

**The Role of School Management Teams in Enhancing Learner Academic
Performance**

By

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of a Masters Degree in
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Date submitted : January 2005

Declaration

I, Bhekisigcino Selby Ndimande, hereby declare that this dissertation "*The Role of School Management Teams in Enhancing Learner Academic Performance*" represents my own work both in conception and execution and that all other sources used or quoted have been acknowledged by means of complete references.

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January 2005

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would like thank God Almighty for giving me the strength and zeal to pursue this study to its conclusion.

Secondly, I wish to extend my deep gratitude and appreciation to the following persons who contributed towards the completion of my study:

- Dr. M.K.K. Chetty who provided insightful professional support and guidance throughout this study and also for conscientising me and unearthing my potentials and strengths.
- My dearest wife, Nonhlanhla, who endured lonely times during my study and for having been a source of encouragement and great support since I commenced the study.
- My loving mum, Marriam, and my late father, Bhekabantu, who were responsible for my basic education.
- My whole family for their loving support and encouragement.
- SMT members for their substantial input to the study.

Dedication

I dedicate this work to the following people:

- My late father, **Bhekabantu Elphas Ndimande**.
- My mother, **Ntombazana Mirriam Ndimande**.
- My dearest wife, **Nonhlanhla Gladys Ndimande**.
- My sister **Doris and the entire family**. May this work be a source of inspiration for the rest of your lives.

Abstract

The primary objective of this study was to investigate the impact of School Management Teams (SMTs) on Learner Academic Performance (LAP). To achieve this, a literature review was conducted on relevant strategies that SMTs can adopt to enhance LAP. Furthermore, an empirical research project was launched to test the extent to which these strategies were or could be employed in local schools. The empirical study was conducted by means of a questionnaire-driven survey, administered in the Port Shepstone District.

The study revealed that LAP is adversely affected in schools where learners are not part of the decision-making process and where they are not given immediate feedback after their assessment activities. In such cases, opportunities for improve performance were lost. Other key findings of the study suggest that:

- Many STMs have not implemented staff development programmes.
- Some SMTs have not involved parents in the formulation or implementation of LAP enhancement programmes.
- Educators are not fully motivated to enhance LAP.
- A general lack of communication between SMTs and the rest of the staff members compromises potential enhancement of LAP.
- Some educators are not familiar with the vision of the school and consequently do not realise its goals.
- LAP is negatively impacted in schools where there are indications of poor strategic planning.
- A lack of non-management educator involvement in curriculum development also negatively impacts LAP.

The above shortcomings were compared to recommended and best practices where suggested in research on LAP enhancement. The following suggestions were made in this regard:

- The National Department of Education (NDoE) should provide resources for on-going capacity building.
- Parents should be involved in supporting the school to manage learners and learning activities effectively.
- SMTs should capitalize on educator strengths, put in place educator development programmes to address areas of weakness and motivate educators to excel in teaching.
- SMTs should create and maintain clear channels of communication.
- SMTs and educators should develop a shared vision to enhance LAP and this should be communicated to all constituencies in the teaching and learning environment (including parents and the general community in which the school is embedded).
- SMTs and educators should engage in strategic planning to enhance LAP.
- SMTs should conduct staff training programmes on curriculum development.

This study is deemed significant as it exposes, at grassroots level, problems experienced in enhancing LAP and makes practical recommendations on strategies to improve LAP. These recommendations are based on a review of both national and international literature and have precedents of successful implementation here and abroad.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: ORIENTATION	1
1.1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY	2
1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM.....	3
1.4 DEFINITION OF TERMS	4
1.4.1 Role.....	4
1.4.2 School Management Team (SMT).....	5
1.4.3 Enhancing.....	5
1.4.4 Learner.....	5
1.4.5 Academic Performance.....	5
1.5 AIM OF THE STUDY	6
1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS	6
1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	6
1.8 PARAMETERS OF THE STUDY	6
1.10 ASSUMPTIONS OF THE STUDY.....	7
1.11 LIMITATIONS OF THE EMPIRICAL STUDY	7
1.12 STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY.....	7
1.13 CONCLUSIONS.....	8
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	9
2.1 INTRODUCTION.....	9
2.2 THE ROLE OF SMTs IN ENHANCING LAP	10
2.2.1 Strategic Planning.....	11
2.2.2 School Vision	11
2.2.3 Mission Statement	12
2.2.4 Action Plan.....	14
2.2.5 Prioritisation	14
2.2.6 Implementation	15
2.2.7 Evaluation	16
2.3 CREATING CONDITIONS CONDUCIVE TO ENHANCING LAP.....	16

2.3.1	Improving School Resources	16
2.3.2	Creating A Demand System.....	17
2.3.3	Sound Teaching Methodologies.....	18
2.3.4	High Learner Expectation.....	19
2.3.5	School Discipline.....	20
2.4	FACTORS THAT HINDER LAP	21
2.4.1	The Lack Of Goals	21
2.4.2	The Lack Of Institutional Policies	22
2.4.3	Ineffective Communication Between Educators And Learners	22
2.5	CONCLUSION	23
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES.....		24
3.1	INTRODUCTION.....	24
3.2	PREPARATION FOR THE RESEARCH.....	24
3.2.1	Permission	24
3.2.2	Selection Of Respondents	24
3.3	RESEARCH INSTRUMENT.....	25
3.3.1	The Questionnaire	25
3.4	VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY OF QUESTIONNAIRES.....	27
3.5	ADMINISTRATION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE.....	28
3.5.1	Pilot Study.....	28
3.5.2	Actual Study.....	28
3.6	DATA PROCESSING.....	28
3.7	LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY	29
3.8	ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS.....	29
3.9	CONCLUSION	30
CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA.....		31
4.1	INTRODUCTION.....	31
4.2	ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA	31
4.2.1	Analysis And Interpretation Of Closed-Ended Questions.....	31
4.2.2	Analysis And Interpretation Of Open-Ended Questions	45

4.3	CONCLUSION	47
CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS		48
5.1	INTRODUCTION.....	48
5.2	FINDINGS.....	48
5.3	RECOMMENDATIONS.....	50
5.4	CONCLUSION	52
BIBLIOGRAPHY		53

List of Tables

Table 4.1: Frequency distribution – SMT according to gender of SMTs	31
Table 4.2: Frequency distribution according to the age of SMTs.....	32
Table 4.3: Frequency distribution according to the home language of SMTs	32
Table 4.4: Frequency distribution according to qualification of SMTs.....	33
Table 4.5: Frequency distribution according to rank of SMTs.....	33
Table 4.6: Frequency distribution according to factors that enhance LAP ...	34
Table 4.7: Frequency distribution according to strategies to improve LAP ..	37
Table 4.8: Frequency distribution according to factors that hinder LAP	41
Table 4.9: Respondent-generated list of factors that could enhance LAP ...	45
Table 4.10: Respondent-generated list of factors that hinder LAP	46

Appendices

Appendix A	Questionnaire
Appendix B	Letter to school principals
Appendix C	Letter to ward manager
Appendix D	Letter to circuit manager
Appendix E	Authorization letter from the principal
Appendix F	Authorization letter from the circuit manager

CHAPTER 1: ORIENTATION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Current demands for quality education are placing great pressure on schools to improve education service and delivery. Hence the role of the School Management Teams (SMTs) transcends a purely administrative function and becomes an all-inclusive task that focuses on, among others, improving of teaching and learning in classrooms and subsequently improving Learner Academic Performance (LAP).

Among a number of factors, the quality of educators, especially in relation to academic qualifications, may hamper or enhance LAP. Thus, it becomes critical for the SMTs to adopt strategies to motivate educators to improve their professional qualifications for their personal benefit and the subsequent benefit of learners. According to the researcher, highly qualified educators are inspired theoretically and practically to develop programmes for the enhancement of LAP.

To improve the performance of learners, especially in grade twelve classes, SMTs have supported educators by introducing numerous learner enrichment programmes that are conducted with the assistance of businessmen and non-governmental organisations. For example, Pietermaritzburg Chamber of Commerce conducts a Saturday school programme on Mathematics and Science for selected learners in co-operation with the Shell Science Centre (Chonco, 2001: 3). Similar classes are conducted in Biology, Physical Science, Mathematics and Commercial subjects for selected schools in Umzumbe Circuit. These schools include Bhekameva, Isinamuva, Mqhakama, Mdibaniso Comprehensive, Mayiyane and Elwazi High School. Classes are organized by Highflats Curriculum Committees and sponsored by local companies like South African Pulp and Paper Industries and Garogate. Multiple and fast-paced changes in education has resulted in teaching becoming a complex task. Thus,

the training of educators-in-the-making was extended from two years to a minimum of three years (Khathi, 1990: 15). The number of educational changes and the complexity of the teaching task have, however, necessitated additional training and capacity-building initiatives, especially in an in-service environment. This study focuses on the role of SMTs in evaluating and improving the academic performance of a learner.

1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The number of learners who underachieve or display poor academic performance is not negligible. Studies carried out by educators as far back as 1970 and 1978 show that between 13% and 14% of children underachieve in their studies during their primary school years (Bouwer and Van Niekerk, 1991: 39-43). Although the sources referenced are outdated, it gives an indication that failure in academic performance can begin as early as grade one.

According to the South African Schools Act No. 84 (1996: 6), the basic aim of education is to provide quality education for all learners. To achieve this, there should be excellent facilities and highly trained educators. Diverse methods of teaching and conducive school conditions should be the norm. Learners need to be motivated and disciplined so as to take their education seriously and see the opportunities that are available to them. To meet these goals of quality education, school improvement is necessary.

School improvement is a systematic, sustained effort aimed at change in learning conditions and other related internal conditions, with the ultimate aim of accomplishing educational goals effectively. School improvement, therefore, is about developing strategies for educational change that strengthens the school's organization as well facilitates implementation of curriculum reforms (NDoE, 2003: 13). As indicated above, the key focus for change is the internal conditions of schools. These include not only teaching and learning activities in school, but

all the school's administrative procedures, role allocation and resources employed in supporting the teaching and learning process.

When working with learners who face failure and learning problems, educators, with the support of the SMT, should be sensitive to socio-economic factors that impact negatively on LAP. These include: poor schooling of the parents, stressful home life, a lack of basic skills, previous failure and disruptive behaviour. The SMTs should view these as indicators of problems and work to correct them in a strategic way. Naum (1985: 61) recommends that educators build their power to *control the curriculum*. Educators should see learners as individuals and use the curriculum as a way to enhance the academic performance of a learner. In chapter two, some of these issues will be explored further. Issues explored will include vision, mission statement, prioritisation, morale, delegation of duties and motivation.

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The high level of failure in schools (Chonco, 2001: 36) indicates considerable under-achievement amongst the learners. The poor results are being criticised by the learners. According to Naicker and Waddy (2002: 76) it is not apartheid or lack of money or segregated educational institutions that failed half of South African matriculants. The lack of trust and unity among SMTs has, as a consequence, poor academic achievement of learners. Applying the principle of unity among the members of the SMT is paramount to eradicating mistrust that may surface. According to South and Yeomans (1989) as quoted by Chetty (1998: 131), every individual should be perceived and treated as unique and valuable. Kelly (1995) also cited by Chetty (1998: 132) advances the point further when she promotes the imperatives that each person must be defined as an individual and not as a mere representative of some larger group. Each individual must be encouraged to define himself or herself in this way.

Members of the SMT do not know what is expected of them, especially when there is no clearly defined job description. School principals cannot exercise leadership without delegating responsibilities. Poor LAP is characterized by a poor culture of learning. SMTs do not check whether study and homework programmes are in place to support learners. Among the contributory factors that result in the poor academic performance of learners in school is the high educator to learner ratio. The current educator-learner ratio in KwaZulu-Natal schools is 1:35.7 (Chonco, 2001: 31). These overcrowded classes are detrimental to the academic progress of learners.

Some SMTs are guilty of not inviting parents to participate in developing policies and assisting in decisions that would affect learners. According to Piek and Mahlangu (1990: 43) the complexity of a parent's task in a continuously developing world limits and binds them. Therefore the principal, as chief executive leader of the school, needs to maintain good public relations with the parents on the whole. Parents should know that school education cannot replace home education and should be considered as complementary to it. The success of education in this context therefore depends on effective contact between the parents, the SMT and staff.

1.4 DEFINITION OF TERMS

1.4.1 ROLE

Role is defined as a function that any individual or institution can play in society. In this study role is defined as a function of the SMT in enhancing LAP at school. SMTs are obliged to support their learners from helpless childhood to adulthood. SMTs act indirectly, as managers of their respective schools.

1.4.2 SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAM (SMT)

All persons occupying supervisory positions are engaged in managerial activities regardless of their position in the hierarchy of the school or the nature and scales of the tasks assigned to them (De Wet, Monteith, and van der Westhuizen, 1981: 57). According to the Naicker and Waddy (2002: 5), every person in the teaching profession who is charged with duties involving organization and decision-making, leadership and policy formulation is engaged in enhancement, which entails initiation and maintenance of dynamic interaction that could lead to more effective education and teaching. In this study, the *SMTs* will refer exclusively to the Principal, Deputy Principal and Heads of Department.

1.4.3 ENHANCING

Enhancing refers to improving the value, quality and effectiveness of education. In this study, enhancing means uplifting learners and helping them live a better life by improving their academic performance.

1.4.4 LEARNER

A *learner* is an educand who must learn through intentional, conscious, active, purposeful and willingly involvement in his or her education. A learner in this study refers to someone who will purposefully be guided to adulthood.

1.4.5 ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

In this study, *academic performance* refers to the scholastic accomplishment of the child. This accomplishment is measured through continuous assessment conducted in every learning area offered at school. Continuous assessment aims at verifying whether or not the child understood the learning matter taught in classes. Subject educators conduct these assessments. For the grade twelve

learners the senior personnel in the Department of Education and Culture in KwaZulu-Natal, prepare questions for all learning areas.

1.5 AIM OF THE STUDY

The aims of the study are as follows:

- To conduct a literature review on the role of the SMT in enhancing LAP
- To investigate conditions that are conducive to enhancing LAP
- To investigate factors that hinder LAP

1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions have been formulated for this study:

- What is the role of the SMT in enhancing LAP?
- How do SMTs create conditions conducive to LAP?
- What are the factors that hinder or help the SMTs in improving LAP?

1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

An empirical investigation will be completed by means of open-ended and closed-ended questions. The researcher will conduct a review of available, relevant literature on strategies to enhance LAP. Structured questionnaires will also be developed and administered to the members of SMTs, namely principals, deputy principals and heads of department of selected school in the Umzumbi Circuit.

1.8 PARAMETERS OF THE STUDY

Whilst multiple stakeholders are responsible for promoting quality public education in all schools across the country, this study focuses specifically on the

role of the SMT in enhancing LAP. Furthermore, the empirical study will be conducted among SMT members within secondary schools as an aim of the study is to determine what SMTs are doing to ensure quality results in grade 12.

1.10 ASSUMPTIONS OF THE STUDY

The primary assumption of this study is that the SMTs are grappling with the *implementation of effective strategies to enhance LAP at school.*

1.11 LIMITATIONS OF THE EMPIRICAL STUDY

The study focuses on senior secondary schools in the Umzumbe Circuit within the Port Shepstone District of KwaZulu-Natal. The sample population will be limited to SMTs in randomly selected secondary schools. The respondents will be required to answer questions on the role of SMTs in enhancing LAP in secondary schools with learners ranging in age from thirteen (13) to eighteen (18) years.

1.12 STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

The study is structured as follows:

- | | | |
|---------------|---|--|
| Chapter One | : | gives an orientation to the problem of the study. |
| Chapter Two | : | provides literature review based on approaches / strategies adopted by SMTs to enhance LAP. |
| Chapter Three | : | presents the research methodology. |
| Chapter Four | : | presents an analysis and interpretation of the collected data. |
| Chapter Five | : | draws conclusions from the whole study and makes recommendations to facilitate improved LAP. |

1.13 CONCLUSIONS

This chapter provided the aims and highlighted the problems under investigation. The programme of the study and the research methods were overviewed. The assumption underlying the study was made explicit. The research questions for this study were raised and the researcher provided his motivation for embarking on the study. The researcher also defined the key concepts used in this study and highlighted limitations of the study. The next chapter will provide a review of literature focusing on strategies adopted by SMTs to enhance the academic performance of learners.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Good school management is an essential aspect of any education service. Butler and Christie (1999: 42-43) who undertook a contrastive study of schools with good and poor academic results, have concluded that organisation makes a big difference between schools with good academic performance and schools with poor academic performance.

They point to three main features that often characterize schools that perform poorly, namely:

- Bad relationships between educators, learners and school management resulting in low morale and people not knowing how to improve things.
- Confusion about roles and responsibilities where principals lack authority to lead schools and do not have any procedures for dealing with grievances.
- Educators, learners and management who may have lost a sense of purpose and do not understand why they are at school. They also often feel their daily activities have no direction or meaning.

In contrast to the schools that perform poorly, those that perform well are often well-organised and have clear roles and responsibilities defined for everyone. Furthermore, they have clear lines of authority and communication is regular. Put differently, staff and learners know what is expected of them. This study seeks to investigate certain aspects of learner management and organisation that are conducive to good teaching and learning and are most likely to improve the academic performance of learners.

A report by South African National Task Team on Education and Culture (NDoE, 1996: 8) states that the task of management at all levels in the education system is ultimately the creation and support of conditions under which educators and

their learners are able to achieve effective teaching and learning. The report also argues that the extent to which effective learning is achieved, therefore, becomes the criterion against which the quality of management is to be measured. From the report, it may be deduced that good management practices coupled with sustained development and effective structures, systems and procedures are likely to lead to an improved culture of teaching and learning and ultimately improvement of academic performance.

It can be argued, that effective teaching and learning in the school depends on its leadership and the way human resources are managed. These resources include the principal and his deputy, heads of departments, class educators, learning area educators, class representatives and learners.

The South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996 encourages the involvement of learners in their own education through the introduction of learner representative councils at secondary school level. This raises challenges for many principals and educators who are accustomed to the traditional methods of strict supervision and control of learners who in the past have had too little or no voice in the organisation of their education.

2.2 THE ROLE OF SMTS IN ENHANCING LAP

Planning is the cornerstone for any improvement initiatives within an educational institution (Naicker and Waddy, 2002: 85). In order for SMTs to enhance LAP, it is crucial to have a thorough plan to work towards, where high standards and excellent LAP are the norm. It is argued, however, that planning cannot be done in a haphazard manner. According to Naicker and Waddy (2002: 250) planning for enhanced LAP, is an activity that involves strategic initiatives that will lead the school towards action-oriented goals. In this sense, it becomes the professional role of the SMT to engage in strategic planning, specifically designed to enhance LAP.

2.2.1 STRATEGIC PLANNING

According to the *Planning and Developing Effective Schools Guide* (NDoE, 2002: 29), planning as a management duty is an indispensable part of on-going school improvement. It enables planners to concentrate their efforts on improving LAP. To be effective, schools need to become proactive rather than reactive to the changing environment (Chetty 1998: 73). Planning for effective learning is a critical feature for the improvement of the academic performance of a learner. According to Kreitner Kinicki and Buelens (1998: 3) a strategy can be seen as a deliberate route chosen by an institution to get from where the institution is at the moment to where it would like to be in the future. Bush and West-Burnham (1994: 82) state that for an educational institution, strategic planning is essentially a matter of bridge-building or mapping the route between the perceived present situation and the desired future situation. One way of viewing strategic planning is to think of the question asked by the parents of a child about to start secondary education; "what will this school be like a year from now?" According to Naicker and Waddy (2002: 59), strategic planning encompasses six important steps namely, vision mission statement, priorities, action plans, implementation and evaluation. These steps are discussed in detail below.

2.2.2 SCHOOL VISION

According to the report of the Task Team on Education Management and Development in South Africa (NDoE, 1996: 29-31), strategic planning involves a value-driven vision. This approach emphasises that for the school to be successful all its activities must be driven by the values and the vision of the school. These values should be developed and owned by the principal and all major role players namely: parents, educators, non-teaching staff, learners and the community in general. These role players must participate constructively in the development of the vision of the school. According to the report, if parents, educators and learners are all properly involved, they are most likely to support the SMT in their attempt to achieve the best for all learners.

The KwaZulu-Natal School Governance Unity document (NDoE, 1997: 29) states that for a school vision to make workable sense it should balance idealism with practical reality. This implies that the vision for the school should be determined by the situation on the ground. This view coincides with the view of Glatter (1997: 41-42) who states that the failure of a vision arises when a head fails to interpret the environment correctly and therefore establishes an inappropriate vision, which is doomed to fail. The NDoE (1997: 29) also argue that the vision cannot be realized if the head fails to convert the vision into policy and practice.

In its guide, the NDoE (1997: 45), states that the whole school community should in some way be involved in the development of a vision. The vision should show *the school community and the outside world* what the culture of the school is or should be the school's values and the *direction* the school wants to move toward. The guide further argues that schools need a vision because the principal and the governing body will change over time. Changes can be disruptive. The school has to have a clear direction and everyone has to have an idea about what the school is trying to do. This guide states that for the effective management of the learners, the school vision should be clearly articulated and clarified to all educators so that educators can perform better and assist learners to try harder *to improve their performance*.

Attempts should also be made to ensure that educators identify with this vision. Once educators know where they are going and how to get there, they are most likely to be more dedicated and consequently improve the academic performance of learners. In order for the vision to be realized, a mission statement needs to be developed as the second step in the strategic planning process.

2.2.3 MISSION STATEMENT

The mission statement describes the reason for the school's existence (Preedy, 1993: 55). SMTs, staff member and learners have a role in developing a mission statement for the school. Jason (1996: 124) states that the mission statement

may be regarded as the foundation of the school's purposes and policy. De Wet, Monteith, and Van der Westhuizen (1981: 144) concur that a mission statement is a statement concerning the nature of the school as an organisation and does not necessarily include what the school is striving to be. The SMT members may use a mission statement as a strategy to answer the question, "how will the school enhance LAP?" SMTs need to exercise their authority rigidity as educational leaders to ensure that the mission is clear to all participants on the academic performance of learners. Larson and Gobeli (1987) cited in Msimango (2001: 159) state that for a mission statement to be of any value, it has to ensure persistence of vision, clearly stating the reason for the institution's existence and clarifying the main activities of the institution and its desired position, intentions and aspirations.

Bush and West-Burnham (1994: 86) postulate that a mission statement serves as a focus for all significant activities, that is:

- Producing a sense of direction and purposes.
- Setting criteria for policy-making.
- Generating consistency of action.

Preedy (1993: 105) emphasize that SMTs should involved all stakeholders in framing the mission statement, which is then communicated to all staff members and learners. This will ensure greater commitment that will further enhance LAP. SMTs should therefore, take cognisance of the importance of involving all stakeholders in the formulation of the mission statement. Bush and West-Burnham (1994: 121), support the notion of a mission statement by stating that a mission statement is a declaration of an institutions reason for being, it is essential for effectively establishing objectives and formulating strategies. Naicker and Waddy (2002: 10) says, a mission statement is sometimes called a creed statement; a statement of beliefs or statement defining the business. In terms of LAP, the business of intent is one of high standards and excellent learning outcomes. The mission statement provides a framework for intentions to

enhance the academic performance of learners. SMTs should be able to identify the difference between the school's present state and its desired future state in relation to learner performances. After the mission statement has been accomplished the SMT should prioritise according to the needs of the school.

2.2.4 ACTION PLAN

According to Naicker and Waddy (2002: 62) the action plan helps the school to move towards its vision. This is done through practical and concrete projects. The action plan for the year should show the top three priorities that were chosen by educational practitioners. According to Van Wyk et al. (1997: 55) as cited by Chetty (1998: 95), a mere analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the school as well as the opportunities for and threats to the school, is pointless unless the relevant stakeholders can formulate an action plan for school improvement based on this analysis. Chetty (ibid) suggests therefore that a *modus operandi* must be formed to bind together all three factors, namely vision, mission and prioritisation so as to formulate an action plan which is in step with the mission of the school. A school can be said to function adequately, but a conscious action plan to eradicate weaknesses is an important strategy to support the mission for improved LAP. The action plan is seen as a step to minimize future problems. SMTs need to work collaboratively with the staff, learners and parents to make plans for enhanced LAP workable.

2.2.5 PRIORISATION

In accordance with a school's mission statement, a school exists to provide quality education for all its learners. In order to realise the mission statement, goals need to be set and prioritised. *Staff involvement in setting priorities is an integral part of the enhancement of the academic performance of learner.* Creemer (1996: 6) stipulates that setting priorities should be about reconciling differences in the process of improving academic performance of a learner.

Creemer (1996: 133) states further that prioritisation is an important component of an effective development programme.

In the school situation, prioritisation helps SMTs to focus; it gives room to maintain strengths and to eradicate weaknesses in favour of better academic performance. Hargreaves and Hopkins (1991: 42) maintain that there should be consultation about possible priorities. Consultation will lead to long list of priorities that have to be selected for the first year of the plan. An implementation programme can be developed for the second, third and later years. In determining the priorities, SMTs may select from activities that give problems or select aspects of learner performance which do not meet the expected standard of measurement. Prioritisation should be followed by an action plan, which helps the SMT in minimizing future problems.

2.2.6 IMPLEMENTATION

According to Naicker and Waddy (2002: 68), many teams develop wonderful plans but fail to implement them properly. Naicker and Waddy (2002: 75) identify four important implementation guidelines and observation; namely:

- Keep to your action plan.
- Make sure that action happens by the due date, and that costs stay within the limits agreed in the action plan.
- It is important to be well-organised and co-ordinate the work of all the volunteers.
- Team members in a well-motivated school will offer to help others if they need help.

SMTs should involve all stakeholders in the implementation. It is important for SMTs to evaluate the whole process to ensure that the goals are in line with the vision of the school.

2.2.7 EVALUATION

Chetty (1998: 99) claims that whilst practitioners are primarily responsible for the implementation of the action plan, the role of SMTs in overseeing implementation cannot be undermined. The active role of SMTs in this regard keeps the school accountable. Monitoring progress therefore, is an intrinsic role of the SMT in enhancing academic performance of a learner. An SMT's commitment and enthusiasm is crucial to the success of improved learner results.

2.3 CREATING CONDITIONS CONDUCTIVE TO ENHANCING LAP

McFarland (1973: 57) believes that SMTs should ensure that enrichment programmes are put in place in order to create conditions that are conducive to improved teaching and learning situations.

2.3.1 IMPROVING SCHOOL RESOURCES

According to Wiseman (1997: 115) a decline in quality of education is reflected by increased instances of class repetition and higher dropout rates in secondary schools. These problems are due to shortage of qualified educators, inadequate inspectorate services, overcrowding and lack of educational facilities and equipment. Problems cited in Lesotho are comparable with problems experienced in South Africa. Therefore, if these problems are curbed, the quality of education is likely to improve. In order to achieve high LAP, local resource allocation (financial, educators, training, facilities) becomes critical.

Amongst the available resources for enhancing LAP, the most important is the educator himself/herself. Other resources include:

- The school's physical structures e.g. classrooms.
- The learning materials and resource aids such as projectors, copiers and computers.

- The school's human capital (educators, learners and non-teaching support staff).

Learner performance depends mostly on parental involvement as a resource for learning in the school community and their relations with educators in the school. Parent involvement in schools is actioned by general participation, helping in classrooms or sponsoring and supporting school programmes, and participating in school governance (Chonco, 2001: 96). There are a variety of learner and educator resources such as overhead projector videos and libraries with which educators and learners interact in teaching and learning (Perrot, 1982: 130-132). The educator's effective use of resources like audio-visual equipment is important. It is concluded that both human and material resources are essential for achieving high learner performance.

2.3.2 CREATING A DEMAND SYSTEM

The SMT and educators should create a demand system to ensure excellent work and excellent discipline. Educators influence learning by ensuring that the school curriculum is broad and balanced, and by providing continuity and progression of learning. An educator's wholehearted involvement enhances curriculum change and effective teaching and is a prerequisite for subject knowledge to be translated into learning programmes that are tailored to the needs of learners. Educators could often be more effective if greater attention was paid by SMTs to the teaching skills needed for each learning area, including how to use tools, materials and equipment effectively. Key success indicators of lessons that have maximum classroom effectiveness are:

- Presence of clear intentions; and
- Well-structured and organized designs, which match the learners' previous learning and is appropriate to their stage of development.

The basis for learning in schools is the process itself that develops the learner's ability for achieving high performance. Educators must reflect on what they do to achieve high performance. Educators should demonstrate high motivation, interest, and a will to do their work. With new knowledge, an individual educator has the necessary skill to implement new practices, which fosters high learner performance (Darlin, 1998: 38).

2.3.3 SOUND TEACHING METHODOLOGIES

For LAP to improve, certain conditions must prevail in class and the educator, as a classroom manager, needs to create and control these conditions in a way that assures successful learning. Engelbrecht et al. (1998: 4) state that for the lesson to be successful, the educator needs to have the ability to motivate the learners to take part in the teaching-learning situation. They propose that the educator should implement different techniques, to place less emphasis on his/her contribution and more on that of the learners during lessons.

Engelbrecht et al. (1998: 13) also support the active participation of learners in the lesson as way of improving academic performance of learners. They assert that to enhance the academic performance of learners, educators need to perfect the skill of questioning as a way of involving learners in a lesson. They further contend that educators who are well trained in the skill of questioning will not only be able raise the level of learner achievement, but create a more effective learning environment in the classroom. They maintain that questions should always be asked with a specific vision in mind. According to Engelbrecht et al. (1998: 133), the educator can ask questions to focus the attention of learners on a specific fact or concept, to arouse curiosity and interest, or to diagnose problems inhibiting learning. It is therefore clear that questioning as a skill can help to improve learner performance, especially if it is used to ensure active participation by all learners in a lesson. It can also be used to develop thinking skills of learners.

Flanders (1976: 4) also supports the idea of learner participation in the lesson. He argues that educators' actions that tend to increase and reward learner participation are more likely to give learners the opportunity to become influential in the lesson and subsequently to improve learner performance. It becomes necessary therefore, for SMTs to be vigilant in supporting educators to adopt diverse teaching methodologies to secure best classroom practices so that learner performances may improve.

2.3.4 HIGH LEARNER EXPECTATION

Pidgeon (1971: 122) contends that one of the motivating factors for learners is the high expectations that educators have of them. He maintains that if the educator expects his/her learners to achieve at a high level, then the learners will be urged on by this very fact. On the other hand, if the educator has only limited expectations, his/her learners will have no incentives to perform at higher levels. Thus, it can be concluded that educators need to have positive expectations of their learners and should depict them in a class vision so as to motivate learners to improve their overall performance. Regular and on-going guidance by SMTs in respect of learner expectations has become necessary.

High and positive expectations of learners should extend beyond the classroom and become part of a school culture. Bryk and Driscoll (1988) cited by Darlin (1998: 117) define school culture as a common value system, a common agenda and collegial relations between the educators, learners and support staff. Little (1990) cited by Darlin (1998: 55) has shown clearly how collegial norms influence the chance that SMTs have to make an impact in their own school. Where there is a positive school culture, learners are more interested in academic learning areas, have a lower rate of absenteeism, and are more organised. Perrot (1982: 130) maintains that, in such environments, fewer learners quit school and learners get better grades. Educators are more satisfied with their jobs, they are sick less often and morale is higher than at other schools. There is also a high degree of motivation for further school improvement. The culture of a school is a

deciding factor when it comes to a school's state of readiness and its capacity to improve. A network of common beliefs, norms, values, attitudes and behaviours are those cultural components in a school, which enables educators to positively influence learner performance.

A conscious attempt by an effective school to promote common culture for increased co-operation and collegial relations leads to improved classroom teaching and to increased educator motivation. Darlin (1998: 121) concludes that in order for SMTs to motivate educators for a new learning culture, they have to work with the educators strong points so that a culture of excellence prevails.

2.3.5 SCHOOL DISCIPLINE

The development of an effective disciplinary system in a school is an important aspect of the SMT's role and it is likely to influence the academic performance of learners in schools.

Sonn (1999: 21) defines discipline as self-respect and respect for others. Badenhorst and Scheepers (1995: 120) define discipline in the school context as *a state of order in the classroom that permits learning to proceed smoothly and productively*. Whilst the first definition seems to suggest that discipline is about human dignity, the second one looks at discipline as a tool for effective teaching and learning. What is common in both definitions is that they seem to suggest that discipline in schools is about the establishment of an environment that is healthy for both educators and learners to work in.

Wilson (1974: 77) qualifies school discipline as a form of logical and evaluative order, which must be learned if one is to understand what is involved in doing something. Wayson, (1982) quoted by Carter (1987: 8) defines discipline as the ability to identify the character of the situation to determine one's most constructive role in it and to learn from the consequences of one's actions.

From these definitions it can be deduced that both Wilson (1974) and Wayson (1982) see discipline as a skill that is taught and learned like any other skill. It is however, important to reconcile the values of the parents and those of the school so as to avoid conflict in the discipline system adopted.

In the current climate of transformation, it becomes important for SMTs to acknowledge that learners are more outspoken, are aware of their rights and easily query their educators' decisions. Healthy discipline in a school is thus, a pre-requisite for the success of the schools curricular and extra-curricular programmes to enhance LAP (Chonco, 2001: 10). SMTs should regard discipline as an important element of school and classroom management as it ensures good academic results. Without proper discipline and authority, chaos may prevail in the classroom, which subsequently leads to impoverished LAP.

2.4 FACTORS THAT HINDER LAP

In order for learners to perform well academically, teaching and learning challenges need to be identified and confronted. Limitations, which may negatively affect LAP, must be considered by the SMT.

2.4.1 THE LACK OF GOALS

Goals are generalised, broad and are usually formulated over a long period. SMTs should set clear goals to achieve high LAP. Without concrete and specific goals, the learner may not realise his/her full potential academically. The determination of goals is part of the planning task of SMTs (Van der Westhuizen, 1991: 145). Van der Westhuizen (ibid) states that, when the planning task is evaluated, it is necessary that there should be clearly delineated goals with which to carry out evaluation. Everard and Morris (1990: 149) state that schools should be actively managed according to goals. Not only should there be a clear sense of the direction in which the school is being steered, but also markers whereby

SMTs can assess progress. Goals, therefore, provide direction for management actions in the enhancement of LAP.

2.4.2 THE LACK OF INSTITUTIONAL POLICIES

Cadwell and Spinks (1998) cited in Beare, Caldwell and Millikan (1989: 119) describe school policy as a statement of purpose and a set of guidelines on achieving that purpose. It provides a framework for the operation of the school or programme. According to Rue and Byars (1990: 111) there is a possibility of failure in learner academic achievement processes if policies to promote learner excellence are absent. Policy should be capable of securing positive changes. SMTs should therefore ensure that the school formulates policies congruent with the aims of enhancing LAP.

2.4.3 INEFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION BETWEEN EDUCATORS AND LEARNERS

Mahlangu (1997: 166) defines communication as an activity which takes place when a message is transferred satisfactory from one party to another so that it can be understood and acted upon as is necessary. Rasberry and Lemoine (1986: 23) define communication as, sorting, selecting, forming and transmitting symbols between people to create meaning. Effective communication among stakeholders in schools is crucial in fostering healthy relationships and partnerships. Ineffective communication with learners and other relevant stakeholders negates a healthy ethos where learning and teaching take priority.

The lack of effective communication among the stakeholders of the school can hinder LAP. Mahlangu (1997: 167) states that reasons for communicating is to inform, explain, persuade, reprimand, encourage, thank, appraise, propose, consult, apologize and praise. Where there is no effective communication among stakeholders, the school fails to achieve its stated goals.

2.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter dealt with the role of SMTs in enhancing LAP. From the literature reviewed, it is evident that the SMT plays a central role in promoting excellence in teaching and learning. The primary beneficiaries of effective management by SMTs are the learners who demonstrate enhanced academic performance. Literature indicates, that some of the key tasks which SMTs should perform to enhance LAP, are among others, strategic planning, improving school resources and ensuring high learner expectation. Whether or not these tasks are being effectively performed by SMTs is revealed in subsequent sections of this study. An empirical study to this end has been undertaken. The research methodology and procedures for the empirical study are provided in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter a literature review on the role of SMTs in enhancing LAP was conducted. In this chapter, methods employed to obtain data from the respondents are discussed. An account of how the study was designed and conducted is also presented.

3.2 PREPARATION FOR THE RESEARCH

3.2.1 PERMISSION

Van Dalen (1979: 154) emphasizes that before sending out the questionnaire, the researcher should obtain permission from the highest authority in each unit to contact respondents. In order to conduct research amongst the SMTs of Umzumbe Circuit, it was necessary to write letters requesting permission from the circuit manager (Appendix D), the ward manager (Appendix C) and the principals of the schools (Appendix B). A copy of the questionnaire (Appendix A) was enclosed with the letters. Letters granting permission were received from the circuit manager (Appendix F) and the principal of the schools (Appendix E). Arrangements to administer the questionnaire were made with the principal.

3.2.2 SELECTION OF RESPONDENTS

The researcher decided to conduct his study in Umzumbe area because he lives in the area and has access to all the schools of Umzumbe. The researcher wasted little time and money since the questionnaires were hand delivered. The researcher was able to avoid the disadvantages of mailed-questionnaires as observed by Bailey (1987: 150). The researcher also felt that findings in the Umzumbe Circuit could be applicable to other circuits with similar characteristics and therefore were generally applicable in term of the nature of the problems

identified for the study. The respondents identified for this empirical study were all members of SMTs and limited to principals, deputy principals and HODs in the wards of Umzumbe Circuit.

3.2.2.1 POPULATION AND SAMPLE SIZE

Umzumbe Circuit has six wards. Four wards were selected from which the sample would be chosen. The selected wards were Highflats, St. Faiths, Mabheleni and Turton as these wards were most easily accessible. The total number of secondary schools in the above-mentioned wards is 50. From the 50 schools, 40 were randomly selected. In each school, one SMT member was chosen to answer the questionnaire. Terblanché and Durhan (1999: 44) state that the sample must be representative of the population about which the researcher aims to draw conclusions. The researcher ensured that a representative sample of the population was selected. Of the 40 questionnaires handed out, 40 were completed and returned. This constituted a 100% return rate, which was considered an excellent response.

3.3 RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

Consistent with the aim of this study, it was decided that a survey would be used. Cohen and Manion (1996: 72) suggest that survey research focuses on prevailing conditions, practices, beliefs, attitudes, processes and emerging trends. The survey method enabled the researcher to obtain data and evidence concerning an existing situation regarding the role of SMTs in enhancing LAP in secondary schools.

3.3.1 THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The research instrument that best served the needs of this research was the questionnaire. A questionnaire is an instrument with open-ended or closed-ended questions or statements to which a respondent must react. The researcher

decided to use the questionnaire to collect data, because this method still continues to be the most useful available instrument for obtaining information from a wide sample. Behr (1984), as quoted by Khathi (1990: 97), concurs with this view.

The basic objective of using the questionnaire in this study was to obtain facts and opinions about enhancement of academic performance by SMTs themselves. The use of the questionnaire would give SMT members an opportunity to respond individually and confidentially on their experiences in enhancing LAP as managers of schools. Mahlangu (1997: 79) argues that the completion of the questionnaire without outside influence is efficient and practical and is widely employed in educational research.

Chetty (1998: 131) claims that the questionnaire makes it possible to measure what the person knows (knowledge and information), what he/she likes or dislikes (values and preferences) and what a person thinks (attitude and beliefs). Questionnaires as a tool afford a good measure of objectivity in soliciting and coding the responses of the population sample.

3.3.1.1 CONSTRUCTION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Davidson (1970) cited by Cohen and Manion (1996: 92-93) claims that an ideal questionnaire is clear, unambiguous and uniformly workable. The design of the questionnaire must minimize potential errors from respondents and coders. The researcher used simple language and short question to make understanding easy.

An attempt was made to produce a design and layout which would ensure a high response rate. The appearance of the questionnaire is vitally important. It must be easy and attractive. Cohen and Manion (1996: 111), as quoted by Chetty (1998: 131-132), state that the construction of a questionnaire as an activity should not take place in isolation because it is the culmination of a long process

of planning the research objectives, formulating the problems and generating the hypothesis. In order to achieve the aims of the study, the researcher formulated the questionnaire as follows:

- Section 1 : focused on biographical information of the respondents.
- Section 2-4 : were closed-ended questions with each section focusing on specific themes relevant to the aims of this study.
- Section 5 : consisted of an open-ended question.

3.4 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY OF QUESTIONNAIRES

Validity and reliability are two concepts that are critical for the measurement and understanding of research (Huysamen, 1989: 213). Best and Laer (1986: 144) concur that validity and reliability are essential to the effectiveness of any data collection procedure. Validity and reliability are interrelated.

Reliability as defined by De Vos (1998: 85) is the accuracy or precision of an instrument and the extent to which independent administration of the same instrument yields similar results under comparable conditions. This will instil confidence in the conclusions drawn. Reliability may be affected by the following situations:

- The respondent's mood or alertness which could be caused by his/her physical and mental condition at a given moment e.g. illness, bad experience etc.
- Differences in scoring and interpretation of results and the problem of respondents who provide answers to questions without thoroughly considering their meaning.

The researcher believes that the questionnaires in this investigation were completed with the necessary honesty and sincerity required to render the maximum possible reliability.

3.5 ADMINISTRATION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

3.5.1 PILOT STUDY

Before actual fieldwork could be undertaken, it was considered essential to set up a pilot or pre-test. A sample for the pilot study was selected from Highflats ward. The researcher administered the questionnaire to the SMTs of three schools. The researcher sent three questionnaires to each school; one each for the principal, the deputy principal and the Head of Department. The pilot study revealed that the questionnaire was well-phrased and there was no need to restructure the questions. The nine questionnaires sent out were all timorously returned.

3.5.2 ACTUAL STUDY

The researcher personally distributed the questionnaire to SMTs of Highflats, St. Faiths, Mabheleni and Turton wards as they had management workshops on different days. Questionnaires from each ward were completed and personally collected by the researcher the same day. It was convenient to administer the questionnaires at a management workshop because ward managers had included the administration of the researcher's questionnaires in the lunchtime programme of the workshop. It was clarified that SMT members were not compelled to participate in the survey.

3.6 DATA PROCESSING

The data was manually captured so that it could be analysed and interpreted. Frequency tables were used to analyse open-ended question. These were then interpreted.

Van den Aardwarg (1998: 65-76) stresses that frequency tables are very useful as they provide the following information:

- The frequency of responses.
- Comparative response percentages.

3.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Time constraints limited the study as it was difficult to travel around all wards, which were, geographically, too far apart. The timing of the study was problematic since the questionnaire was administered mid-September 2004 during which time most of the members of SMTs from all wards were engaged in a series of management workshops.

To overcome these challenges the researcher personally visited the respondents in their schools and the questionnaire was made part of the meeting agenda at workshops. The researcher also used only four wards for the administration of questionnaire and ten schools per ward instead of the whole circuit.

3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical consideration requires respecting the anonymity of respondents. Bailey (1987: 407) states that different researchers have written about codes of ethics outlining the behavioural standards that researchers must follow as they conduct research. A code of ethics is suggested by Bailey (*ibid*) and includes:

- Maintenance of privacy.
- Uses of samples rather than complete populations so that fewer persons are inconvenienced.
- Objectivity and honesty in reporting.
- Promising confidentiality and anonymity of participants.

In conducting the study, the researcher complied with the code of ethics stipulated above.

3.9 CONCLUSION

In this chapter a detailed description of the method used in the research was presented. The research instrument used to collect data was described. The chapter also discussed sampling procedures followed and methods of data analysis employed. The following chapter interprets data gathered from the survey.

CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter analyses and interprets questionnaire data gathered from members of SMTs. The questionnaire consisted of forty closed-ended questions and a single open-ended question.

4.2 ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

4.2.1 ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF CLOSED-ENDED QUESTIONS

The responses to each question are summarized in a frequency table. A qualitative analysis follows each question to provide further insight into the results. Response items are classified by use of the symbols P and F, where:

- P = percentages, and
- F = frequencies.

Table 4.1: Frequency distribution – SMT according to gender of SMTs

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	18	45
Female	22	55
Total	40	100

Table 4.1 indicates that more female educators (55%) than male educators (45%) occupy management positions in secondary schools in the selected circuit. It is evident from table 4.1 that the respondents are representative of both male and female members of SMTs.

Table 4.2: Frequency distribution according to the age of SMTs

Age	Frequency	Percentage
Under 30	1	2.5
31-40	24	60
41-50	11	27.5
51- Over	4	10
Total	40	100

The age profile of the respondents reflected in the above table shows that 62.5% of the respondents are in the age category below 41. Data from this question clearly indicates that SMT members in Umzumbe Circuit are relatively young and have many years to contribute to the management of schools. Leonard (1989) as cited by Chetty (1998: 167) states that it is good for any school to have spread of ages in its staff. If their knowledge and skills are properly harnessed and they are trained to become partners in managing the education system, LAP can be improved.

Table 4.3: Frequency distribution according to the home language of SMTs

Home Language	Frequency	Percentage
English	2	5
Afrikaans	-	-
Zulu	38	95
Xhosa	-	-
Total	40	100

Table 4.3 indicates that the majority of respondents (95%) speak Zulu at home. This finding was anticipated and therefore the researcher opted for the group-administered questionnaire in order to prevent misinterpretation of questions. Cognisance was taken of De Vos' (1998: 155) suggestions for group-administered questionnaires. He states that each respondent should receive the same stimulus and complete his or her own questionnaire without discussion with

other members of the group. The respondents thus, completed the questionnaires while the researcher provided instructions and clarified uncertainties.

Table 4.4: Frequency distribution according to qualification of SMTs

Qualification	Frequency	Percentage
Diplomas	25	62.5
B.A.	4	10
B.Ed	10	25
Masters	1	2.5
Doctorate	-	-
Total	40	100

Sixty-two and a half percent of the respondents have diplomas, 10% have B.A. degrees, 25% have B.Ed degrees and 2.5% have MA degrees. The high qualifications that the respondents have, should impact positively on the enhancement of LAP. This is emphasized by Chonco (2001: 25), who maintains that in-service training is a major vehicle for delivering educational reform. Educators who upgrade themselves are informed and knowledgeable about educational and curriculum issues.

Table 4.5: Frequency distribution according to rank of SMTs

Rank	Frequency	Percentage
Principal	15	37.5
Deputy Principal	2	5
HOD	23	57.5
Total	40	100

The researcher administered the questionnaire to a controlled sample consisting exclusively of HODs, principals and deputy principals. Table 4.5 indicates that the majority of respondents (57.5%) were HODs, 37.5% of respondents were

principals and 5% were deputy principals. It is evident that the respondents are a representative sample of SMTs.

Table 4.6: Frequency distribution according to factors that enhance LAP

In our school, our SMT	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
a. Engages in strategic planning to enhance LAP	42.5% 17	47.5% 19	7.5% 03	2.5% 01	0% -	100 (P) 40 (F)
b. Advises parents about creating a home environment conducive to learning	30% 12	52.5% 21	7.5% 03	7.5% 03	2.5% 01	100 (P) 40 (F)
c. Arranges extra classes after school to enhance LAP	25% 10	50% 20	12.5% 05	7.5% 03	5% 02	100 (P) 40 (F)
d. Arranges programmes that enhance LAP	25% 10	55% 22	10% 04	10% 04	0% -	100 (P) 40 (F)
e. Creates a positive environment to improve LAP	30% 12	55% 22	7.5% 03	5% 02	2.5% 01	100 (P) 40 (F)
f. Creates a sound relationship with learners in our school	30% 12	62.5% 25	5% 02	2.5% 01	0% -	100 (P) 40 (F)
g. Creates a sense of co-responsibility for teaching among staff members	30% 12	62.5% 25	5% 02	2.5% 01	0% -	100 (P) 40 (F)

a. Our SMT engages in strategic planning to enhance LAP

Ninety percent of the respondents agreed that they engage in strategic planning to enhance LAP, 2.5% disagreed whilst 7.5% were uncertain. There is a possibility that some SMT members did not want to confess their lack of strategic planning to enhance LAP. Musaazi (1987: 77) asserts that the LAP can be enhanced through planning, consultation and networking. There should be no uncertainty about the imperatives for SMTs to engage in strategic planning.

b. Our SMT advises parents about creating a home environment conducive to learning

A remarkable 82.5% of the respondents indicated that SMTs advise parents on the importance of creating a home environment conducive to learning. Ten percent of the respondents indicated that parents are not advised by the SMT of this importance and 7.5% of the respondents were not certain. This is an indication that some SMT members are not aware of their obligation to support parents in enhancing LAP. Galloway (1985: 15) points out that educators who are consistently in touch with families of their learners may greatly benefit when standards are dropping as they may have information regarding factors that influence the performance of learners.

c. Our SMT engages in extra classes after school to enhance LAP

Seventy-five percent of the respondents indicated that SMTs promote extra classes after school to enhance LAP. 12.5% of the respondents do not agree that there is such an arrangement in their schools while 12.5% of respondents are uncertain. This is clear evidence that in some schools, SMTs do not arrange extra-classes for the enhancement of LAP.

d. Our SMT arranges programmes that enhance LAP

Eighty percent of the respondents agreed that SMT members arrange programmes that enhance LAP, 10% of the respondents disagreed with the

statement and a further 10% of the respondents were uncertain about whether or not SMTs have programmes of that sort. There is an indication that some SMT members (10%) do not arrange programmes to enhance LAP. The absence of supportive programmes results high failure rate. Diomo (1988: 156) advises that SMTs should support educators by bringing in numerous learner achievement programmes that are conducted with the assistance of businessmen and non-governmental organisations.

e. Our SMT creates a positive environment to improve LAP

Eighty-five percent of the respondents agreed that SMT members create a positive environment to improve LAP, 7.5% of the respondents disagreed and 7.5% of the respondents were uncertain. Whilst the majority of SMTs do create a positive environment to improve LAP, others appear to be indifferent or complacent. School improvement is a systematic, sustained effort aimed at changing learning conditions and other related internal conditions, with the ultimate aim of accomplishing educational goals effectively (NDoE, 2003: 13). Therefore to improve LAP, a systematic, sustained effort aimed at improving learning conditions becomes necessary.

f. Our SMT creates a sound relationship with learners in our school

Ninety-two and a half percent of the respondents claimed that the SMTs created a sound relationship with learners, 2.5% of the respondents disagreed with the statement and 5% of the respondents were uncertain. It is encouraging to note that the majority of SMT members create a sound relationship with learners.

g. Our SMT creates a sense of co-responsibility for teaching among staff members

A remarkable 92.5% of the respondents found the above statement true, 2.5% disagreed and 5% of the respondents were unsure. SMT members have a responsibility to reinforce the staff members and to promote co-responsibility for teaching.

There is an inference that some SMT members are not sure about the scope of co-responsibility they should create among staff members. Two and a half percent of respondents indicate that SMTs do not create a sense of co-responsibility. This could be attributed to the fact that the SMT and staff are overloaded and sometimes do not have sufficient time with learners, which in turn hinders the academic performance of learners. SMTs cannot exercise leadership without delegating of their responsibilities.

Table 4.7: Frequency distribution according to strategies to improve LAP

In our school, our SMT	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
a. Involves parents in strategic planning to improve LAP	42.5% 17	47.5% 9	7.5% 03	2.5% 01	0% -	100 (P) 40 (F)
b. Supports educators in the implementation of LAP	30% 12	52.5% 21	7.5% 03	7.5% 03	2.5% 01	100 (P) 40 (F)
c. Provides staff members with an opportunity to participate in decisions about curriculum matters	25% 10	50% 20	12.5% 05	7.5% 03	5% 02	100 (P) 40 (F)
d. Provides suitable resources	25% 10	55% 22	10% 04	10% 04	0% -	100 (P) 40 (F)

In our school, our SMT	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
for enhancing LAP						
e. Sends educators to workshops to improve knowledge about the new teaching methods	30% 12	55% 22	7.5% 03	5% 02	2.5% 01	100 (P) 40 (F)
f. Encourages educators to share ideas about improving the curriculum	30% 12	62.5% 25	5% 02	2.5% 01	0% -	100 (P) 40 (F)
g. Informs parents about the learner's progress	30% 12	62.5% 25	5% 02	2.5% 01	0% -	100 (P) 40 (F)
h. Invites parents to discuss educational problems experienced by their children	35% 14	47.5% 19	7.5% 03	5% 02	5% 02	100 (P) 40 (F)

a. Our SMT involves parents in strategic planning to improve LAP

Only 2.5% of the respondents disagreed with the above statement, whilst 90% agreed that the SMT members involved parents in strategic planning to improve

LAP. This data clearly shows that articulating the strategic planning of the school gives a sense of direction, which may motivate learners to perform better. In some schools, SMTs govern their schools without strategic planning and this may result in a high failure rate among learners. Dennison and Shenton (1987: 10) are of the opinion that in a professional partnership, a senior professional leads strategic planning but there are arrangements to allow all others to participate.

b. Our SMT supports educators in the implementation of LAP

Eighty-five and a half percent of respondents agreed that SMTs support educators in implementing LAP enhancement programmes. Ten percent of the respondents disagreed with the statement and 7.5% were uncertain. Evidence indicates that the majority of educators do get the relevant support material they need for the enhancement of LAP. However, there are some educators who do not get sufficient support from their SMTs so as to enhance LAP. Various authors such as Dubin (1992), and Biott and Nias (1992) as cited by Chetty (1998: 130) view the management structures of a school as the framework within which the teaching and learning processes can be encouraged and supported. In some schools where such support is lacking, educators may feel demotivated and hence, may not produce the best LAP.

c. Our SMT provides staff members with an opportunity to participate in decisions about curriculum matters

Seventy-five percent of the respondents agreed with the above statement. This is an encouraging sign as it reflects the gradual, but definite inclusion of educators in curriculum matters. Ten percent of respondents disagreed and 7.5% of the respondents were uncertain. This is an indication that in some schools, SMTs do not give educators an opportunity to participate in decision-making and this hinders LAP. Wood (1985) is convinced that educators, who are involved in making decisions that affect their job, are motivated to implement those decisions.

d. Our SMT provides suitable resources for enhancing LAP

Ten percent of the respondents disagreed, a further 10% percent of respondents were uncertain and 80% agreed that SMTs provided suitable resources for enhancing LAP. Shortage of educators and resources are factors responsible for low academic performance of learners. In schools, both SMTs and educators are charged with the responsibility to arrange for the availability of resources so as to enhance LAP. Keith and Girling (1991: 10) claim that SMTs serve key public relations functions in relation to all stakeholders. Under conditions of budgetary restraint, dynamic SMTs should try to acquire additional resources for the learners so that performance may be enhanced.

e. Our SMT sends educators to workshops to improve their knowledge of new teaching methods

Eighty-five percent of the respondents are in agreement that SMTs send educators to workshops to improve their knowledge of new teaching methods, while 7.5% of the respondents are uncertain. A further 7.5% disagreed with this assertion. Indicators suggest that schools are making a good effort in giving educators in-service training. This seems to be in line with Tomlinson's (1993: 109) view that workshops for educators are important to build a body of educators, which is well prepared academically and professionally. Workshops can enable educators to enhance their intellectual abilities and to develop their practical and human skills so that each educator may be enabled to make a maximum contribution to education. Cohen (1984: 111) points out that SMT members are facilitators of staff improvement processes in schools. The support given to staff ultimately helps learners to perform well.

f. Our SMT encourages educators to share ideas about improving the curriculum

The vast majority of the respondents (92.5%) agreed that SMT members encourage educators to share ideas about improving the curriculum. Only 2.5% disagreed with this view and 5% were undecided. Some schools do not allow

educators to network with well-equipped and resourceful schools and this hinders the effective progress of the school.

g. Our SMT informs parents about the learner’s progress

An encouragingly high percentage of respondents (92.5%) agreed that SMT members inform parents about the learner’s progress, 2.5% of the respondents disagreed with the above statements whilst 5% were uncertain. Evidence indicates that some SMT members adopt a leadership style, which excludes parents. These SMT members are acting contrary to the teaching service regulations namely, Education Act No. 84 of 1995 and other education policies.

h. Our SMT invites parents to discuss educational problems experienced by their children

Eighty-two and a half percent of the respondents agreed that SMT members invite parents to discuss educational problems experienced by their children, 10% of the respondents disagreed with the above statement and 7.5% of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed. There is evidence to indicate that parents of the children, in some schools are there in name only. They do not take part in the education of their children. Green (1968: 75) asserts that the educational reason for the parent-educator co-operation is that it helps children to learn better. Morris (1984: 131) points out that children whose parents are interested in their educational welfare tend to pull ahead of the rest, irrespective of their starting ability. Schools therefore, should encourage parents to discuss problems experienced by their children by inviting them to be part of the education of their children.

Table 4.8: Frequency distribution according to factors that hinder LAP

In our school, our SMT	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total

In our school, our SMT	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
a. Consults parents with regards to LAP	27.5% 11	45% 18	10% 04	15% 06	2.5% 01	100(P) 40(F)
b. Make all the curriculum decisions	35% 14	20% 08	20% 08	17.5% 07	7.5% 03	100(P) 40(F)
c. Develops a working relationship that help in enhancing LAP	15% 06	60% 24	12% 05	10% 04	2.5% 01	100(P) 40(F)
d. Is aware of programmes that enhance LAP	35% 14	37.5% 15	17.5% 07	2.5% 01	7.5% 01	100(P) 40(F)
e. Help learners who find it hard to cope with schoolwork	20% 08	52.5% 21	17.5% 07	05% 02	05% 02	100(P) 40(F)
f. Resolves learner problems effectively	25% 10	52.5% 21	10% 04	12.5% 05	0% -	100(P) 40(F)
g. Gives the staff the opportunity to express ideas about improving	32.5% 13	52.5% 21	0% -	05% 02	10% 04	100(P) 40(F)

In our school, our SMT	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
LAP						
h. Accepts staff advice about improving learner performance	30% 12	55% 22	0% -	7.5% 03	7.5% 03	100(P) 40(F)

a. Our SMT consults parents with regards to LAP

Seventy-two and a half percent of the respondents agreed that the SMT members consult parents with regard to LAP while 10% of the respondent were not certain and 17.5% disagreed. This suggests that in some schools, SMT do not consult parents with regards to LAP. Galloway (1985: 15) points out that educators who are constantly in touch with families of their learners may greatly benefit when standards are dropping as they may have information regarding factors that influence performance of the learners. This indicates that parents can greatly influence the academic performance of learners at school if they are properly involved.

b. Our SMT makes all the curriculum decisions

Fifty-five percent of the respondents supported the statement that SMTs make all the curriculum decisions while 25% disagreed. Some members of the SMT (20%) were not sure whether or not they make all the curriculum decisions. This indicates that possibly up to 45% of the respondents do not invite other educators to participate in decision-making on curriculum matters.

c. Our SMT develops a working relationship that helps in enhancing LAP

Although the majority (75%) of respondents expressed satisfaction that SMT members develop a working relationship that helps in enhancing LAP, 12.5%

indicated dissatisfaction and a further 12.5% were unsure. Some SMTs do not encourage teamwork among the staff. This cripples the school and also affects the performance of the learners.

d. Our SMT is aware of programmes that enhance LAP

Seventy-two and a half percent of the respondents expressed their satisfaction that the SMT members are indeed aware of the programmes that enhance LAP, while 10% expressed dissatisfaction and 17.5% of the respondents were unsure of how informed SMTs were of LAP enhancement programmes. The statistics above indicate that in some school, SMTs do not have programmes that enhance LAP and this undermines the academic performance of the learner.

e. Our SMT helps learners who find it hard to cope with schoolwork

Ten percent of the respondents indicated their dissatisfaction with SMT assistance to learners who find it difficult to cope with schoolwork. Seventy-two and a half percent were satisfied that SMTs were adequately addressing the problem and 17.5% of the respondents were uncertain. There is a clear indication that in some schools, SMTs do not help learners who find it hard to cope with schoolwork. This is possibly because SMTs spend too much time on departmental meetings and have little time to assist learners who do not cope with schoolwork.

f. Our SMT resolves learner problems effectively

Seventy-seven and a half percent of the respondents indicated their satisfaction with the SMTs commitment or ability to resolved learner problems effectively, 12.5% were dissatisfied and 10% of the respondents were uncertain. Indications are therefore that in some schools SMT members do not have time to resolve learner problems because of the administrative and teaching load that they face. Learners therefore grapple with problems on their own.

g. Our SMT gives the staff the opportunity to express ideas about improving LAP

The majority of respondents (85%) were satisfied with the statement that SMTs give the staff the opportunity to express ideas about improving LAP. Fifteen percent expressed dissatisfaction.

h. Our SMT accepts advice about improving LAP

Eighty-five percent of the respondents agreed that SMTs accept staff advice about improving LAP and 15% of the respondents disagreed with the statement. This again suggests that in some schools, SMTs do not have trust in other members of staff. Because of this lack of trust, staff are often demoralized and this negatively impacts on the academic performance of learners.

4.2.2 ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

The researcher planned to take 15 minutes in answering the open-ended questions but the time spent on these questions was extended to 25 minutes. Some respondents were reluctant to answer the open-ended questions but later they did answer. The following are the questionnaire items that were formulated as open-ended questions:

Table 4.9: Respondent-generated list of factors that could enhance LAP

Theme	Frequency	Percentage
a. Educator development programmes	18	45%
b. Reinforcement programmes for learners	5	12.5%
c. Educator support material	4	10%

a. Educator development programmes

Forty-five percent of the respondents indicated that programmes to improve LAP are put in place. Many schools are still grappling with such programmes. Failure to put teaching and learning programmes in place results in academic failure of learners. This therefore, means that in such schools SMTs must play a more active role in educator development programmes that enhance LAP.

b. Reinforcement programmes for learners

Thirteen percent of the respondents mentioned that reinforcement programmes to assist learners are important to enhance LAP. In some schools SMTs do not assess learners' work regularly. This may impact negatively on the academic performance of learners. According to Duminy and Steyn (1985: 186-187) immediate feedback helps the learners to be aware of their own progress and motivates them to perform even better.

c. Educator support material

Ten percent of the respondents highlighted that SMTs should provide an educator with support material to facilitate teaching in the classroom. It is encouraging to see that most educators get all the support they need from SMTs. In some schools, SMT members find it difficult to provide educator support material because of budgetary constraints in their schools.

Table 4.10: Respondent-generated list of factors that hinder LAP

Theme	Frequency	Percentage
a. Lack of educator and learner motivation	9	22.5%
b. Lack of open communication between educators and parents	4	10%

a. Lack of educator and learner motivation

Twenty-three percent of the respondents mentioned lack of motivation of educators and learners as a factor that hinders academic performance. This indicates that in some schools, SMTs do not support educators in arranging activities that could motivate the academic performance of learners. According to Hertzberg, Mausner and Schneider (1959: 66) motivation is a critical feature to inspire educators to work diligently and for learners to excel in their schoolwork.

b. Lack of open communication between educators and parents

Ten percent of the respondents mentioned the lack of open communication between educators and parents as something that hinders LAP. Open communication between parents and educators can secure commitment among learners.

4.3 CONCLUSION

A central finding of the empirical research is that SMT members, themselves, assess their contribution to enhancement of LAP positively, although they acknowledge that there is room for improvement. The research results re-affirm the contention made earlier in Chapter 1, namely that SMTs are struggling to motivate staff members to enhance LAP. Specific findings of this study are summarized in the next chapter and recommendations based on these findings, are subsequently made.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This study primarily investigated the role of SMTs in enhancing LAP. This chapter provides a summary of findings from the empirical investigation. Recommendations to improve LAP are also made.

5.2 FINDINGS

The following is a summary of the findings of the empirical investigation:

a. SMTs do not implement staff development programmes

Reponses summarised in table 4.9, indicates that in most schools, SMTs do not conduct staff development programmes. Educational imperatives, such as improving the teaching skills of educators, are neglected. The SMT plays a minimal role in assisting staff to improve the quality of teaching and learning. This is likely to be one of the causes of poor performance.

b. Some SMTs do not involve parents in LAP enhancement programmes

SMTs, together with educators, do not adequately communicate with parents regarding the individual learner's performance. Parents get know about the child's performance from term reports only. In matters relating to learner discipline in most schools, parents are seldom consulted. The lack of parental involvement tends to inhibit LAP because parents are marginalized from the educational processes of the child.

c. Educators are not fully motivated to enhance LAP

Findings from the empirical investigation indicate that there is a lack of motivation in SMTs to enhance LAP. For example, question (f) in table 4.8, reflects that 23% of the respondents highlighted that the SMT members do not motivate members of the staff and learners to excel in their educational endeavours. This lack of motivation creates an ethos of complacency in the school; educators become

indifferent and learners to do not aspire to improve their overall academic performance. Cohen (1984: 16), commenting on the school effectiveness studies conducted in different parts of the world, identifies the SMT as an important variable in the staff and learner motivation.

d. There is lack of communication between SMTs and the staff

Although 90% of the respondents agreed that SMT members have effective communication with the members of the staff, 10% of the respondents disagreed. The lack of proper communication among stakeholders may hinder LAP. Information exchange between SMTs and staff is critical for monitoring and evaluating LAP.

e. Some educators are not familiar with the vision of the school

In some schools, SMTs indicated that they communicate the vision of the school to all stakeholders so as to make sure that learners know the direction the school is headed in. In the other schools though, educators do not even know what the vision of the school is, as they are not exposed to it. Byne-Jardine and Holly (1994: 24) state that the vision addresses the whole issue of the desired learning environment and articulates the desired outcomes.

f. Poor strategic planning in some schools adversely affects LAP

Table 4.8, question (a), indicates that 95% of the respondents are involved in strategic planning in their schools. According to Bush and West-Burnham (1994: 65) and Beare, Caldwell and Millikan (1989: 116-117) SMTs are leaders in the planning process to enhance LAP and are therefore a crucial element of excellent schools. Schools with poor strategic planning are likely to under-achieve by the end of the year. Evidence indicates that there are indeed a minimal number of the schools (5%) that have no strategic plan to enhance LAP.

g. There is a lack of educator involvement in curriculum development

Responses in table 4.8, question (f), indicate that some SMTs are not involving educators in curriculum development. Curriculum development should be an open and transparent process with the participation of relevant phase educators. The RNCS guidelines verify that curriculum development is a lengthy, continuous process, which presupposes open communication, consultation and willingness to participate in decision-making by all educators. SMTs have a key role to play in leading and directing the process of curriculum design within their schools.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

a. The SMT should provide resources for on-going capacity building of educators

The NDoE and SMTs need to ensure that the development of educators is an on-going process and does not end with certification. Educators should seek opportunities for professional development on a regular basis. There should be regular workshops, in-service training, and courses on leadership, human resource management, school development, school policies, communication and conflict management. These can increase a sense of professional development, which will enhance academic performance.

b. SMTs should encourage parents to support the school in order to manage learners effectively

It is recommended that parents offer supervisory help to their children at home and ensure that they study properly in an atmosphere conducive to learning. Regular visits to school by parents to inquire about the progress of their children are highly recommended. Enhancing LAP requires the concerted efforts of all relevant stakeholders, especially parents who have to provide guidelines for discipline at home. Furthermore, parents need to monitor the homework given in school so as to ensure that it is completed at home so that on-going learning

takes place. They should also work with their children to set study programmes to prepare adequately for tests and examinations.

c. SMTs should motivate educators to excel in teaching

Educators need to be motivated to carry out educational activities with enthusiasm and dedication. The SMT should give support to educators. The support given to staff helps learners to perform well. SMTs should inspire confidence and enthusiasm in their educators so that their schools will become successful. SMTs should listen to educators' needs and take the initiative to sympathize with them and provide regular guidance, advice and support.

d. SMTs should create clear channels of communication

Clear communication channels can create favourable behaviour and healthy partnerships. Communication is a vehicle by which LAP can be made successful within an institution. SMTs should therefore work diligently and seriously to develop a system of horizontal communication within their schools.

e. SMTs and educators should develop a joint vision to enhance LAP

SMTs should involve educators in setting a clear and appropriate vision to enhance LAP. Follow-up efforts should be fostered to ensure that educators buy into the vision of the school and that educators take their vision seriously. SMTs should make an on-going effort to articulate this vision to learners in order to remind them about the school's aspirations and what the school's expectations are with regard to LAP.

f. SMTs and educators should engage in strategic planning to enhance LAP

There is a need for the development of strategic planning in schools that is specially focused on ways to enhance LAP. A well-planned programme to promote excellent LAP is a trait of a good school. SMTs should involve all members of staff in strategic planning to improve results.

g. SMTs should conduct staff training programmes on curriculum development

The adoption of the RNCS provided the basis for curriculum transformation and development for schools. Educators have an important role to play in realizing the aims of the RNCS. SMTs should conduct in-service training for staff to promote the development of the curriculum within their schools, since all educators are required to be curriculum designers. This is a demanding and a complex task because educators need to reconcile the curriculum needs of the school with that of their local community so that the curriculum becomes relative and relevant to the learner's life-world. It is, therefore, critical that on-going training in respect of curriculum development is conducted by SMTs with expertise in curriculum design. Alternatively, SMTs should recruit the services of external consultants with curriculum expertise to train staff in curriculum development.

5.4 CONCLUSION

This study investigated the role of SMTs in enhancing LAP. The study revealed that to enhance academic performance of learners, SMT members should ensure that educator support material, development programmes and promotion of teamwork are in place. It was discovered in this study that when there is an effective communication system and on-going training programmes for educators in the school, LAP is enhanced. It is hoped that the recommendations made will be considered so that schools can move from a situation of stagnation to growth and development. Enhanced academic performance of learners' is primarily dependant on the SMTs' initiative and endeavours to design strategic planning programmes created especially to promote and sustain quality and excellence in schools.

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Appendix A

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

QUESTIONNAIRE

*THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAM
IN ENHANCING LEARNER ACADEMIC
PERFORMANCE*

DEAR RESPONDENT

Thank you for taking time to answer my questionnaire. The fact that we have been chosen as a respondent is quite coincidental. The area in which you live, as well as you have been selected randomly for the purpose of this survey.

I would like to assure that all the information you provide will be regarded as strictly confidential. Thus, to obtain reliable, scientific information it is necessary that you answer the questions as honestly as you can. Your opinion is important.

Please answer ALL questions in the following way:

1. Use crosses, e.g. X.
2. Where a question requires comments, write in the space provided.

SECTION ONE : BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION**1.1**

SEX	
Male	
Female	

1.2

AGE GROUP	
Under 30	
31-40	
41-50	
Over 50	

1.3

HOME LANGUAGE	
English	
Afrikaans	
Zulu	
Xhosa	
Sotho	
Other (please specify)	

1.4

MY HIGHEST QUALIFICATION IS	
STD. PTD. HED. FDE	
BA	
B.ED/Honours Degree	
Master Degree	
Doctorate Degree	

1.5

WARD	
Highflats Ward	
St. Faiths Ward	
Mabheleni Ward	
Turton Ward	

1.6

RANK	
Principal	
Deputy Principal	
H.O.D	

SECTION TWO : FACTORS THAT ENHANCE LEARNER ACADEMIC PERFORMACE.

KEYS : SA : Strongly Agree
A : Agree
U : Uncertain
D : Disagree
SD : Strongly Disagree

OUR SMT	SA	A	U	D	SD
2.1 Engages in strategic planning to enhance learner academic performance.					
2.2 Advises parents about creating a home environment conducive to learning.					
2.3 Arranges extra classes after school to enhance learner academic performance.					
2.4 Arranges programmes that enhance learner academic performance.					
2.5 Creates a positive environment to improve learner academic performance					
2.6 Creates a sound and relationship with learners in our school					
2.7 Creates a sense of co-responsibility for teaching among staff members.					

SECTION THREE : STRATEGIES THAT SMT ADOPT TO ENHANCE THE LEARNER ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

OUR SMT	SA	A	U	D	SD
3.1 Involves parents in strategic planning to improve Learner Academic Performance					
3.2 Supports teachers in the implementation of learner academic performance.					
3.3 Provides staff members with an opportunity to participate in decisions about curriculum matter					
3.4 Provides suitable resources for Learners Academic Performance					
3.5 Sets teachers to workshops to improve their knowledge about the new teaching methods					
3.6 Encourages teachers to share ideas about improving the curriculum					
3.7 Informs parents about the learner's progress					
3.8 Invites parents to discuss education problems experienced by their children					

SECTION FOUR : FACTORS THAT HINDER LEARNER ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

OUR SMT	SA	A	U	D	SD
4.1 Consults parents with regards to learner academic performance.					
4.2 Makes all the curriculum decisions					
4.3 Develops a working relationship that helps in enhancing learner academic performance					
4.4 Is aware of programmes that enhance learner academic performance.					
4.5 Helps learners who find it hard to cope with school work.					
4.6 Resolves learner problems effectively					
4.7 Gives the staff the opportunity to express ideas about improving learner academic performance.					
4.8 Accepts advice about improving learner performance by the staff					

SECTION FIVE

Does your SMT have strategic plans to enhance Learner Academic Performance? Explain briefly what these plans are. If no, explain the reason's for this answer

Yes ☐ No ☐

Thank you for completing the questionnaire

P.O BOX 575
ANERLEY
4230
24 JUNE 2004

THE PRINCIPAL/SMT

Dear Sir

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

I kindly request to conduct research in your school. The research is part of my study towards MED degree with the University of Zululand (Durban Umlazi Campus) under the supervision of Dr. Chetty.

The topic of my mini-dissertation is: The role of the School Management Team in enhancing learner academic performance.

The research will be conducted by means of a questionnaire, which will be administered to the SMT.

Thank You

Yours faithfully


B.S. NDIMANDE

P.O BOX 575
ANERLEY
4230
24 JUNE 2004

THE WARD MANAGER
P.O BOX 133
HIGHFLATS
3306

Dear Sir

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

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Yours faithfully


B.S. NDIRMANDE

Appendix D

P.O.BOX 575
ANERLEY
4230
24 JUNE 2004

THE CIRCUIT MANAGER
P.O.BOX 133
HIGHFLATS
3306

Dear Sir

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

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The topic of my mini- dissertation is: The role of School Management Teams in enhancing learner academic performance.

The research will be conducted by means of a questionnaire, which will be administered to SMT members.

Thanking you in anticipation of your kind assistance in this matter.

Yours faithfully



B.S. NDIMANDE

THE PRINCIPAL
P.O BOX 154
HIGHFLATS
3306
25 JUNE 2004

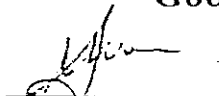
MR. B.S NDI MANDE
P.O BOX 575
ANERLEY
4230

Dear Sir

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

1. Your request for permission to conduct research in our school has been accepted.
2. I wish to congratulate you on the steps that you have taken to upgrade your academic qualifications.
3. I hope that your research finding will in future make a contribution towards the improvement of education in our district.

Good Luck!


N.B Khambule



UMZUMBE CIRCUIT ISEKETHI LASE-MZUMBE UMZUMBE CIRCUIT

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Postcode: 3306

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HIGHFLATS
3306

Telephone: [033] 835-0309
Fax: [033] 835-0233

Inquiries:
Mkhizoshe: B.S. MKHIZE
Mkhizoshe:

Reference:
Mkhizoshe:
Mkhizoshe:

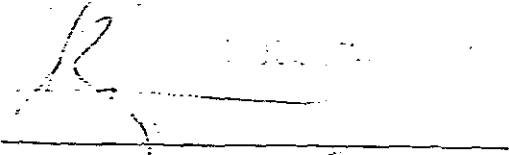
Date:
Mkhizoshe: 24 June 2004
Mkhizoshe:

TO: - ALL PRINCIPALS OF UMZUMBE CIRCUIT

You are hereby informed that the bearer Mr.B.S Ndimande, is currently conducting a research project in pursuance of his master's degree studies. You are thus requested to assist him by giving him information when he visits your school.

Your co-operation will highly be appreciated.

Yours faithfully


B.S. MKHIZE
CIRCUIT MANAGER