings. This agreed with what the learners had reported. The researcher makes the same recommendations as already made under section 5.4.1 – that is, providing such affected parents with developmental programmes that would equip them with necessary knowledge and skills to assist their children, as well as hire private tutors to work with the grade twelve learners.

On the question of the nutrition programme, some SMT members reported that the programme was not properly conducted and monitored in Mbizana schools, as a result of which some grade twelve learners arrived at school hungry and tired. It may therefore be recommended that the ECDoE review its policies and procedures on the nutrition programme, with a view to removing the obstacles which are currently preventing the programme from working smoothly. Again, further research study to, inter alia, investigate the impact of nutrition programme on learner performance in Mbizana schools could be conducted.

#### **5.4.3 Educators' Views about the Under-performance of Learners in the Mbizana District**

Most grade twelve educator respondents reported that they had not experienced any content gap ever since they started teaching. Nonetheless, the SMT should be encouraged to implement school improvement plans, as well as identify educators' developmental needs. Thereafter, the DoE should come up with appropriate educator development programmes.

Further, most grade twelve educators reported that they had not received sufficient support from their curriculum advisors. Thus, further research could be conducted on the factors contributing to the insufficient support to educators by curriculum advisors in Mbizana schools.

A relatively smaller number of grade twelve subject educators reported that the new education system itself, its practices and procedures had contributed to low academic performance of Mbizana NSC learners. This calls for an in-depth investigation on this matter, involving various stakeholders in order to determine the extent to which the new curriculum may have contributed to low the reported low academic achievement of learners in the NSC examinations. Most educators reported that they were dissatisfied with the OBE system, particularly with reference to the stipulation that learners be allowed to learn in different ways, at different times and at different rates – and that educators provide for these differences. It is pleasing that, since the time this study started, the DoE has taken steps to relieve teachers of the heavy burden of administrative responsibilities that was placed on their shoulders when the OBE instructional approach was introduced. Certainly, the introduction of CAPS has come with great relief on this particular score. However, CAPS – like OBE, is also built upon the constructivist teaching philosophy, and the basic tenets upon which the implementation of the NCS is based has, therefore, not changed. It is recommended that the DoE consider adopting a more eclectic approach with regard to the overall curriculum implementation philosophy so that behaviourism and constructivism can also openly be applied in the implementation of the NCS.

Like the learners, the majority grade twelve subject educators also reported that parents did not support their children with homework. The recommendations about this have already been made. Likewise, the educators also reiterated the point that some of the parents did not buy the required learning material for their children, and that this contributed to low learner

academic achievement. Within the circumstances of Mbizana, the emphasis should be on schools preserving the learning resources that come their way by, inter alia, ensuring that textbooks are collected back from learners at the end of the year. Thus, by and large, Mbizana parents cannot be blamed for the shortage of learning material. The DoE should capacitate Mbizana SMT on how they should utilize their funds. In particular, SMTs and SGBs should be encouraged to utilise school funds in ways that prioritise procurement of learning/teaching materials, as well as undertake resource-mobilisation activities to supplement the resources that come from government. The issue of pooling resources together in cluster schools is another recommendation that has already been made. It has also already been recommended that further research be undertaken to identify the reasons behind government officials not delivering learning materials to schools in time.

Most grade twelve educator respondents also reported that their learners were demotivated – and that this adversely impacted their performance. I recommend that Mbizana schools invite motivational speakers periodically, to motivate both learners and educator. Some of these could also be representatives of various employment categories, who would come and entice the learners to follow certain careers. In the process, the relevant entry requirements would be communicated, and this could motivate the learners to work hard in certain subjects so that they would qualify to enter those professions.

The issues of learners from poverty stricken homes arriving at schools hungry, and thus not performing well, as well as the lack of science laboratories, libraries and other important physical infrastructural necessities were also echoed by the educators as factors adversely impacting learner performance. Recommendations have already been made above concerning these issues, save to add that perhaps the affected schools could use their maintenance funds to construct libraries or science laboratories instead of waiting for the



DoE to do it for them. As recommended earlier, schools could also request donations from no-governmental organisations, industry and the business sector.

#### **5.4.4 SGB Members' Views about the Under-performance of Learners in the Mbizana District**

Most SGB member respondents indicated that the relationship between them and the school principals were not always cordial, as a result of which they could not be fully involved in school activities. I recommend that Mbizana principals be directed to adhere to the prescriptions of the Policy Hand Book for Educators, where it is made clear that there should be effective partnerships between parents and school staff to promote effective teaching and learning.

Some of the SGB member respondents reported that they tried to play an active role in attempting to resolve disciplinary matters at their schools, but lamented lack of cooperation and support from the school authorities. Certainly, the often strained relationships between parents and school authorities is something that warrants future and on-going investigations. Challenges may be site-specific, but further research is certainly required.

The SGB member respondents also echoed sentiments about parents not providing their children with study rooms, as well as being unable to provide their children with reading material at their homes. Recommendations about these challenges have already been made. The issues are echoed here just to show how pervasive these sentiments are – that is, the same challenges being echoed almost by all the groups of respondents that participated in this study.

There was only a small response profile from SGB member respondents indicating that parents exhibited a sense of ownership of their schools – and, accordingly, worked to prevent

ills such as vandalism. This result is most likely related to the one presented above, showing that relationships between parents and school authorities were not cordial. This could make parents feel alienated. So, one would recommend that SMTs and SGBs be capacitated to ensure that they each know what their roles and responsibilities are in maintaining the good order of school governance and administration.

The shortage of classrooms and furniture was also echoed by the SGB member respondents as posing a serious challenge to good learner performance. This matter could be related to the issues of school admission policies and practices, vis-à-vis the requirements and guiding principles of the DoE. For instance, if schools are admitting more learners than the department can support, then solutions need to be found, before school principals take in more learners in the next learning cycle. Therefore, it appears imperative to recommend that SGBs engage DoE officials in order to find lasting solutions to these difficulties. Certainly, proper teaching and learning cannot be expected to occur normally in overcrowded classrooms. Furthermore, the researcher feels that a future research should be done to investigate the impact and implications of the new DoE policy of re-admitting grade twelve failures.

#### **5.4.5 Similarities and Differences in the Views of the Various Stakeholders**

All grade twelve learners, SGB and SMT member respondents reported that parents did not attend school meetings; most learners, educators and SGB member respondents indicated that parents did not assist their learners with homework; most grade twelve learner respondents and SMT members indicated that parents did not buy the necessary learning materials for their children; most SMT members and the grade twelve learners conceded that poverty had a negative impact on learner performance – and that the school nutrition programme was not operating effectively in the district.

As one may see, these findings indicate that the factors considered by the various stakeholders to be the main challenges preventing Mbizana learners from performing well in the NSC examinations were generally the same. For this reason, the researcher recommends that all these stakeholders hold regular meetings to review the challenges that they commonly face. Since the various groups general agree on the salient factors impacting learner performance, they will not take long to also find possible solutions to these challenges if they engaged each other genuinely.

## **5.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

### **5.5.1 Introduction**

Limitations are matters and occurrences that arise in a study which are out of the researcher's control (Labaree, 2015). They limit the extent to which a study can go and sometimes affect the end result and conclusions that can be drawn. Every study, no matter how well it is conducted and constructed, has some limitations.

### **5.5.2 Limitations**

In presenting a research limitations' section that is well structured, the researcher has recommended a structure which is based on the following moves (Cookies & Privacy, 2012):

- The announcing move which allows her to identify the limitations of her study.
- The reflecting move which provides greater depth, helping to explain the nature of the limitations and justify the choices that she made during the research process.
- Finally, the forward looking move which enables her to suggest how such limitations could be overcome in future research.

### **5.5.3 The announcing move**

In the present study, one of the limitations was that participation was limited only to a single band, the FET, which comprised senior secondary schools. By design, the study excluded the GET band, which consists of primary and junior secondary schools. Accordingly, the findings are only limited to the views of participants in-so-far as these matters pertain to the FET schooling band.

A further limitation is that out of twenty eight Mbizana senior secondary schools, only nine senior secondary schools had been selected to constitute the sample of the study. This is only about 30% of the target population.

### **5.5.4 The reflective move**

The researcher had decided to conduct her research solely at FET schools because in the Eastern Cape Province, the process of re-alignment of schools had not been completed. The majority of senior secondary schools still started from grade ten to grade twelve, instead of starting from grade seven to grade twelve. As a consequence, it would have been difficult for the researcher to access the target group in different bands.

The research study was conducted at only nine sample schools since the district director had permitted her to complete field work within a short period of time in order not to disturb the normal school programme. However, working with a relatively smaller research sample had the advantage of saving the researcher the time and expense of studying the entire target population.

The researcher had resolved to use interviews and questionnaires to collect data for her study. However, her intention to also carry out document analysis did not materialize – thus, she relied only on the responses from questionnaires and interview. She was avoiding a lot of

discussions about two curriculum policies, National Curriculum Statement grades R-12 (NCS) as well as the incoming Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) for grades ten to twelve.

The sample of the study was limited to the FET school level due to time and financial constraints. Despite the fact that there was a dire need for the provincial and district officials' input into the study, the researcher could not afford to pay the expenses of extending participation.

### **5.5.5 The forward looking move**

The researcher recommends that, after the completion of the process of re-alignment of schools in the Eastern Cape Province, future research should include both FET and GET school bands. With regard to the small sample in this study, the researcher recommends that the university should render financial assistance to facilitate research processes, such as this one. In addition, it would be commendable if the university could assist in the procurement of permission for research studies, such as this one, from Mbizana district officials. This would assist the researcher to be given sufficient time to conduct the research.

Concerning the use of two research methods, interviews and questionnaires, the researcher felt that it was good for triangulation and validation purposes to do so. However, future research should include document analysis since (CAPS) is implemented from grade eight to grade twelve as well as in GET schools.

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## APPENDIX A

### QUESTIONNAIRE FOR LEARNERS

This questionnaire consists of two sections. Section A requires your biographical information. Section B, consists of four columns, the first column represents strongly agree, the second column represents agree, the third column represents strongly disagree and the fourth column represents disagree. You need to put a tick next to the corresponding answer. There is also a blank page where you need to express your own opinion around each question.

This questionnaire is confidential. You are not required to write your name.

#### Section A

##### 1. What is your home language?

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##### 2. Are your parents alive or deceased?

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**3. Is your home electrified?**

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**4. What is your parents or guardians' highest level of education?**

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**5. What is your parents' or guardians' employment status?**

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**6. Does your parent or guardian assist you with homework?**

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**7. Do you come from a poverty-stricken home?**

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## SECTION B

Possible challenges	SA	AG	SD	DA
1. Working in a group makes me feel more confident about my academic abilities.				
2. Overcrowding prevents us from doing some classroom-based activities.				
3. Lack of science laboratories and libraries contribute to low academic performance in my school				
4. Late delivery of textbooks contributes to low academic performance in my school.				
5. There is no reading material at home. I depend completely on school books.				
6. My parents do not attend parent meetings called by the school.				
7. My parents do not help with homework.				
8. Other family members disturb me while I am studying at home.				
9. Lack of learning material contributes to low academic performance in my school.				
10. Travelling to and from school is a big challenge.				

## APPENDIX B

### QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAM MEMBERS

This questionnaire consists of two sections. Section A requires your biographical information. Section B, consists of four columns, the first column represents strongly agree, the second column represents agree, the third column represents strongly disagree and the fourth column represents disagree. You need to put a tick next to the corresponding answer. There is also a blank page where you need to express your own opinion around each question.

This questionnaire is confidential. You are not required to write your name.

#### SECTION A

##### 1. How old are you?

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##### 2. How many years do you have in this post of a principal?

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**3. Do you have road access to your school?**

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**4. Do you receive capacity building in managerial and leadership skills?**

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## SECTION B

Possible Challenges	SA	AG	SD	DA
1. Teacher absenteeism is common in this institution.				
2. Learner-teacher ratio for grade 12 is too high and classrooms are overcrowded.				
3. My school does not have enough teachers for mathematics.				
4. My school does not have enough teachers for physical sciences.				
5. Lack of water supply makes learning and teaching difficult.				
6. There is a lack of science labs in my school.				
7. There is a lack of sufficient learning materials that are necessary for the Outcomes Based Education system to be effective.				
8. There is late delivery of text books in my school.				
9. Classrooms are overcrowded in this institution.				
10. There is a shortage of furniture such as desks.				
11. Very few parents attend parents' meetings in this institution.				
12. Very few parents assist their children with homework.				
13. Poverty is a great barrier to education in my school.				
14. Nutrition programmes in my school are properly conducted and monitored.				



## APPENDIX C

### QUESTIONNAIRE FOR EDUCATORS

This questionnaire consists of two sections. Section A requires your biographical information. Section B, consists of four columns, the first column represents strongly agree, the second column represents agree, the third column represents strongly disagree and the fourth column represents disagree. You need to put a tick next to the corresponding answer. There is also a blank page where you need to express your own opinion around each question.

This questionnaire is confidential. You are not required to write your name.

#### SECTION A

##### 1. Why did you choose teaching as a career?

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##### 2. Have you been employed before being an educator? If yes, please provide details of your employment.

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**3. How long have you been teaching the subject that you are currently teaching in Grade 12?**

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**4. Are you satisfied with the current curriculum? Yes or no, please substantiate your answer.**

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**SECTIONB**

<b>Possible challenges</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>AG</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>DA</b>
1. I did not experience any content gap problem ever since I taught this subject				
2. I have not received enough support from the curriculum advisors				
3. The new education system itself, its practices and procedures have contributed to low academic learner performance in my school				
4. Learners are expected to learn in different ways at different times and we are expected to allow for these differences. This is impossible in my situation				
5. Some people do not assist their children in doing their homework				
6. Some parents do not buy the required learning material for their children				
7. Learners are demotivated				
8. Learners come from poverty stricken homes so they come to school hungry				
9. Lack of science labs necessary for OBE contributes to low academic performance				
10. Lack of libraries necessary for OBE contributes to low academic performance				

**APPENDIX D**

**QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY MEMBERS**

This questionnaire consists of two sections. Section A requires your biographical information. Section B, consists of four columns, the first column represents strongly agree, the second column represents agree, the third column represents strongly disagree and the fourth column represents disagree. You need to put a tick next to the corresponding answer. There is also a blank page where you need to express your own opinion around each question.

This questionnaire is confidential. You are not required to write your name.

**SECTION A**

**1. What is your church denomination?**

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**2. What is your employment status?**

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**SECTION B**

Possible challenges	SA	AG	SD	DA
1. There is a good relationship between the principal and the SGB members in this institution				
2. SGB plays an active role in appointing teachers				
3. SGB plays an active role in resolving disciplinary matters				
4. Parents' attendance at school meetings is bad. Very few (less than 2%) parents attend meetings				
5. Parents are willing to assist their children with homework				
6. Parents provide grade 12 learners (their children) with study rooms so that they are not disturbed by their friends when studying				
7. Mbizana homes have no reading material for their children to read as a result grade 12 learners depend only on school material				
8. As SGB members, when realising that a child has an academic problem, we call the child's parents				
9. Parents own this school, they prevent any form of vandalism (They are securing the school buildings)				
10. This school has a shortage of furniture				

**APPENDIX E**

**INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

**In your opinion, what major factors impact learner performance in the Mbizana district? Please explain your answer.**

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**In your view, is the Eastern Cape Education Department doing enough to address the issue of learner performance in Mbizana district?**

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**Mbizana district is mainly deep rural, do you think this could impact the quality of education received by learners, as well as learner performance in this district?**

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**In your opinion, are there other factors that may be impacting on learner performance in the Mbizana district? Please state and explain such factors, if any.**

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**5. In your view, who is most severely affected by the factors that you have identified?**

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## APPENDIX F

### INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

#### 3.6 Grade 12 learners

##### 3.6. 1. In your opinion, what major factors impact on learner performance in Mbizana district? Please explain?

###### L-R1

Lack of space makes it difficult for me to work in the groups although I enjoy group work.

A shortage of textbooks does not give me enough time to read at home.

I have no hope of good results at the end of this year.

My parents do not help with homework. They also do not want to attend school meetings.

They said that they are busy.

There is no Science laboratory at my school as a result I do not have insight of some chemicals.

I do not meet the minimum requirements needed to pass grade 12 because I do not have money to rent a house next to school so that I study without disturbance.

###### L-R2

The School Management Team does not address our problems such as building hostels for us.

I have to travel a distance to go to school. On my arrival, I feel tired and hungry.

Sometimes, I have decided not to go to school because I have no bus fare.

My classroom has no space for me to do many activities well.



The new education approved (OBE) does not give me enough time to study independently instead it prefers group work.

Most of us do not return our books at the end of the year. The new ones are delivered very late. We have been running short of learning material for a long time.

My parents do not know how to assist me in Mathematics and Science.

My parents do not attend school meetings. They claim that they are busy. They are looking after their cattle and goats.

### **L-R3**

My parents do not support me when I am doing my homework. They told me that they do not know grade 12 work.

I share my textbook with Zola because textbooks were delivered very late at my school.

There is no library in my school. The one in town has insufficient books. There is also no science laboratories.

I want to be transported to the nearby school laboratory which is well equipped.

My parents promised to buy me extra material to read at home however they failed to do that due to financial constraints.

I do not attend extra-classes because of the long distance I am travelling after school.

### **L-R4**

There is a lack of learning material at my school as well as my home.

I am trying my level best but I do not get the necessary support from home.

I enjoy working in groups but my classroom is overcrowded.

My school is not well equipped in terms of resources.

If I need to visit a well-equipped science laboratory, I have to go to KZN schools.

Some learners do not return all text books at the end of the year. The new books are usually delivered very late.

### **L-R5**

I do not have reference books to read at home.

I do not have a science laboratory at my school.

I have a problem with transport. I have to travel on foot to school and it is a distance.

There is a shortage of Science laboratories at my school as well as at neighbouring schools.

Many learners in my class do not have textbooks. Some textbooks arrived very late.

On rainy days, I do not go to school.

My classroom has insufficient space for me to participate in group discussion without disturbing other groups.

Our teachers confuse us because they do not consolidate what we have discussed in groups.

**3.6.2. In your view, is the Eastern Cape Education Department doing enough to address the issue of learner performance in Mbizana district?**

### **L-R1**

Yes, it is trying because education is free which encourages me to do my level best since it is easy for me to study without fees.

Yes, Corporal punishment was abolished.

It advises us to form our study groups.

We form groups although our classrooms are overcrowded.

### **L-R2**

No, some of the issues raised are not properly addressed. There is a lack of resources such as science laboratories.

I need more reading material to supplement my prescribed textbooks.

No, there are no incentives to motivate our parents, therefore they do not attend school meetings.

### **L-R3**

I have limited information because there is no library at my school.

My parents promised to buy for me material to read at home. However, they failed to do this due to financial constraints.

No, no there are no student residents or hostels at my school and I do not have enough study at home because there is a lot of noise.

### **L-R4**

No, there is a lack of reading material at my school.

The Department of Education does not construct enough classrooms for us. Our classrooms are overcrowded.

No, there is a lack of learning material. The Department supplies high passing schools with material and forgets about us.

There is a lack of transport. I travel to and from school on foot.

I do not have parents, my guardian does not want to co-operate.

I am not willing to ask for help, because the teachers do not want to do their work.

#### **L-R5**

The Department allows teachers to transfer to schools next to town. We are left without teachers.

The Department does not give our parents incentives as result they do not support us with school.

**3.6.3. Mbizana district is mainly deep rural, do you think this could impact the quality of education received by learners as well as their performance in this district?**

#### **L-R1**

No, if there could be enough learning material this would improve the quality of education received by learners as well as their performance.

#### **L-R2**

No, if the Department of Education could build hostels in all Mbizana senior secondary schools, we could not travel long distances to and from school.

I could get sufficient time to study in the morning and after my classes.

#### **L-R3**

No, if my parents could have quiet study houses at home so that I could have study rooms at home so that I could study without any disturbance, this could not have any negative impact on my academic performance.

**L-R4**

No, this could not impact my academic performance if my guardian could assist me with my homework. It will be easy for me to learn from my guardian more than teachers.

**L-R5**

I do not know because roads are inaccessible on rainy days in rural areas.

I need the DOE to provide us with hostels at school in order to study well.

**3.6.4. In your opinion are there other factors that may be impacting on learner performance in Mbizana district? Please state and explain such factors if any.**

**L-R1**

There are other factors such as drug abuse.

**L-R2**

I always arrive late at school as a result, I miss some lessons.

**L-R3**

My classmates are selling drugs in order to get money. Use of drugs during school hours may impact on our performance

**L-R4**

I am coming from a poverty stricken home. I am travelling a long distance to get to school due to the lack of transport. By the time I arrive at school, I am tired and hungry and I cannot concentrate on my work.

**L-R5**

I always use drugs that are available at my school. This could be one of the factors that have impacted negatively on my performance.

**3.6.5. In your view, who is most severely affected by the factors that you have identified.****L-R1**

We, as learners are largely affected because our future is impacted negatively. In addition, our teachers and our parents are also affected. Our district is also regarded as a low performing one.

**L-R2**

We are largely affected because it is our future.

**L-R3**

I think we as learners, as well as teachers are severely affected.

**L-R4**

My guardian will be highly affected because I will not complete my education in time, so I can assist them financially.

## **L-R5**

My district will be severely affected because it will be regarded as a low performing district.

### **3.7 School Management Team**

#### **3.7.1. In your opinion, what major factors impact on learner performance in Mbizana district? Please explain?**

##### **SMT-R1**

At my school, there is a major shortage of qualified teachers especially in Maths and Science.

There is also high learner and teacher absenteeism.

My school is characterised by a shortage of classrooms which results in a high learner-teacher ratio.

Parents do not attend meetings at this school.

##### **SMT-R2**

At my school, some learners do not return textbooks at the end of the year. New textbooks are distributed very late.

Teachers do not come to school on rainy days because roads are not accessible.

The fact that our matric starts in grade 10, instead of starting in grade 8 does not allow our learners to be well prepared for the NSC.

The important factors such as overcrowded classrooms at my school result in high learner-teacher ratios.

Another factors that affects academic achievement is the use of drugs amongst some learners in my school.

Use of drugs by learners, results in their low academic performance.

### **SMT-R3**

At my school, there is a shortage of furniture such as desks.

There is also a shortage of learning resources.

Grade 12 classes at my school are overcrowded. This results in high learner-teacher ratios.

I have a problem of parents who do not assist their children with homework.

At my school the DoE does not provide incentives for educators who excel in their subjects.

This could encourage the trend of teacher absenteeism.

Many learners travel long distances to get to school. They arrive at school hungry, thus they lose concentration.

I am running short of very important facilities such as a library and a science laboratory.

### **SMT-R4**

I have three vacant posts for language, Science and Accounting Head Of Divisions (H.O.Ds).

The DoE supplies us with teachers very late.

I have a shortage of qualified teachers, especially in Maths and Science so the teacher-learner ratio is too high.

My teachers do not come to school on rainy days because the road to this school is not accessible.



At my school I have a problem of nutrition programmes.

An approved service provider does not deliver food for a couple of weeks.

#### **SMT-R5**

When I invite parents to parent meetings, they do not turn up. They also do not help with their children's homework.

I am running short of water. I cannot afford to buy many tanks.

I do not have enough Maths and Science teachers, this is due to the termination of temporary teachers at the end of each year and their late appointment.

Many schools in this district are offering Mathematics and Physical Sciences as a result I cannot request any Mathematics or Physical Science teacher from any school to assist in my school.

I have a shortage of furniture, especially desks.

The DoE has no clear policy of their distribution. This results in overcrowded classrooms.

**3.7.2. In your view, is the Eastern Cape Department of Education (ECDoE) doing enough to address the issue of learner performance in Mbizana?**

#### **SMT-R1**

No, intervention programmes are targeting very few subjects such as Maths and Physical Sciences.

The ECDoE does not employ enough teachers as a result I have a shortage of Maths and Science teachers.

The lack of qualified teachers in Maths and Science has a negative impact on learner performance at my school.

There is a shortage of furniture at my school. The DOE provides us with desks after three or four years. There is no clear policy of how desks are distributed. I need to receive written instruction that will tell me when I get new desks will be distributed.

**SMT-R2**

No, it does not capacitate parents as a result, parents do not assist their children with homework.

Again, when I invite them to school meetings, very few parents attend.

**SMT-R3**

No, its policy does not allow learners to pay fees. This results in the shortage of the learning material necessary for OBE at my school.

No, it does not supply our schools with desks every year. My classrooms are congested. Learner-teacher ratio is too high.

**SMT-R4**

No, it takes a long time to respond to my application for the construction of a Science Laboratory and other structures.

Again, textbooks are delivered very late at my school.

**SMT-R5**

The education system itself has a negative impact on learner performance. The fact that all our high schools start at grade 10 does not fully prepare our learners.

The ECDoE does not award bursaries to learners coming from poverty stricken homes.

**3.7.3. Mbizana district is mainly deep rural, do you think this could impact the quality of education received by learners, as well as learner performance in this district?**

**SMT-R1**

No, being in a rural area is not a cause of poor performance because there are districts such as Limpopo which are rural and perform well.

No, if the DoE could construct good roads, all schools could be accessible. This will prevent teacher absenteeism on rainy days.

**SMT-R2**

Yes, in my school, teachers are transferring next to town as a result, I have a shortage of Maths and Science teachers.

Teachers do not come to school on rainy days because roads are too muddy.

**SMT-R3**

Many learners come from poverty-stricken homes, as a consequence their parents cannot afford to buy learner material for them.

Little attention is also paid to rural schools with regard to resources.

There is poor infrastructure at my school. Again, the DoE is delaying in building a science laboratory at my school.

**SMT-R4**

Yes, learners are not exposed to good resources and technology that can help them to access necessary information.

Yes, most parents do not assist their children because they are illiterate.

**SMT-R5**

Yes, many children are coming from poverty stricken homes, as a result it is difficult for them to concentrate on their studies.

Yes, at my school, there is a shortage of classrooms.

On rainy days, building material could not be delivered.

**3.7.4. In your opinion, are there other factors that may be impacting learner performance in the Mbizana district? Please state and explain such factors, if any.**

**SMT-R1**

There are other factors such as the chaotic nutrition programme at my school. The approved service provider supplies my learners with insufficient food Learners wait in queues for a long time due to a lack of bread.

Shortage of classrooms leads to a high learner-teacher ratio.

**SMT-R2**

On rainy days, roads to my school are not accessible. This enhances teacher absenteeism and non-delivery of learning material.

**SMT-R3**

At my school, career guidance is not properly done by the Life Orientation teachers. This results in poor subject combination and constant changing of subjects every year.

**SMT-R4**

Parents are not responding when I am inviting them to my school meetings. They also do not assist their children with take-away tasks.

**SMT-R5**

I have a shortage of specialists in Maths and Science. These subjects are taught by teachers that have specialised with certain sections of the subjects.

**3.7.5. In your view, who is severely affected by the factors that you have identified?****SMT-R1**

Students are directly affected by these factors because education prepares a bright future for them. The fact that their parents do not support them demotivates them.

**SMT-R2**

Mbizana district as well as the Eastern Cape Province Department of Education are mostly affected by these factors. They are regarded as the poorest performers in South Africa.

Mbizana grade 12 learners are also mostly affected because they are labelled as low academic performers.

**SMT-R3**

Teachers are frustrated and demotivated because of poor performing learners.

Parents are also affected because they are expecting their children to obtain the NSC in time.

#### **SMT-R4**

Parents and the entire community are mostly affected by the chaotic nutrition programme at my school because most learners come from poverty stricken homes.

I wish this programme could be transferred to the Department of Health where it will be properly monitored.

#### **SMT-R5**

Learners, parents as well as educators are affected by the shortage of learning material. They have no money to buy them.

### **3.8 Educators**

**3.8.1. In your opinion, what major factors impact on learner performance in Mbizana district? Please explain your answer.**

#### **E-R1**

At my school, I need a library to read more about the subjects I teach. I need to read extensively about my subject although I do not experience any content gap in relation to them. Some learners come from poverty stricken homes. Their parents could not afford to buy the required learning material.

#### **E-R2**

There is lack of parental support in this school. Parents do not attend school meetings. They also do not help their children with homework. As a result, their children are demotivated. Most parents do not buy learning material for their children, they claim that education is free in South Africa. This non-cooperation of parents demotivates their children. High rate of learner pregnancy results in the low academic achievement.

**E-R3**

I have congested classrooms. Learners do not receive individual attention. Overcrowded classrooms do not allow learners to learn in different ways as it is expected in OBE. The Department of Education frequently capacitates me. I am happy about that, though I do not have any content gap in my subject.

**E-R4**

I have no curriculum advisor to support me in my subject. My principal has told me that there will be no employment of curriculum advisors until 2017. Again, I am not happy about this new education system. It demands a lot of paper work. Learners are expected to learn in different ways and I am expected to allow them.

**E-R5**

At my school there is no science laboratory. Learners have no insight of the experiments they are learning about. In addition, I do not have a curriculum advisor in my subject, Physical Sciences. The circuit manager told my principal that there will be no employment of curriculum advisors until 2017.

**3.8.2. In your view is the Eastern Cape Education Department doing enough to address the issue of learner performance in Mbizana district?****E-R1**

No, it is not doing enough to address the issue of learner performance because it delays to employ curriculum advisors. Again, the ECDoE does not build a science laboratory and a library for my school. It does not employ motivational speakers to motivate our demotivated learners.

**E-R2**

No, it does not give parents any incentives as a result parents are uninterested in attending school meetings and assisting their children with homework.

**E-R3**

No, it introduced the new education system which demands a lot of paperwork from me. It also fails to supply my school with the learning material necessary for OBE. This new education approach has a lot of work, learners are expected to learn in different ways, I am expected to allow these differences and this is impossible in my situation.

**E-R4**

No, it does not construct a library and a science lab for my school. This makes teaching and learning difficult. Learners are frustrated and demotivated by the absence of a library and a science lab. The DOE does not employ any motivator for both learners and educators at my school. Both educators as well as learners are demotivated in this institution. The DOE needs to give all top achievers incentives in order to motivate them.

**E-R5**

No, it introduced OBE which expects learners to learn in different ways yet classrooms are crowded. It is not easy for me to teach under these conditions. I do not have a curriculum advisor in my subject, Physical Science. The circuit manager told my principal that there will be no employment of curriculum advisors until 2017. It means that I will not have a subject advisor from now until 2017.

**3.8.3. Mbizana district is mainly deep rural, do you think this could impact the quality of education received by learners as well as learner performance in this district?**



**E-R1**

No, I do not think that this could have an impact on the quality of education received by learners because I do not have a content gap in this subject. If the ECDoE and the parents would buy learning material there would be no negative impact on the quality of education as well as learner performance.

**E-R2**

No, the Department of Education frequently capacitates me. I am happy about that, though I do not have any content gap in my subject. The fact that Mbizana district is deep rural could not negatively impact on learner performance.

**E-R3**

Yes, most parents in deep rural areas are not highly educated. This is the reason why Mbizana learners are not assisted with homework by their parents.

**E-R4**

Yes, most parents in deep rural areas are not working. As a result, Mbizana learners come from poverty-stricken homes. Learners have no parents, and their guardians tell them that education is free in South Africa.

**E-R5**

Yes on rainy days, my school is not accessible as result subject advisors could not visit us for a couple of days. Lack of curriculum advisors' support indirectly affected learner performance.

**3.8.4. In your opinions are there other factors that may be impacting on learner performance in Mbizana district? Please state and explain such factors, if there are any.**

**E-R1**

Interruptions caused by frequent district official visits during teaching hours, demotivates us as well as learners. Strikes are common at my school especially towards the end of the year. This has a negative impact on learner performance. Learners do not get sufficient time to revise their work. High rate of teacher absenteeism in summer contributes to our low academic achievement.

**E-R2**

My learners reported to me that they do not get enough time to study at home. It is very noisy because some parents have taverns that disturb learners the whole night. Parents do not take responsibility for their children's education. They do not assist them with homework.

**E-R3**

At my school, some of the learners came from poverty stricken homes, their parents could not afford to buy food and learning material for them. They come to school hungry. Vandalism is common in rural schools and it results in the theft of many learning materials. Out of school youth assisted by school children coming from poverty-stricken homes usually vandalise my school.

**E-R4**

The education system has got a lot of paperwork. It consumes a lot of my teaching time. Learners are expected to learn in different ways. There are no laboratories. Learners could not

combine theory and practice. Learners have no insight of the many chemicals we are talking about because there is no science laboratory at my school.

#### **E-R5**

Classes are overcrowded. This leads to high learner-teacher ratio. Many learners at my school come from poverty stricken homes. Their parents could not afford to buy them learning material. I am teaching demotivated learners. The DoE needs to employ motivational speakers.

#### **3.8.5. In your view who is most severely affected by the factors that you have identified?**

#### **E-R1**

We, as educators are affected because we are regarded as failures by the parents and municipalities. I am most severely affected. I have no library at my school. I am demotivated by this environment which is not conducive to teaching and learning. This new education system, its policies and procedures demand a lot of work from me. It engages me with paper work.

#### **E-R2**

The African child, who was predominantly made poorer by the past political domination, is affected. She/he is delayed by the repeating the same class yet he/she is expected to complete his/her studies and go to work.

#### **E-R3**

Parents, teachers, learners and communities are affected. Parents pin their hopes on their children because they are not working. They expect their children to work for them. Communities also believe in their children to improve the economy of the country.

#### **E-R4**

Learners are severely affected and also demotivated. Learners are most severely affected by the lack of science laboratory. They want to complete their studies on time. They want to work and earn money because their parents are unemployed.

#### **E-R5**

The provincial office is severely affected because it is regarded as a poor performer by the national office. It is undermined by other provinces as a result of its low performance.

### **3.9 School Governing Body Members**

**3.9.1. In your opinion, what major factors impact learner performance in Mbizana district? Please explain your answer.**

#### **SGB-R1**

The principal does not appoint relevant teachers at this school. He usually appoints the teachers in Mathematics vacant posts. As a School Governing Body chairperson, I am not fully involved in the appointment of teachers. This strains our relationship.

#### **SGB-R2**

There is a shortage of furniture such as desks in this school due to the re-admission of grade 12 failures. The Department of Education usually distributes furniture after two or four years. This results in overcrowded classrooms. In addition out of school youth vandalise the school and steal desks.

### **SGB-R3**

At this school, the principal does not involve us in the appointment of teachers. As School Governing Body members, we need to first discuss the vacant post. However, as the School Governing Body chairperson, I am expected to be an observer during the interview process. As the School Governing Body chairperson, I notice that parents do not attend school meetings to check the progress of their children.

### **SGB-R4**

This school has a problem of network which is one of the facilities. Yes, when the school was vandalized, I phoned the police however, I could not get hold of them due to the shortage of network.

### **SGB-R5**

When my child requests me to assist her with Mathematics homework, I cannot help her because of my low level of education.

**3.9.2. In your view, is the Eastern Cape Education Department doing enough to address the issue of learner performance in Mbizana district?**

### **SGB-R1**

No, it does not build classrooms for my school. There is a shortage of classrooms at my school due to the re-admission of grade 12 failures. When parents are called to a meeting to resolve this, they do not turn up.

**SGB-R2**

No, the policy of re-admitting grade 12 failures at my school leads to the shortage of classrooms and furniture. The newly admitted grade 12 learners could not get enough attention because teachers could not attend to them individually.

**SGB-R3**

No, I cannot afford to buy reading material for my child because I am not working. Furthermore, the Department of Education informed us that education is free in this country.

**SGB-R4**

No, there are no clear policies; I do not attend many school meetings. I usually get invitations very late; the school principal calls me on the meeting day.

**SGB-R5**

No, there is a shortage of classrooms at my school due to the re-admission of grade 12 failures. This results in a high learner-teacher ratio.

**3.9.3. Mbizana district is mainly a deeply rural area, do you think this could impact the quality of education received by learners, as well as learner performance?**

**SGB-R1**

Yes, most parents in rural areas do not support their children. They do not attend meetings to ensure their children's performance.

**SGB-R2**

Yes, many parents in rural areas are uneducated and as a consequence; they do not assist their children with homework.

**SGB-R3**

No, the fact that Mbizana district is deeply rural does not impact on learner performance, if the Department of Education could provide the district with enough reading material and furniture, learner performance would be good.

**SGB-R4**

Yes, parents in rural areas are mainly looking after their cattle and cultivating their fields instead of attending school meetings and helping their children with school work.

**SGB-R5**

Yes, in rural areas, many people are unemployed. They are unable to provide their children with study rooms and reading material.

**3.9.4. In your opinion, are there other factors that may be impacting learner performance in Mbizana district? Please state and explain such factors, if there are any.**

**SGB-R1**

I have noticed that learners in this school usually strike towards the end of the year. The principal partially involves me in resolving this matter.

**SGB-R2**

In Mbizana, people are unemployed. They rely on taverns and other small businesses. Taverns result in a lot of noise, day and night which prevents learners from studying.

**SGB-R3**

There is no reading material in Mbizana homes. Many parents cannot afford to buy them due to financial constraints.

#### **SGB-R4**

Curriculum is not properly managed. The School Management Team, particularly principals are inefficient. The DoE does not employ well qualified principals. It usually employs principals because they are SADTU members.

#### **SGB-R5**

Teachers as well as learners are demotivated due to the unavailability of human and material resources. The frequent changing of curriculum impacts negatively on teaching and learning. The DoE fails to make most teachers permanent and temporary teachers get demotivated and do not do their jobs well.

#### **3.9.5. In your view who is most severely affected?**

#### **SGB-R1**

Learners are most severely affected because their dreams are successful. Learners are in need of jobs after they have completed their studies, so that they can alleviate poverty.

I, as a parent am severely affected by because, I wish to see my child progressing in life.

#### **SGB-R2**

Teachers, learners, parents and the community at large are affected. They are regarded as low performers in the whole nation. Communities hope that if they can educate their children, the economy will develop.



**SGB-R3**

Everybody who has a stake in the education of a child, is severely affected. Other provinces of South Africa are affected because of the poor performance of the Eastern Cape Province impacts negatively on the country (South Africa).

**SGB-R4**

Both teachers and learners are severely affected. They are regarded as poor performers in the whole SA.

**SGB-R5**

I, as an SGB chairperson am severely affected. Other provinces will think that I am not assisting the schools in terms of management. Learners, teachers and parents are also affected. They want their children to complete their studies in order to join the workplace.



## APPENDIX G

### LETTERS TO REQUEST PERMISSION

EASTERN CAPE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

BIZANA DISTRICT OFFICE Private Bag X504 \* BIZANA \* 4800 \* REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA \* Tel: 039 2510 063 Fax: 039-2510423\* Website: [ecprov.gov.za](http://ecprov.gov.za) \* E-mail [nkanceladn@gmail.com](mailto:nkanceladn@gmail.com) cell no. 0736372223 Date: 20-03-2012

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**To: The District Director**

**Subject: Permission to conduct a research study in your schools.**

I am Degrena Nokuzola Nkanzela, doing Doctor of Education in the Department of Curriculum and Instructional Studies at the University of Zululand. I am currently doing research on the following topic:

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO LOW ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF GRADE TWELVE LEARNERS IN MBIZANA DISTRICT.

Three sample schools will be randomly selected from each circuit. Nine sample schools will be randomly selected from the entire district. Participants in your schools such as grade twelve educators, grade twelve learners, school management team and school governing body are expected to answer questionnaires based on the factors contributing to grade twelve learners poor performance

Your co-operation will be highly appreciated in this regard.

..... Signature.

I ..... (Name in full) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of this research. I agree that the respondents who are interested can participate in the research project.

.....Signature.



EASTERN CAPE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

BIZANA DISTRICT OFFICE Private Bag X504 \* BIZANA \* 4800 \* REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA \* Tel: 0392 510 063 Fax: 039-2510423\* Website: [ecprov.gov.za](http://ecprov.gov.za) \* E-mail [nkanceladn@gmail.com](mailto:nkanceladn@gmail.com) cell no. 0736372223 Date: 20-03-2012

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**TO: The Circuit Manager**

**Subject: Permission to conduct a research study in your schools.**

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FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO LOW ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF GRADE TWELVE LEARNERS IN MBIZANA DISTRICT.

Three sample schools will be randomly selected from your circuit. Participants in your schools such as grade twelve educators, grade twelve learners, school management team and school governing body are expected to answer questionnaires based on the factors contributing to grade twelve learners low academic performance

Your co-operation will be highly appreciated in this regard.

..... Signature.

I ..... (Name in full) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of this research. I agree that the respondents who are interested can participate in the research project.

.....Signature.



## APPENDIX H

### CONCENT FORMS

EASTERN CAPE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

BIZANA DISTRICT OFFICE Private Bag X504 \* BIZANA \* 4800 \* REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA \* Tel: 039 2510 063 Fax: 039-2510423\* Website: [ecprov.gov.za](http://ecprov.gov.za) \* E-mail [nkanceladn@gmail.com](mailto:nkanceladn@gmail.com) cell no. 0736372223 Date : 20-03-2012

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**TO: The District Director**

**Subject: Permission to conduct a research study in your schools.**

I am Degrena Nokuzola Nkanzela, doing Doctor of Education in the Department of Curriculum and Instructional Studies at the University of Zululand. I am currently doing research on the following topic:

**FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO LOW ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF GRADE TWELVE LEARNERS IN MBIZANA DISTRICT.**

Three sample schools will be randomly selected from each circuit. Nine sample schools will be randomly selected from the entire district. Participants in your schools such as grade twelve educators, grade twelve learners, school management team and school governing body are expected to answer questionnaires based on the factors contributing to grade twelve learners poor performance

Your co-operation will be highly appreciated in this regard.

..... Signature.

I Victor Mkentane, a manager of Mbizana district (Name in full) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of this research. I agree that the respondents who are interested can participate in the research project.

.....Signature.



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**TO: The Circuit Manager**

**Subject: Permission to conduct a research study in your schools.**

I am Degrena Nokuzola Nkanzela, doing Doctor of Education in the Department of Curriculum and Instructional Studies at the University of Zululand. I am currently doing research on the following topic:

**FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO LOW ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF GRADE TWELVE LEARNERS IN MBIZANA DISTRICT.**

Three sample schools will be randomly selected from your circuit. Participants in your schools such as grade twelve educators, grade twelve learners, school management team and school governing body are expected to answer questionnaires based on the factors contributing to grade twelve learners low academic performance

Your co-operation will be highly appreciated in this regard.

..... Signature.

I VusumziSitofela, a manager of Mbongweni circuit (Name in full) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of this research. I agree that the respondents who are interested can participate in the research project.

.....Signature.



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Three sample schools will be randomly selected from your circuit. Participants in your schools such as grade twelve educators, grade twelve learners, school management team and school governing body are expected to answer questionnaires based on the factors contributing to grade twelve learners low academic performance

Your co-operation will be highly appreciated in this regard.

..... Signature.

I BukiweMabhengu, a manager of Luna circuit (Name in full) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of this research. I agree that the respondents who are interested can participate in the research project.

.....Signature.



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Three sample schools will be randomly selected from your circuit. Participants in your schools such as grade twelve educators, grade twelve learners, school management team and school governing body are expected to answer questionnaires based on the factors contributing to grade twelve learners low academic performance

Your co-operation will be highly appreciated in this regard.

..... Signature.

I BongaMkhanzi, a manager of Khotsho circuit (Name in full) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of this research. I agree that the respondents who are interested can participate in the research project.

.....Signature.