LEADERSHIP PRACTICES BY SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAMS AIMED AT ENHANCING ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN UNDERPERFORMING SCHOOLS OF MOPANI WEST DISTRICT

by

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2025

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DECLARATION

I, **DIKELEDI ESTHER MANGENA,** Student Number **18022844**, hereby declare that the thesis titled:

> "**LEADERSHIP PRACTICES BY SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAMS AIMED AT ENHANCING ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN UNDERPERFORMING SCHOOLS OF MOPANI WEST DISTRICT"**

… has not been submitted previously for a degree at this or any other institution or university; that it is, my own designed and executed work and all the reference materials contained therein have been duly acknowledged.

DK ETEDIESTHER MANGENA 31.07.2025

…… ……..

Signature Date

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my family, whose unwavering love, support, and encouragement have been my greatest source of strength throughout this journey. To my parents, who instilled in me the value of education and perseverance, and to my siblings, whose belief in my abilities kept me motivated even in the most challenging times.

I also dedicate this work to the educators and school management teams who work tirelessly to improve academic performance in underperforming schools. Their dedication and commitment to shaping the future of learners have been a profound inspiration.

Finally, to all those who believe in the power of leadership and education as transformative tools for progress, this study is a testament to the impact of resilience, vision, and the pursuit of excellence.

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ABSTRACT

Using instructional leadership to improve student performance is a standard practice in many nations, including South Africa. Principals, Deputy Principals, Departmental Heads (DHs) and senior teachers form part of Senior Management Teams (SMTs) in schools, and they are held responsible for improving student performance, especially in secondary schools. Little, however, is known about how SMTs use their instructional leadership practices to influence learner performance in secondary schools in Mopani West Education District. Yearly, the Department of Basic Education sets the standard expected from schools to achieve, for them to be labelled "performing schools". When a school performs below the expected standard, it is categorized as an underperforming school. This study aimed to explore and analyse instructional leadership practices by SMTs in pursuit of improving academic performance in selected underperforming schools. The study implemented a mixed-method approach. The population for this study comprised all school management team members - Principals, Deputy Principals, Departmental Heads and senior teachers - in nine (9) identified underperforming schools in Mopani West District. This sampled population was made up of 9 Principals, 9 Deputy Principals, 18 Departmental heads and 9 senior teachers – hence, 45 participants. This study used purposive sampling to select the participants who enabled the researcher to explore and analyse SMTs' instructional leadership practices, in pursuit of improving learner performance. First, quantitative data was gathered through questionnaires; then the results of the quantitative data informed the design of the qualitative data collection instrument - semi–structured interviews. Findings from the interviews were augmented by document analysis, thus enabling triangulation of the process of gathering data, resulting in a comprehensive exploration and analysing of the instructional leadership practices used by school management teams to raise learner achievement in underperforming schools in the Mopani West District of the Limpopo Province in South Africa. The quantitative data was analysed using the SAS/STAT 13.1 software, while the qualitative data analysed using the Tesch Methods of data analysis. The findings of the study is that the school management teams in underperforming schools do not monitor curriculum management, academic goals are not clearly set, inadequate provision of support to teachers and learners, Inadequate integration of ICT and lack of professional development of teachers in the schools

Key Words: School Management Team, Instructional Leadership, Under-performance, Senior Teacher, Departmental Heads

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AAPR	:	Annual Academic Performance Reports
ACPI	:	Academic Conferences and Publishing International Administration and Management
AIP	:	Academic Improvement Plans
AJUE	:	Asian Journal of University Education
ASCD	:	Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
ATP	:	Annual Teaching Plan
CAPS	:	Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement
CICE	:	Center for the Study of International Cooperation in Education
CLPS	:	Chronically Low Performing School
CPTD	:	Continual Professional Teacher Development
DBE	:	Department of Basic Education
DEU	:	Development and Education Unit
DH	:	Departmental Head
DoE	:	Department of Education
DP	:	Deputy Principals
ECPS	:	Educationa, Cultural and Psychological Studies
EDII	:	Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India
EELC	:	Equal Education Law Centre
HEQC	:	Higher Education Quality Committee
ICREM	:	International Conference on Research of Educational
ICT	:	Information and Communication Technology
ICT	:	Information and Communication Technology
ICT	:	Integrated Communication and Technology
IES	:	Institute of Education Sciences
IJHCM	:	International Journal of Human Capital Management
IQMS	:	Integrated Quality Management System
JESPAR	:	Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk
LRC	:	Learner Representative Council

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LTSM	:	Learner Teacher Supporting Materials
MSC	:	National Senior Certificate
NCEE	:	National Centre for Education Evaluation
NDP	:	National Development Plan
NGOs	:	Non-Governmental Organisations
NSLA	:	National Strategy for Learner Attainment
P	:	Principals
PAM	:	Personnel Administration Measures
PD	:	Professional Development
PLC	:	Professional Community Process
PTAs	:	Parent-Teacher Associations
QLTC	:	Quality of Learning and Teaching Campaign
RCA	:	Root Cause Analysis
RFP	:	Request for Proposal
SAPS	:	South African Police Services
SAS/STAT	:	Statistical Analysis System/Statistical Procedures
SBA	:	School-Based Assessment
SDP	:	School Development Plans
SGBs	:	School Governing Bodies
SIP	:	School Improvement Plans
SMT	:	School Management Teams
ST	:	Senior Teachers
STATSSA	:	Statistics South Africa
SWOT	:	Strength, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats
TVET	:	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UK	:	United Kingdom
USA	:	United States of America

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CHAPTER1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Underperformance in schools is globally a multi- faceted issue affected by a range of factors, such as socio- economic conditions, resource allocation, cultural factors and governance structures (Papa & English, 2011; Harris & Jones, 2022). In many countries, learners from marginalized communities tend to have less access to quality education resulting in disparities. Western countries like United State and United Kingdom follow this trend, with high performing schools in wealthier areas and underperformance in lower income regions (Simon, James & Simon, 2021). This has caused some concerns; in addition, complaints have arisen, over the absence of accountability by schools, with reports indicating mismanagement and insufficient leadership leading to underperformance.

In South Africa, underperformance of schools is a significant issue reflecting deep-rooted challenges in the education system. Several factors have contributed to underperformance including the historical inequalities, socio- economic disparities and inadequate teacher training. Poor leadership contributes to underperformance where school management and governance structures are not functioning as effectively as they should (Burkett & Hayes, 2023). Moloi (2019) and Mette (2020) recorded that 80% of schools in South Africa are found to be dysfunctional by the Equal Education's Law Centre (EELC). The quality of SMTs is one of the key factors required to drive the transformational turnaround and improvement required in schools (Shava & Heystek, 2018; Mathura, 2024). Underperformance is a complex issue in South Africa intertwined with diverse broad problems. The Department of Education is spending 5, 5% of its budget on education, however, Bush (2012) and Day, Sammons, Gorgeon (2020) identified that leadership is the contributor to achieving quality of education in schools. The government of South Africa has implemented several initiatives to improve school

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performance, such as National Development Plan (NDP), however, these efforts are not achieving the desired results, mainly due to lack of resources and capacity. The Limpopo Province is always struggling in terms of schools' performance, always taking the last position, out of the nine (9) provinces in South Africa, in terms of the National Senior Certificate results.

Education is considered a cornerstone for the progress of society and is also regarded as a catalyst for achieving growth among individuals and the development of the community. In Mopani West Education District of Limpopo Province, South Africa, the underperformance of secondary school learners is a continuous problem. Year in and year out, several schools in the district do not reach the performance benchmark.

According to Smith, Warrican, Kuki –Yeboah, Cheema and Alleyne (2020), underperforming schools are those that do not meet the standard or benchmark of performance as prescribed by the Department of Basic Education. The Department of Basic Education Circular D3 (2023) indicates that secondary school are deemed underperforming if the pass percentage in the National Senior Certificate (NSC) Examination falls below 70% and has produced less than 30% Bachelor passes and 25% Diploma passes; schools that fall below these established benchmarks are labelled as "underperforming schools". The School Management Teams (SMTs) have been identified as crucial participants in resolving the underperformance issue, however, the effectiveness of their leadership practices in boosting academic achievement in underperforming schools is still a grey area that needs to be addressed.

Instructional leadership is one that helps in supporting the development of learning and teaching methods, hence, instructional leaders have a managerial responsibility to develop teachers and learners for schools to improve their academic performance. Within this context, this study explores and analyses the practices of SMT members in improving performance in the underperforming secondary schools of Mopani West Education District, in the Limpopo Province of South Africa. This study aims to investigate reasons for this, by exploring the practices employed by SMT members in pursuit of improving

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learner performance in underperforming schools and investigating the effectiveness of those practices. The results, hence, would fill the gap, in literature, by identifying SMTs role in instructional leadership aimed at improving performance of learners, particularly, in underperforming secondary schools in Mopani West, Limpopo, South Africa.

Mopani West District is a rural area in Limpopo, South Africa, with around 278,254 inhabitants (StatsSA, 2022) and each of the district's thirteen (13) circuits has a cluster of schools. Mopani West District has been categorised as academically underperforming, with a high school dropout rate and low levels of learner accomplishment (Nkambule & Venter, 2020). According to a report by the Department of Basic Education (2015), many secondary schools in the district need more resources, since they have poor buildings, limited instructional materials, and a teacher shortage. This has led to low academic performance, with many pupils failing to achieve the prerequisites for tertiary studies (Budeli, Mashao & Nesengani, 2018; Adebayo, Ntokozo & Grace, 2020).

Studies show that low-performing schools are frequently located in impoverished neighbourhoods with restricted access to resources and opportunities (Hanse, 2017; Sanz, 2024). The historical and social backdrop of South Africa, with its legacy of apartheid, has produced entrenched socio-economic disparities that impact educational attainment (Motala & Vally, 2016; Sanz, 2024). These disparities are very visible in the Mopani West District, where poverty, unemployment, and lack of access to basic services are pervasive (Mothapo & Mavhandu-Mudzusi, 2018; Losen, Martinez, 2020). The next paragraph discusses the statement of the problem.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Mopani West Education District has nine (9) underperforming schools at secondary level, despite several intervention strategies developed by the schools, District, Province and the Department of Basic Education (DBE) to improve learner performance. One current strategy utilized by the DBE to improve learner performance in underperforming secondary schools is the deployment of district mentors. Districts, as well have come up

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with Grade 12 Project Managers as a strategy to improve performance of Grade 12 learners despite all these interventions, the Mopani West Education District has nine (9) underperforming secondary schools performing at 26.12%, 35.71%, 46.23%, 48.2%, 51.72%, 53.6%, 57.5%, 58.8% and 59.7%. Most of the studies conducted in South Africa appear to focus mainly on explaining low performance, rather than figuring out what causes this. This study explored and analysed how SMTs enact their instructional leadership practices to improve or enhance learner performance in these underperforming schools and identify any key factors that may be hindering their responsibilities. Currently, there are limited studies on the topic, although, studies by Dlangalala (2015); Heystek (2019), Shava and Dedun (2013) and Masenya (2022) support the idea that instructional leadership by SMT has the power to influence the quality of education thereby, improve teacher and learner performance. Setlhodi (2020) added that a collaboration between the two tiers of school governing bodies and school management teams, is an absolute requirement for successful schools.

South Africa's education system faces enormous obstacles in delivering quality education to poor learners and they are mostly experienced in low-performing secondary schools. These schools frequently lack the resources, infrastructure and leadership required to equip learners with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed (Mokhele, 2017; Adebayo, 2020; Ntokozo & Grace, 2020); and despite the efforts to improve the quality of education in South Africa, policymakers and teachers continue to struggle with underperforming schools (Ngidi & Majozi, 2018; Mathura, 2024). Lack of competent instructional-leadership practices has been identified as one of the primary reasons for this low performance. Characteristics of underperforming schools are distinctly different from performing schools; one reason for such difference is the fact that instructional leaders in underperforming schools may lack the required skills, expertise and support to effectively lead their schools to improve academic achievement (Van der Westhuizen, Mapotse & Mashegoane, 2020).

In the Mopani West Education District, underperformance of secondary schools is a major challenge. Schools that underperform over a period of three years in a row are labelled

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"chronic underperforming schools". This underperformance occurs in schools where school management teams seem not to monitor and support teaching and learning, in addition to other factors. This issue, hence, can be resolved by adopting, among others, efficient instructional leadership practices by the school management teams. Underperformance in schools raise concerns related to adopting leadership strategies to improve performance. There is a need, therefore, to determine and understand the instructional leadership practices utilized by the school management teams and their influence on academic performance.

According to Onwi and Mogari (2004); Adebayo et al. (2020) factors such as curriculum implementation, professional development, and resource constraints also influence the quality of education, although, leadership practices visibly bring positive change, thereby improving school performance. Fullan (2020) determines that the performance of secondary schools cannot be enhanced without proper implementation of leadership practices, hence, Mopani West Education District's overall achievement can be said to be negatively affected by lack of leadership. Lack of success in academic performance influences learners' future and restricts their opportunities (Ulate & Carballo–Letras, 2010). The next section focused on the research aim and objectives

1.3 RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The study aims to explore and analyse the instructional leadership practices adopted by school management teams to improve the academic performance of underperforming secondary schools in Mopani West District of Limpopo, South Africa.

1.3.1 Objectives

The objectives of this study were as follows:

- The role of school management teams in supporting teachers and learners in implementing evidence-based instructional leadership practices.

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- Effectiveness of instructional leadership practices in improving academic performance in underperforming secondary schools.
- Challenges faced by the school management teams in improving academic outcomes of underperforming schools.
- Instructional leadership practices employed by the school management teams to improve academic outcomes in underperforming schools.
- Strategies that will improve the performance of SMTs of underperforming schools.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The primary research question is: What instructional leadership practices are employed by the school management teams to improve the academic performance of underperforming schools in the Mopani West Education District of Limpopo, South Africa? The following secondary research questions were formulated to address the primary research question.

Secondary research questions

- How do the School Management Teams support teachers and learners in implementing evidence-based instructional practices?
- How effectiveness are the instructional leadership practices in improving the academic performance in underperforming secondary schools?
- What are the key challenges faced by the School Management Teams in underperforming secondary schools?
- What instructional leadership practices do the School Management Teams employ to improve the academic performance in underperforming schools?
- Which strategies could be developed to improve SMTs' performance in underperforming schools?

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1.5 LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of a literature review is to assess existing studies on instructional leadership practices in underperforming schools, as well as any initiatives adopted to improve performance. The review will give a comprehensive context of the topic, thereby identifying any literature and research gaps.

1.5.1 Theoretical Framework

Transformational leadership and instructional leadership theories will be used since they align to this study. The main focus of transformational leadership is about influencing people to change for the better while instructional leadership theory is on how leaders may create an environment that is conducive to better performance. These leadership approaches place strong emphasis on managing educational programs, establishing clear goals, and fostering a supportive school environment in order to improve learner results. The principal's job description includes leadership responsibilities for learner achievement, teacher development, and instructional quality in addition to management and administration. The significance of school leaders in promoting academic achievement has been highlighted by the rise of instructional leadership as a major educational reform tactic over time (Hallinger, 2005).

1.5.2 Overview of School-Based Instructional Leadership Practices

School-based instructional leadership practices are essential to school improvement initiatives. Instructional leaders, often principals, deputy principals, departmental heads and senior teachers, play a crucial role in fostering a school culture that places a premium on teaching and learning (Alfadala, Morel & Spillane, 2021). Good instructional leaders offer teachers guidance and support, monitor and evaluate instructional methods, and foster a shared vision of academic excellence (Leithwood, Sun & Schumacher, 2020). In addition, they are responsible for fostering relationships with the school community, with

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parents, learners, and other stakeholders, to create a pleasant and supportive learning environment (Mora–Ruan, Schurig & Wittmann, 2021).

According to research, effective instructional leadership is related to excellent academic outcomes for learners (Leithwood, Sun & Schumacher, 2021). Instructional leaders who can foster a culture of continuous improvement and give teachers focused assistance are more likely to increase learner accomplishment (Fullan, 2020) hence, instructional leadership is essential in low-performing schools, where children and teachers' difficulties are frequently more complicated (Spillane, 2012). Good instructional leadership necessitates a variety of talents and abilities; these leaders must be educated about teaching and learning, as well as curricula and assessment processes (Goleman, 2021). In addition, they must establish trustworthy relationships with teachers and other school stakeholders, communicate effectively, and develop a shared vision for school reform (Leithwood *et al*., 2021).

School-based instructional leadership is crucial to school development efforts, especially in low-performing schools. Good instructional leaders play a crucial role in enhancing academic outcomes for learners by directing and supporting educators, fostering a culture of continuous improvement, and fostering strong connections within the school community. Effective instructional leadership, hence, requires complex and multidimensional abilities and competencies, including a profound understanding of teaching and learning and excellent interpersonal and communication skills.

1.5.3 Previous Studies on Instructional Leadership and Academic Performance

Past studies have established the essential nature of instructional leadership in enhancing school academic achievement. Leithwood et al. (2021), for instance, found that instructional leadership was positively associated with learner progress in reading, writing and numeracy. The study also revealed that school culture and teacher professional development mitigate the effect of poor instructional leadership on academic performance

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Similarly, Hallinger and Heck (2011) did a meta-analysis on the relationship between school leadership and learner achievement and found that efficient instructional leadership was positively connected with academic performance. Their study also underlined the significance of dispersed leadership, in which leadership tasks are shared among different individuals, in enhancing learner outcomes. Moreover, Mora –Ruano, Schung and Wittman (2021) conducted a study on school leadership impact on results. They discovered that influential instructional leaders could improve learner achievement by fostering a culture of high expectations, providing teachers with targeted professional development, and utilizing data to inform instructional practices. Fullan (2020) conducted a study on educational reform and discovered that Instructional leadership is a crucial aspect of fostering school improvement. The study also highlighted the significance of collaborative leadership, with educators, parents, and other stakeholders to realize a shared goal for school reform.

Previous research, therefore, has consistently established the significance of instructional leadership in enhancing school academic achievement. Other studies have highlighted the need to develop a shared vision, enhance teacher capacity, cultivate a positive school culture, use data to inform instruction and engage in collaborative leadership to improve a school.

In addition, research has also focused on how instructional leadership might boost academic achievement in low-performing schools. Ward, Bagley, Lumby, Woods, Hamilton and Roberts (2015) and Mathura (2024), for instance, found that influential instructional leaders in low-performing schools could improve academic outcomes by providing targeted support for struggling learners, implementing evidence-based instructional practices, and using data to monitor and adjust instruction.

Wahlstrom, Louis, Leithwood and Anderson (2010) Harris and Jones (2022) investigated the role of instructional leadership in turning around low-performing schools in urban districts. Their report on the study revealed that successful turnaround attempts were characterised by a strong emphasis on learner accomplishment, a culture of high

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standards, and a continuing commitment to professional development for educators and instructional leaders. Furthermore, Ozdemir, Sahin and Ozturk (2020) evaluated the influence of instructional leadership on rural school academic performance. They found that effective instructional leadership had a favourable correlation with academic success, especially in schools where there are learners with high levels of poverty and low resources.

Past research, thus, has proven the urgency of instructional leadership in boosting academic performance in schools, particularly, in underperforming and disadvantaged schools. The current study intends to investigate the instructional leadership practices by the SMTs in improving academic performance in low-performing secondary schools in Mopani West Education District of Limpopo Province, South Africa, by building on earlier research.

1.5.4 Role of the School Management Teams in Underperforming Schools

Benoliel (2021) and& Mathura (2022) agree that SMTs have a managerial role in developing teachers and learners so that their schools can achieve and improve performance; they are responsible for teacher development and support in their schools (Naidoo, 2019; Martinez & McAbee, 2020). Teacher development aims to upgrade teachers, by preparing them for new roles, curriculum-related improvements, refresher courses, and certification for on-the-job training. Teacher development is usually in the form of workshops, seminars, conferences, and courses to improve performance (Dasoo & Van der Merwe, 2020). Teacher competency depends on factors like - the support they receive from the SMTs, teaching and learning resources, supervisor effectiveness and the workload (Burgers & Newton, 2016). Support and teacher development are necessary when a teacher lacks performance attributes, showing that inadequate support by the SMTs to teachers causes poor performance in schools (Zhou, Sun, Zhou & Li, 2024).

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In low-performing schools, the SMTs needs to play a critical role in encouraging learner progress and reducing the achievement gap. Instructional leaders are accountable for developing and implementing practices that would improve learning and achievement. Due to inadequate resources, low levels of educator efficacy, and other variables that contribute to low-learner achievement, instructional leaders in underachieving schools face particular challenges in improving learner achievement. Providing targeted help for challenged children, employing evidence-based teaching techniques, using data to monitor and change instruction, and building a positive school culture are all components of effective instructional leadership, as these, have repeatedly been focused upon by research. Studies by Louis, Dretzke and Wahlstrom (2010); Day et al, (2020) have identified seven strong claims impacting successful school leadership, including - creating a shared vision, building educator capacity, fostering a positive school culture, using data to inform instruction, engaging in collaborative leadership, ensuring school-wide emphasis on learner achievement, and establishing external partnerships.

Instructional leaders in struggling schools must be able to identify and address the unique needs of their learners and instructors as strategies to improve performance in schools should differ from location to location because contextual factors, such as politics and resources, are not the same everywhere (Campbell, Chaseling, Boyd & Shipway, 2019; Heystek & Emekako, 2020).

Instructional leaders in schools with low performance should be able to promote equality and social justice in their schools; this involves addressing issues of bias and unfairness in the school's curriculum and culture, as well as promoting a safe and inclusive educational environment. Effective instructional leaders at high-poverty schools are able to promote equity and social justice by offering culturally responsive instruction, fostering learner voice and agency, and interacting with families and communities (Ward, Bagley, Lumby, Woods, Hamilton & Roberts, 2015; Sanz, 2024).

Instructional leaders play a crucial role in improving learner accomplishment in schools with low performance by including a variety of strategies, such as providing targeted

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support for struggling students, implementing evidence-based instructional practices, using data to monitor and adjust instruction, fostering a positive school culture, promoting equity and social justice, and developing teacher capacity. By implementing these practices, instructional leaders may contribute to closing the achievement gap and promoting student success for all children.

1.5.5 Challenges Faced by Instructional Leaders

In their efforts to increase academic performance, instructional leaders in low-achieving schools encounter several obstacles; these include - insufficient resources, educator resistance to change, lack of trust and buy-in from stakeholders and competing demands on their time and focus. The minimal resources available to instructional leaders in schools with low performance is a significant obstacle. Lone and Yadov (2021) discovered that schools in low-income communities typically have fewer resources, such as fewer experienced educators and restricted access to technology and instructional materials. These make it challenging for instructional leaders to apply practices that have been proven to promote learner progress. It is difficult for instructional leaders to assist learners in practical subjects like Mathematics and Physical Sciences, without resources like calculators and a laboratory for experiments.

Instructional leaders in low-performing schools frequently encounter resistance from instructors who doubt the efficacy of new practices. According to a study by Ertmer, Ottenbreit-Leftwich and Tondeur (2014), educators who are reluctant to change may be less likely to properly integrate new teaching practices, which can impair efforts to enhance academic achievement.

In addition, instructional leaders may struggle to gain the trust and support of stakeholders, such as educators, parents, and community members. According to a study by Bryk (2015), successful school reform efforts require a high level of trust and collaboration among stakeholders, which can be difficult to build in schools with a history of mistrust and low levels of engagement.

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Instructional leaders at schools with low performance may have difficulty balancing competing demands on their time and attention, in addition to their leadership responsibilities. Liu, Bellibas and Gumus (2021) observed that instructional leaders in high-poverty schools are frequently required to also manage personnel, monitor learner conduct, and address school safety concerns.

Research demonstrates that strong instructional leadership can considerably enhance academic outcomes in schools with low performance (Fullan, 2020; Aryanti & Suhardan, 2020). Academic accomplishment can be supported by a culture of high standards and accountability fostered by instructional leaders who prioritize academic goals, provide continual professional development for teachers, and regularly monitor and assess learner progress. These leaders can encourage the deployment of techniques proven to enhance academic performance in underperforming schools (Hallinger, Gumus, Bellibas, 2018; Schmidt, 2016; Day et al., 2020); for instance, instructional leaders can offer teachers access to high-quality curricular materials, instructional coaching, and professional learning communities that facilitate the application of good teaching practices, hence, they can facilitate the development of robust partnerships with families and the broader community to enhance learning (Qaralleh, 2021). By integrating families in the educational process and community members in school decision-making, instructional leaders can foster a sense of ownership and engagement in the school's success, which can positively affect academic achievements.

Instructional leaders in schools with low academic performance encounter several obstacles in their efforts to increase academic performance; these include insufficient resources, teacher resistance to change, a lack of trust and buy-in from stakeholders and competing demands on their time and focus. By tackling these obstacles, leaders can enhance their ability to promote learner progress and close the achievement gap.

It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of instructional leaders in boosting academic achievement in low-performing schools; they can create a culture of high expectations and accountability, facilitate the implementation of evidence-based instructional

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practices, and build strong partnerships with families and the community to support learners through effective instructional leadership.

1.5.6 Characteristics of Underperforming Secondary Schools

Several variables contribute to poor academic performance in secondary schools. These variables can be grouped into four major categories - school infrastructure, teaching and learning, leadership and administration, and socioeconomic considerations (Ayeni & Adelabu, 2012; Adebayo et al., 2020); these show that secondary schools with poor academic performance are defined by a variety of contributing factors. These variables when adequately addressed, may improve the quality of education in underperforming schools and boost student academic progress. Variables that contribute to poor academic performance in secondary schools are discussed below.

1.5.6.1 Inadequate Infrastructure

Infrastructure is a crucial aspect in determining the quality of secondary school instruction. Inadequate infrastructure, such as inadequate classrooms, a lack of proper sanitation facilities, and inadequate teaching materials, can harm learners' academic performance (Tan, 2018; Sawamoto & Marshall, 2020). Inadequate levels of physical facilities contribute negatively to the performance level of education in any organisation (Yangambi, 2023). School facilities refer to buildings, classrooms, laboratories, dormitories, administrative facilities, sports facilities, and related facilities, in connection with a school (Mbalaka & Chesoti, 2021).

The way the school facilities are designed has an effect on the learning processes since there are three necessary characteristics - they must be natural (light and air quality), stimulating (colours and complexity) and individualized (flexibility of learning spaces); this is in-line with Bullock (2007) that there is a relationship between school facilities and learner achievement in secondary schools. Learners perform better in newly-built or renovated schools than in older, dilapidated schools. Hamid (2012) and Kute (2020) found that an environment that is appealing affects not only learners positively but also

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teachers. Completed, well-conditioned and well-maintained infrastructure encourages and motivates teachers to execute teaching and learning activities maximally and achieve the desired goal. In the same way, if the infrastructure is dilapidated, both teachers and learners become stressed and likely become inefficient and unproductive. Technology is also categorized as organizational infrastructure (Davies & West, 2014); incorporating technology has been associated with increased learner motivation and improved academic achievement.

1.5.6.2 Low level of teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are crucial to learners' academic performance and underperforming schools are characterized by low levels of learner engagement and poor teaching quality (Vazquez & Huerta-Manzanilla, 2021). Further, inadequate teacher training, high teacher turnover rates, and a lack of teaching resources are all factors that contribute to low-teaching quality. Learners achieve more when teachers align their methodologies and teaching styles to suit learners; thus, teaching styles need to be continuously reviewed to be relevant. There is no single instructional method that fits all types of learners: each learning style and method has its own strengths and weaknesses. Learners with one learning style perform poorly, while those with multiple ones achieve higher scores. According to Strauss (2014) and Darling Hammond (2020), when teachers account for learner performance, the latter perform better than when there is no accountability for their performance. If the problem is the teachers, the solution is to fix it through, for example, specification of standards, hours of professional learning, assessment of their performance, while if the problem is with the teaching, the situation is to fix practice through, for example, more opportunities for coaching and mentoring by instructional leaders, collaborative reviews and planning (Sun, Kennedy & Anderson, 2020).

1.5.6.3 Inadequate leadership and administration

Leadership and administration are essential determinants of a school's efficacy in fostering academic attainment. Poor leadership and poor management methods can significantly affect educator morale and learner achievement in schools (Berkovich &

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Bogler, 2020). Poor communication, a lack of responsibility, and inadequate support for educators are examples of ineffective leadership approaches. Supervision by leaders in organizations brings improvement in performance by teachers and learners (Winarno, Fitria & Fitriani, 2021). The role of the school leadership is to solve problems and meet the needs of learners; therefore, a school's mission and goals are likely not to be realised where there is no proper administration and effective leadership (Makgato & Mudzanani, 2019; Mohale, Litshani & Mashau, 2020). The effectiveness of instructional supervision is realized only when supervisors pay attention to building their capabilities as lack of supervision results in teachers' negative attitudes and lack of confidence with the supervision processes (Choy, Chong, Wong & Wong, 2011; Ngwenya, 2020). Good leadership and administration lead to positive attitudes, whereas, lack of financial resources and time by leaders in organizations, stand as obstacles to achievement (Teffaw & Hofman, 2012).

1.5.6.4 Socio-economic variables

Socioeconomic variables also have a role in schools with low performance - poverty, poor nutrition, and inadequate health care - can harm student performance (Lam, 2014; Losen & Marinez, 2020). Learners from advantageous socio-economic backgrounds tend to perform better academically as compared to those from poor socio-economic status (Gux, Hassan & Sulaiman, 2024). Matsuoka (2014); Losen and Martinez (2020) found that there is a strong correlation between socio-economic status and a learner's academic achievement. Wilson (2016) also asserts that poverty is not only a single factor but is characterized by many physical and psychosocial stressors, which indicate that poverty has a multifaceted impact on education. Social factors include – financial status of families, family background, crime and violence levels in the community, the learning environment and school feeding scheme. Bozkurt, Coban and Ozdemir (2021), mention that socio-economic status arises from indicators, like education, occupation and family income. Parents' level of education may affect the children's academic output, for if parents are educated, their children will not struggle with schoolwork, and will receive assistance and support from them, while the opposite happens with learners from poor socio-economic context. Liu, Peng and Zhao (2022) indicate that children from poor

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backgrounds mostly attend poor-performing schools as compared to those from advantaged backgrounds. Chaula (2015), Swartz (2009), Maijo (2018) and Claude (2020) agree that when learners are well fed, they become more attentive and focused in class - children who eat before school starts performing better on memory tests because the brain responds to the nutrition supply.

1.5.6.5 Lack of competent instructional leadership

Incompetent instructional leadership practices exacerbate the difficulties experienced by underperforming schools. It is the responsibility of the SMTs to provide instructional assistance, teacher development, and school improvement efforts (Bredeson & Johansson, 2015; Mathura, 2024). Effective instructional leadership is crucial for boosting academic achievement in struggling schools, according to research (Leithwood et al. 2018; Mathura, 2024); yet instructional leadership in low-performing schools is frequently hampered by a lack of support, insufficient training, and high rates of teacher turnover (Schmidt, 2016; Harris & Jones, 2022).

It has been determined that the relevance of secondary education cannot be neglected as it is the basis for students' personal development (Du Plessis & Mestry, 2019). In the Mopani West District, however, there are nine secondary schools that are underperforming, so there is a need to improve the education quality that learners receive. School management teams should adopt effective instructional practices as a measure of improving academic performance of learners. The concept of instructional leadership is explained as involving actions and strategies that need to be employed by leaders of a school to create an environment of learning, increase the effectiveness of teachers and improve learner outcomes (Hallinger, Gumus & Moller, 2020).

Mopani West District is situated in the Limpopo Province is rich in developing potential and achieving cultural diversity, however, the present education landscape requires efforts to deal with challenges that affect the achievement of learners. There are certain negative factors affecting education in the district, among them are limited resources, disparities among people, and differences in education level, so, the adoption of an

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effective approach is necessary for bringing positive change (Lambrecht, Lenkett, Hartmann, Ehlert, Knigge & Sporer, 2022). These authors observed that to provide better education, school principals must play an essential role which include indulging in instructional leadership. Best instructional leadership practices provide benefits to the learners at the time of learning and provide foundations for reforming schools. Instructional leadership involves the responsibilities of SMTs' members considering the hierarchical systems that motivate teachers to make decisions or consider the positions of leadership (Maponya, 2020).

Instructional leadership practices rest on adopting a holistic approach which considers fulfilling unique needs and aspirations. Underperformance within secondary schools can be dealt with by collaborating with the leadership strategies that contribute to the development of a sustainable educational ecosystem, which tends to bring improvements in education (Sibomana, 2022). In the 21st century, most of the educational systems are embracing the adoption of a new paradigm related to educational management which utilises management teams in schools; SMTs monitor and support teaching and learning in schools. Lack of commitment to the moral purpose of teachers, learners' discipline, and the involvement of parents are considered crucial factors inhibiting progress in schools (Ramalepe, 2015; Wullur & Werang 2020).

Mopani West District has been designated as an academically underperforming district with a high school dropout rate and low levels of learner accomplishment (Nkambule & Venter, 2020). Lack of competent instructional leadership exacerbates the difficulties experienced by underperforming schools in the district, since it is the responsibility of the SMTs to provide instructional assistance, teacher development, and school improvement efforts (Bredeson & Johansson, 2015; Mette, 2020). Effective instructional leadership is crucial for boosting academic achievement in struggling schools, according to diverse studies (Leithwood et al., 2018; Day et al., 2020), yet it is frequently hampered by a lack of support, insufficient training, and high rates of turnover (Schmidt, 2016).

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The purpose of this study, hence, was to explore the instructional leadership practices by school management teams, in increasing academic performance in low-achieving secondary schools in Mopani West, Limpopo, South Africa. Furthermore, the study seeks to comprehend the obstacles instructional leaders encounter in increasing academic performance in underperforming schools and to provide insight into the strategies good instructional leaders employ to overcome these obstacles. This study will contribute to the understanding of how to increase academic performance in underprivileged communities by analyzing the instructional leadership practices of the School Management Teams, in underperforming schools.

1.6 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

The following section will define the concepts that will mostly be utilized in the study.

1.6.1 Instructional Leadership

The term “instructional leadership” can be defined as one that helps support the development of learning and teaching methods. It is also known by different names, including - learning-centered leadership, student-centered leadership, and learning for learning. It is mainly associated with developing connections with teaching to enhance student learning (Apkarian & Rasmussen, 2021). Neumerski, Grissom, Goldring, Rubin, Cannata, Schuermann and Drake (2018) define the term as the responsibilities carried out by the leadership of a school in providing clear, strong, directive leadership aimed at curriculum implementation. The leadership comprises several school management team members, like, the principal, the deputy principal, departmental heads, and senior teachers. The principal can always delegate duties to them. For this study, Instructional leadership refers to the leadership that is provided by principals, deputy principals, departmental heads and senior educators, who are part of the management of the school in its responsibility towards achieving high standards for learners. Their main responsibility is to ensure that teaching and learning take place effectively.

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1.6.2 Team Performance

Team performance can be refers to group efficiency and effectiveness when working together to achieve common goals and objectives. It also involves different aspects such as innovation, collaboration, productivity, work quality, and achieving goals (De Jong, Dirks & Gillespie, 2016). Teamwork, hence, is the process through which team members collaborate to achieve tasks and goals. In other words, teamwork refers to the activities through which teams' inputs translate into outputs such as, effectiveness and satisfaction (James, Salas & Driskell, 2018). For this study, team performance refers to the combined efforts by the SMTs' members to enhance performance of learners in an institution.

1.6.3 School Management Teams

School management teams comprise of teachers who are formally appointed into leadership positions to support and guide teachers as well as managing schools, according to Personnel Administration Measures (PAM) as determined by the Minister of Education in terms of the Employment of Educators Act,1998. School management teams are also referred to as "school–based instructional leaders". For this study, School Management Team refers to principals, deputy principals, departmental heads and senior educators, who are managing and providing leadership in the school.

1.6.4 Underperforming Schools

Bayat and Rena (2014) define "underperforming schools" as those that fall short of their potential to give a high-quality education, while Smith (2020) defines it as a drop level that did not meet benchmarks for achievement. For this study, underperforming schools perform below average, or below set standards, or expectations by the Department of Basic Education. For example, in 2022 the benchmark set by the Department of Education for performance was 60%; in 2023 it was 65% and in 2024 it was 70%.

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1.6.5 Academic Performance

Academic performance is the degree at which a student successfully completes a learning exercise and illustrates information and aptitude relative to the set-up instructive guidelines (Jansen, Meyer, Wig Field & Moller, 2022). It refers to the student's capacity to meet or surpass the academic standards. Academic performance is the measurement of student achievement across various academic subjects. Teachers and education officials typically measure achievement using classroom performance, graduation rates and results from standardized tests. For this study, academic performance refers to the overall achievement of a learner at a particular grade.

1.6.6 Senior Teacher

Bakx, Baartman and Schilt-Mol (2014) note a senior teacher as a departmental head in a school, although not a promotional post. Schools without a management post co-opt teachers to assist in heading a department, whenever there is a need. The senior teacher carries out professional support and guidance, administrative and management roles under delegation by the principal. For this study, a senior teacher refers to appointed ones due to their designation and any other level one (1) teacher who is opted into the position by the existing management of the school after identifying a need for extra assistance.

1.6.7 Transformational Leadership

Transformational Leadership is an approach that causes change in individuals and social systems (Bush, 2017). Transformational leadership creates valuable and positive change in followers, with the goal of developing them into leaders. These kinds of leaders inspire their subordinates to go beyond their personal interest in working for the organization's common goal, encouraging inspiration, idealized power, intellectual stimulation and individual judgment (Harb & Sidani, 2019). For this study,

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Transformational leadership refers to the leadership approach that mostly influence subordinates to perform and be transformed into leaders.

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

This study is noteworthy because its findings would benefit the School Management Teams of both underperforming and performing schools based on tactics to improve performance of learners in schools. The Department of Basic Education will also benefit from the study's findings and strategies. This study will close achievement gaps, hence, improve the academic outcomes of learners in different categories of schools. Furthermore, the study will specifically contribute to an understanding of how to increase academic performance in underprivileged communities by analysing the instructional leadership practices of the school management team in underperforming schools.

This study has the potential to make substantive contributions to the policies of the Department of Basic Education by throwing light on the instructional leadership practices employed in underperforming schools to improve them. Instructional leadership practices are relevant approaches for secondary schools to improve their performance in Mopani West District. The study will provide an understanding of the challenges instructional leaders face in underperforming secondary schools. Gaining knowledge related to instructional leadership practice by the school management teams, therefore, will help provide valuable insights to educational authorities (Harris, 2018). The study is anticipated will guide the educational leaders in further seeking to develop approaches and strategies for bringing improvement to underperforming schools.

This study will contribute to the body of knowledge concerning enhancing education in South Africa. Education is an important topic in South Africa, with significant disparities in educational performance between schools, districts and provinces. By focusing on a particular district in Limpopo, this project will contribute to broader efforts to enhance education in South Africa and generate greater educational equity outcomes. The results of this study may have far-reaching consequences for performance in low-performing

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secondary schools in Limpopo and other similar situations. This study has the potential to provide the basis for future research and to encourage the adoption of effective leadership tactics for increasing the performance of secondary schools. The study supports the impact of leadership practices in schools, as contributing significantly to advancing education. Providing quality education benefits all learners studying in secondary schools and creating a positive landscape for education in Mopani West District, Limpopo and South Africa at large.

1.8 CHAPTER STRUCTURE

The following is an outline structure of the chapters of the study on the school-based instructional leadership practices for improving the academic performance of underperforming secondary schools in Mopani West District, Limpopo, South Africa:

Chapter 1: Orientation to the Study

- Introduction, background and context of the study
- Statement of the problem
- Research aims and objectives
- Research questions
- Significance and contribution of the study
- Definition of the concepts
- Overview of the chapter structure

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

Transformational leadership and instructional leadership theories.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

- Assess existing studies on instructional leadership
- Finding and discussing literature gaps
- Support of teachers and learners by-instructional leadership
- Strategies employed to improve performance

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- Effectiveness of instructional leadership practices
- Role of school management teams in improving academic performance
- Challenges faced by instructional leaders
- Characteristics of underperforming schools
- Instructional leadership practices employed to improve academic performance

Chapter 4: Research Methodology

- Research design: a mixed-method study.
- Sampling techniques: purposive sampling
- Data collection methods: structured questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and document analysis
- Data analysis methods: thematic analysis and content analysis
- Ethical considerations

Chapter 5: Presentation, Interpretation and Discussion of Findings

- Presentation of the findings in relation to the research questions
- Interpretation of the findings on the research questions
- Discussion of the findings on the research questions
- Comparison of the findings with previous research

Chapter 6: Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

- Summary of the key findings
- Conclusions concerning the research problem and objectives
- Contributions and significance of the study
- Recommendations for policy and practice
- Areas for further studies.

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CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter dealt with the introduction of the study. In this chapter, the following issues were discussed, namely, the theoretical framework; Transformational Leadership and Instructional Leadership theories were adopted for this study. The following is an explanation of the transformational and instructional leadership theories.

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Transformational leadership and instructional leadership theories underpin the study and will be used since they align with this study. The focus of transformational leadership is influencing people to change for the better, while instructional leadership theory is on how leaders (principals and the School Management Teams (SMT)) may create an environment that is conducive to better teaching and learning. This leadership approach places a strong emphasis on managing educational programs, establishing clear goals, and fostering a supportive school environment to improve learner results. The principal's job description includes leadership responsibilities for learner achievement, teacher development, and instructional quality rather than just management or administration. The significance of school leaders in promoting academic achievement has been highlighted by the rise of instructional leadership as a major educational reform tactic, over time (Hallinger, 2005).

2.2.1 Transformational Leadership Theory

Transformational leadership theory in SMT supports evidence-based instructional leadership, along with the role of SMT in inspiring commitment to evidence-based teaching strategies. According to Moradi and Shahbazi (2016), organizational leadership

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is seen as a vital success component and is becoming more relevant in the world that is changing quickly. In this sense, leaders at all organizational levels feel compelled to collaborate with one another to get the intended outcomes, in addition to top-level managers who must also demonstrate their competence. Whatever their line of work, leaders must persuade people to work and accept accountability for the results. Leaders who strive to generate fresh ideas and viewpoints to present the organization with a new direction for growth and profitability are referred to as “transformational leaders”. Managers and employees who are committed, passionate, and loyal can motivate the organization's members to make major changes to the organization's foundation and base. They mobilize the organization's members to make fundamental changes to gain the necessary capabilities for moving in new directions and reaching higher levels of performance peaks by cultivating commitment, passion, and loyalty among managers and staff.

Scholars and theorists believe that transformational leadership management is more effective than pragmatic leadership. Transformational leaders allow their staff members to recognize the value of what they do; they inspire and create an environment where staff try harder and create innovative practices in their field.

To survive and grow, organizations today must broaden their organizational structures and increase their knowledge and awareness of the environment. In this context, the role of leaders, known as transformational leaders, becomes increasingly apparent as they move the organization toward the future by recognizing the need for environmental changes and implementing necessary changes. These leaders can also strengthen staff’s understanding, as well as improve the quality of work life within the organization; this may include any improvements in organizational culture that raise employees’ satisfaction and human dignity and foster their development and growth, within the company. Organizational management is becoming more important than ever and is seen as a vital success component in organizations, in the rapidly changing globe. To get the intended outcomes, managers at all levels, feel compelled to collaborate with one another in addition to upper-level managers who must demonstrate their talents.

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Whatever their line of work, transformational leaders have to be able to persuade people to work and accept accountability for the results. Transformational leadership is a multifaceted and ever-evolving approach wherein leaders impact the values, beliefs, and objectives of their followers. These leaders help organizations to go forward, acknowledge the needs of the environment, and enable necessary adjustments. Additionally, they foster a commitment to change, culture improvement, and the necessity of developing new strategies for the efficient use of energy and sources (Avarsin et al., 2012).

In the area of education administration, transformational leadership is one of the most prominent and significant leadership styles (Hallinger, 2003; Bush, 2014). These authors expanded the theory to include company executives' actions. They see these leaders as - "Committing to a shared vision and goals for an organization or unit, challenging them to be innovative problem solvers, and developing followers' leadership capacity via coaching, mentoring, and provision of both challenge and support" – hence, these are the stated areas of focus for transformational leaders (Bass & Riggo, 2006:154). Academics studying educational administration acknowledge the theory's applicability to the problems that administrators face today. The theory gained popularity in the education sector and was quickly adopted as the best model for school leadership (Hallinger, 1992; Leithwood, 1994). Leithwood, Doris and Jantzi (1990) and other researchers have been advocating for the implementation of transformational leadership behaviours in school management since the early 1990s. They have provided evidence of the benefits of these behaviors, which are frequently associated with successful school leadership (Leithwood et al., 1999; Leithwood, Doris & Jantzi, 1990). The current, change-oriented policy environment, which emphasizes restructuring and transformation to meet 21st-century schooling requirements, is inextricably linked to the popularization of transformational leadership theory in educational (Hallinger, 1992; Leithwood, 1994). It is now expected of schools to continuously improve, and leaders are essential to this process.

One more example of the popularity of transformational leadership among policy makers can be found in Israel. Steyn (2009) described the Higher Education Quality Committee

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(HEQC) in South Africa as being responsible for the accreditation of academic institutions, indicating that their programs included transformational leadership as one of the criteria to determine the effectiveness of school leadership preparation programs. The national organization that trains principals, the Israel Institute for School Leadership, views transformational leadership as an essential component of a principal's job (Rosha, 2008). Research demonstrates that transformational leadership is being adopted in school leader preparation programs not just as a desirable standard or training material, but also, as a factor for selection. A propensity toward transformational leadership is one of the characteristics used to select qualified candidates for the St. Louis Public School District's first-time leader training program, which Simmons et al. (2008) developed. Programs for more extreme alternative preparation now incorporate transformational leadership, for instance, a new hallmark pedagogy that integrates transformative leadership and care is proposed by Black and Murtadha (2007) for educational leadership development programs.

2.2.1.1 The ideas of transformational leadership and leadership

Social life's emergence is the source of leadership; individuals' group together, start a social life, and have an impact on one another. When followers and leaders encourage one another to strive for greater morals and motivation, transformational leadership is achieved. The rapport between these leaders and their managers is stronger. These types of leaders add value to the organization and are more beneficial than leaders who behave in a transactional manner. Transformational leaders focus on the higher-level needs of their team members and inspire them to go above and beyond what is stated in their employment contracts. In addition to serving as mentors and counsellors, these leaders focus on learning, employee needs, and personal growth (Khorshid & Pashazadeh, 2014).

Leaders who strive to generate fresh ideas and viewpoints to present the organization with a new direction for growth and profitability are referred to as transformational leaders. They mobilize the members of the organization to make fundamental changes to the foundation and basis of the organization to be ready and to gain the necessary capabilities

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for moving in new directions and reaching higher levels of performance peaks by cultivating commitment, passion, and loyalty among managers and staff (Mirkamali, Vaezi & Tabar, 2014). A transformational leader is one who is always on the lookout for possible reasons to follow and who works to bring followers' attention to higher purposes and the transformation of personal interests into group goals. Transformational leadership, as defined by Bass and Avolio (1995) is an intentional, ethical, and spiritual process that offers organizational development guidelines.

Transformational leaders provide a clear explanation of the organization's future prospects, offer a model that is consistent with those prospects, increase acceptance of group goals, offer a variety of forms of support to individuals within the organization, and motivate them to pursue the organization's objectives (Mortazavi & Nikkar, 2014).

2.2.1.2 The Need for and the importance of transformational leadership

The variety of instruments we use daily and the pace of change processes are increasing in the modern era. Even in the previous century, no human could have predicted the speed at which change is occurring now. An extremely unstable climate has been created for all enterprises by global competition and expanding business in both developed and developing countries; leaders are essential to handle this unstable environment and ongoing changes, hence, Leaders who can transform the world are needed. Organizations operating in a volatile and uncertain environment might enhance their performance through the application of transformational leadership practices.

2.2.1.3 The need for integration of approaches with transformational leadership

Organizations can gain a competitive edge when transformational leadership elements are used in conjunction with other leadership initiatives. Making use of this competitive edge can greatly aid in strategic competitiveness and increase profits over the long and short terms. In fact, the likelihood that a company will be able to overcome global economic issues to attain superior and satisfied performance, would be diminished in the absence of strong transformational leadership (Eskandari, 2014).

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The fact that this transformation necessitates the creation of a new system and the institutionalization of novel approaches has highlighted the significance of leadership in the change management process. Without a doubt, a manager's demeanor and style of leadership have a big influence on the kinds of needs and employees' awareness. The way a leader leads serves as a model for their sustainable conduct, and this influences how the organization's members respond and behave, as well as their attempts to either support or oppose organizational reforms. (Khademi & Farazja, 2010).

2.2.1.4 Expert in transformational leadership

In order to differentiate between leaders who primarily rely on transformational leadership's interaction to produce results and those who have strong motivational relationships with their followers and subordinates, Burns (1978) introduced the theory of transformational leadership. To accomplish a shared objective or actual change, transformational leadership is a deliberate, moral, and spiritual process that establishes patterns of equal power connections between leaders and followers. The process of inspiring people to commit to corporate goals and giving them the tools they need to achieve them is known as transformational leadership. Enhancing creativity and self-actualization in followers is facilitated by transformational leadership, which in turn stimulates team, group, and organizational interests. A transformational leader brings about change throughout the entire company and shapes managers' and employees' perspectives (Arabiun, Tajpour & Zahed, 2024).

2.2.1.5 The elements that influence transformational leadership

Transformational leaders understand the requirements of their team and the organization, and they also encourage development and fulfil a person's higher-level demands. A transformational leader inspires followers to work together toward more ambitious objectives to bring about a significant and beneficial change in an arrangement. There are four primary elements that influence transformational leadership - idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and individual factors (Krista & Hoffmann et al, 2012).

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2.2.1.6 The relevance of transformational leadership theory to this current study

Improvement of results in secondary schools that are not performing up to par can be greatly aided by transformational leadership in the following manner:

- **Inspiration and Vision:** Visionary leaders present a convincing picture of the school's future and they create a sense of purpose among the community, staff, and students by inspiring and motivating them to embrace this goal. This may inspire zeal and dedication in raising student achievement in underperforming secondary schools.

- **Empowering Staff**: By granting them the freedom to decide for themselves and offer suggestions, these leaders want to empower their teachers and other staff members. Student performance can be directly impacted by this empowerment, which can result in creative teaching methods and a more engaged and motivated staff, which could in turn, improve results.

- **Professional Development**: Ongoing professional development is a top priority for transformational leaders. They help and encourage educators to acquire new techniques and approaches that can raise the caliber of instruction and enrich the educational experiences of students, which, in turn, can make teaching and learning exciting and enjoyable.

- **High Standards and Support**: They establish high standards for both staff and students and then give them the help they need to reach these standards. High expectations and encouragement can lead to gains in academic achievement.

- **Developing Relationships:** The focus of these leaders is on fostering enduring, constructive bonds between all parties involved in the educational system, including parents, teachers, students, and the community. In order to overcome

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underperformance, schools must foster a collaborative and supportive culture that is facilitated by positive interactions.

- **Emphasis on Individual Needs:** Transformational leaders pay close attention to the requirements of each staff member and student. They can customize interventions and support to improve student learning and teacher effectiveness by successfully addressing these needs.

- **Promoting Innovation:** They work to create a culture that values creativity and innovation, pushing employees to experiment with novel ideas and techniques. This may result in enhanced student engagement and achievement, as well as more efficient teaching methods.

- **Monitoring and Feedback:** Transformational leaders make a commitment to keeping an eye on developments and offering helpful criticism. This aids in pinpointing areas in need of development and implementing the required modifications to tactics and procedures.

To put it simply, transformational leadership fosters an atmosphere in which everyone is inspired and prepared to make a positive impact, and in this context, on school progress. Transformational leaders may effectively address issues presented by underperforming secondary schools and generate significant changes in student results by emphasizing vision, empowerment, professional development, monitoring and feedback, as well as strong relationships.

2.2.2 Instructional Leadership Theory

2.2.2.1 Components of instructional leadership

Three fundamental elements make up instructional leadership theory: establishing the school's mission, overseeing the curriculum, and fostering a supportive learning

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environment (Bellibas, Gumus & Liu,2021). All these factors work together to improve student learning and performance.

- **Define the School's Mission**

An instructional leaders play a pivotal role in defining and communicating the school's mission. This involves setting clear and measurable goals that align with the school's vision and focus on learner achievement (Leithwood et al., 2006). The leader not only defines these objectives but also ensures that all staff members understand and are committed to them. By setting high expectations, instructional leaders inspire teachers and learners to strive for academic excellence and because staff and learners have the same goals, research indicates that schools with clearly-defined missions are more likely to observe increases in learner outcomes (Hallinger, 2005). As an instructional leader, the principal ensures that all decisions made in the school are in line with this objective, which helps to keep efforts to improve instruction focused and consistent.

- **Managing the Instructional Program**

Managing the instructional program, which entails supervising curriculum, instruction, and assessment procedures, is an essential component of instructional leadership. According to Robinson, Lloyd and Rowe (2008), effective instructional leaders are actively involved in these domains and help instructors by means of professional development, classroom observations, and feedback; they guarantee that educators have the materials and equipment required to provide top-notch training.

Additionally, instructional leaders support the use of learner-accomplishment data to guide instructional practices through the promotion of data-driven decision-making. This makes it possible to implement focused interventions and supports educators in customizing their lessons to fit the needs of every student. Robinson et al. (2008) claim that when principals concentrate entirely on administrative duties, learner achievement is lower than in schools where leaders have a strong involvement in instructional management.

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Additionally, instructional leaders are quite essential when it comes to evaluating teachers. They offer teachers critical input to assist them in improving their work through routine classroom visits and performance evaluations. According to research, administrators who participate actively in classroom activities have a greater ability to affect teachers' efficacy, which eventually helps children (Blase & Blase, 1999).

- **Promoting a Positive School Learning Climate**

Encouraging a healthy learning environment in schools is another essential component of instructional leadership. This entails establishing a setting that promotes a culture of continuous development, makes learners feel comfortable, and supports instructors (Day et al., 2016). Setting high standards for conduct and academic achievement, developing support networks for both teachers and learners, and promoting staff collaboration are some of the ways instructional leaders accomplish this.

There is typically a correlation between improved learner involvement and achievement and a positive school climate. Instructional leaders are aware of how critical it is to establish trusting bonds with their departments and learners. They encourage shared leadership, in which educators are given the freedom to take the lead in implementing modifications to their curriculum by creating an environment that is transparent and cooperative. Better learner achievements result from such an atmosphere, which also raises teacher morale (Leithwood et al., 2006).

2.2.3 The Role of Professional Development in Instructional Leadership

Instructional leadership is heavily reliant on professional growth. Continuous learning is a top priority for both leaders and their teachers. Through workshops, training sessions, and cooperative learning groups, School Management Teams offer opportunities for professional development. Professional development, in the opinion of Leithwood et al. (2006), is crucial to ensuring that instructors stay up to date on the newest techniques and strategies for instruction, which have a direct impact on student accomplishment.

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School Management Teams provide an example of lifelong learning by engaging in professional development initiatives, as well as facilitating them. School Management Teams can encourage teachers to participate in their own professional development by actively participating in professional growth activities; hence, School Management Teams are also committed to developing their own leadership skills (Day et al., 2016). Studies indicate that educational institutions prioritizing professional development are more likely to witness enhancements in both teaching quality and student results (Blase & Blase, 1999).

2.2.4 Instructional Leadership and Learner Achievement

Educational research has revealed a strong correlation between learner accomplishment and instructional leadership. Research continuously demonstrates that academic performance is better in schools led by effective instructional leaders. A meta-analysis by Robinson et al. (2008) revealed that transformational leadership has less of an effect on student outcomes than instructional leadership. This is due to the fact that the most relevant elements that determine a learner's success are the teaching and learning processes, which instructional leaders directly impact.

Five leadership elements were found by Robinson et al. (2008) to be associated with learner achievement - setting goals and expectations, strategically allocating resources, organizing, coordinating, and assessing teaching and curriculum, encouraging and taking part in teacher learning and development, as well as maintaining a supportive and orderly environment. The alignment of these elements with the concepts of instructional leadership underscores the significance of this approach in promoting academic progress.

2.2.5 Challenges to Instructional Leadership

Even with all of its advantages, instructional leadership is not without difficulties. The growing burden that SMTs are under is one of the main challenges. There is rarely time for instructional leadership because many school leaders are overburdened with

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administrative duties (Hallinger, 2005). This may make it more difficult for them to fully participate in teaching strategies and offer the assistance that educators require.

Furthermore, it's possible that some SMT members lack the knowledge of instruction needed to lead in this field. School Management Teams must possess a thorough understanding of teaching and learning in order for instructional leadership to be successful, which may not always be the case. This emphasizes how crucial it is to give School Management Teams access to opportunities for professional development that center on instructional leadership.

2.2.6 Relevance of Instructional Leadership to this Current Study

Especially in underperforming schools, instructional leadership is essential to raising student performance. By placing focus on teacher professional development, high-quality education, and creating a supportive school environment, this leadership style aims to improve teaching and learning. Instructional leaders establish specific academic goals and ensure that instruction at underperforming schools is in line with these goals. In order to close learning gaps, they regularly monitor lessons, give teachers feedback, and encourage data-driven decision-making.

Instructional leaders ensure that teachers have the knowledge, tools, and resources necessary to enhance learner outcomes by developing systems that encourage cooperation and ongoing professional development. Underperforming schools may improve by fostering participation of external stakeholders in the educational process, as instructional leadership theory promotes the idea of school management teams being flexible and receptive to new ideas and approaches. Instructional leadership emphasizes the importance of accountability in enhancing school performance. Strong instructional leaders also set high standards for staff and learners and encourage accountability, all of which are critical for turning around underperforming schools. Finally, instructional leadership plays a critical role in underperforming schools by directly influencing the

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calibre of instruction and establishing a framework required for improved learner performance.

2.3 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Transformational and Instructional theories underpinned the study as they add value to how school management teams can bring change in managing their institutions. Since the world is revolving and nothing is remaining static, SMTs should change to new ways of doing things to accommodate the present generation. The methods used should be accommodating of all the stakeholders to enhance academic performance. Through Instructional leadership, teachers and learners will feel supported, leading to an increase in outcomes. The following chapter will discuss the literature review.

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CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter discusses the chosen theoretical framework. In this chapter, the researcher will review literature relevant to instructional leadership practices by the School Management Teams in improving academic performance in underperforming schools. The points to be discussed in this chapter will include - the relationship between transformational and instructional leadership in learner performance; role of the School Management Teams in underperforming schools; factors leading to consistent low performance in schools; challenges faced by instructional leaders in improving academic performance; characteristics of underperforming secondary schools; instructional leadership support to teachers and learners; importance of instructional leadership in improving academic performance, as well as strategies employed to improve academic performance.

3.2 LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will present existing literature on instructional leadership practices of school-based instructional leaders in underperforming schools, as well as initiatives adopted to improve learner performance. Several studies have highlighted how the instructional leadership practices of leaders' impact on learner performance, whether positive or negative. School-based instructional leaders in underperforming schools in the Mopani West District in Limpopo Province have been in the public's eyes for some time, as debates continue as to whether they are performing their roles as expected by the Department of Education; this is therefore a grey area that needs to be researched. The purpose of this literature review is to assess existing studies on instructional leadership practices in underperforming schools as well as initiatives adopted to improve their performance. The review will give a comprehensive overview of the literature, focusing

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on - school based–instructional leadership practices, relationship between instructional leadership and learner performance, role of school management teams in underperforming schools; factors leading to persistent low performance; challenges faced by instructional leaders in improving academic performance; characteristics of underperforming secondary schools; significance of instructional leaders in improving academic performance; strategies to improve academic performance in schools; the effect of transformational and instructional leadership styles as well as, the effectiveness of instructional practices in academic performance. Basically, the review will focus on school-based instructional leadership practices in underperforming schools.

3.2.1 Overview of School-Based Instructional Leadership Practices

The nexus of diverse studies has been the impact of school-based instructional leaders in fostering a school culture that creates a conducive environment for effective teaching and learning. Kalkan, Aksal, Gazi, Atasoy and Dagi (2020), for example, posit that school-based instructional leadership practices play a vital role in schools fostering a culture that places a premium on teaching and learning. Qadach, Schechter and Da'as (2020), add that good instructional leaders offer teachers guidance and support, monitor and evaluate instructional methods, hence, foster a common vision of academic excellence. I concur with Qadach et al. (2020) that school management teams play a pivotal role in schools. The SMTs are in the forefront in planning, organising, leading and coordinating activities in the schools, the success and failure of every institution rests with the leadership. A study by Webster and Litchka (2020) found that school-based instructional leaders play a crucial role in fostering relationships with the school community, including parents, learners, and other stakeholders, which in turn creates a conducive learning environment. Education is a societal business; therefore, effective instructional leadership necessitates a variety of talents and abilities. Instructional leaders must be educated about teaching and learning, as well as schools' curricula and assessment processes (Goleman, 2017). In addition, they must be able to establish trustworthy relationships with teachers and other school stakeholders, communicate effectively, and develop a shared vision for school reform (Qadach et al., 2020).

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Instructional leaders are responsible for coming up with stakeholders' management systems for all interested parties in education like the School Governing Body (SGB), businesses, Non-governmental Organisations, traditional leaders, Learner Representative Council (LRC) and so on. Different stakeholders are to be involved in the decision-making process with a goal to improve the performance of the school. Allowing participatory management achieves, productivity, efficiency and valued goals. The performance of the school will depend on how well the instructional leaders are able to influence their stakeholders. Moving the school closer to the community and listening to their contributions creates interdependence that promotes schools' better decision-making that will yield good performance. The instructional leaders are to create systems on how to hold hands with different stakeholders with the aim to improve performance in the school, however, whether these practices are happening in the underperforming secondary schools in Mopani West District in the Limpopo Province is not known, hence, this study aims to close that gap.

Excellence in performance should be the driving force for Instructional leaders in Mopani West District schools. Without effective instructional leadership in these schools, excellent performance in a school is a nightmare, therefore, I posit that Instructional leaders who can foster a culture of continuous improvement and give teachers focused assistance are more likely to increase learner accomplishment and they are essential to school improvement initiatives Urkofsky (2022). Instructional leaders, who are often principals, deputy principals and departmental heads and senior teachers play a crucial role in fostering a school culture that places a premium on teaching and learning (Kalkan, Aksal, Gazi, Atasoy & Dagi, 2020). Effective systems like monitoring of lesson preparations, audit of written work, formal and informal written work, completion of work schedule and moderation of tasks in schools need to be monitored and supported by instructional leaders. Good instructional leaders offer teachers guidance and support, monitor and evaluate instructional methods, and foster a common vision of academic excellence (Qadach et al., 2020); they ensure that educators and learners are clear on the vision and mission of the school. The vision is also to be shared with all stakeholders for it to be realised; it needs to have values which everyone should be aware of and fulfil

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or live up to. Mopani West Education District Vision Statement states excellence in provisioning of quality basic education with a mission statement of providing quality and innovative education programmes for learners across all grades, thus, excellence and quality results are core. The Values for Mopani West Education District are Excellence (striving for extraordinary performance of both educators and learners), Professionalism (striving for a professional ethos from educators and learners), innovation (coming up with new ways of doing things) and Integrity (doing the right thing even when no one sees you). Schools in Mopani West also have their own vision and mission statements which should uphold their district's vision and mission statement; similarly, their vision and mission statements are geared towards the production of quality results and overall good performance in schools.

Effective instructional leadership is related to greater academic outcomes for learners, according to research (Leithwood & Seashore- Louis, 2016). These scholars assert that, if instructional leaders are providing leadership, support and guidance to educators and learners, performance will improve from one level to another. Instructional leaders who can foster a culture of continuous improvement and give teachers focused assistance are more likely to increase learner accomplishment (Urkofsky, 2022). Moreover, instructional leadership is particularly important in low-performing schools, where the difficulties facing children and teachers are frequently more complicated (Kalkan et al., 2020). Instructional leaders have a role to play in changing the complexion of underperforming schools through the leadership practices they employ. The instructional leaders are to create opportunities for innovative ideas and support to improve the school's performance.

School-based instructional leadership is a crucial element of school development efforts, especially in low-performing schools as they can enhance academic outcomes for learners and teachers by directing and supporting educators, fostering a culture of continuous improvement, and strong connections within the school community. Effective instructional leadership requires complex and multidimensional abilities and competencies, including a profound understanding of teaching and learning as well as

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excellent interpersonal and communication skills. The relationship between instructional leadership and learner performance is discussed as follows.

3.2.2 Relationship between Instructional Leadership and Learner Performance

A series of studies has established the importance of instructional leadership in enhancing school academic achievement. Leithwood, Harris and Hopkins (2020), for instance, found that instructional leadership was positively associated with learner progress in reading, writing and numeracy. The study also revealed that school culture and teacher professional development mitigated the effect of instructional leadership on academic performance. Similarly, Deng, Li, X, Wu and Xu (2011) did a meta-analysis on the relationship between school leadership and learner achievement and found that instructional leadership was positively connected with academic performance. I align my thoughts with the above-mentioned authors that learner performance relates to the instructional leadership of the school. The study by Deng et al. (2011) also underlined the significance of dispersed leadership, in which leadership tasks are shared among different individuals, in enhancing learner outcomes. Webster and Litchka (2020) conducted a study on school leadership and discovered that effective instructional leaders were able to improve learner achievement by fostering a culture of high expectations, providing teachers with targeted professional development, and utilizing data to inform instructional practices. Similarly, Urkofsky (2022) conducted a study on educational reform and discovered that instructional leadership is a crucial aspect of fostering school improvement. The study also highlighted the significance of collaborative leadership, which involves collaborating with educators, parents, and other stakeholders to realize a shared goal for school reform.

Previous research has consistently established the significance of instructional leadership in enhancing academic achievement in schools. Several studies have highlighted the need of developing a shared vision, enhancing teacher capacity, cultivating a positive school culture, using data to inform instruction and engaging in collaborative leadership to improve a school. In addition, recent research has focused on the precise ways in

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which instructional leadership might boost academic achievement in low-performing schools. Chase (2020), for instance, found that effective instructional leaders in low-performing schools were able to improve academic outcomes by providing targeted support for struggling learners, implementing evidence-based instructional practices, and using data to monitor and adjust instruction.

The researcher assents with the previous authors, stating the positive relationship between Instructional leaders and learner performance. There is a correlation between school-based instructional leaders and the performance level of learners. Effective curriculum management in the school is the responsibility of all instructional leaders starting from planning to implementation and evaluation, as the day-to-day running systems in the school are under the care of instructional leaders. Plans like the School Development Plans (SDP), School Improvement Plans (SIP), Academic Improvement Plans (APIP) and Annual Academic Performance Report (AAPR) are driven by the school-based instructional leaders. Furthermore, plans like staff meetings, SMT meetings, staff development programmes, allocation of duties and class visits are all the responsibility of school management teams. Operational plans that address the day-to-day running of the school like timetable, period register and attendance registers are monitored and evaluated by the instructional leaders as they are the ones who moderate assessment quality of written work in their schools. As leaders they motivate, guide and influence educators, learners and stakeholders. By promoting good professional and healthy relationships amongst the school community, performance by all improves so that the set standard of the school is met. If there is a deviation from the set standard, corrective measures will be employed by instructional leaders as intervention mechanisms until the anticipated performance of learners is reached. Teacher development strategies are employed by instructional leaders as a way of improving where gaps are identified for the betterment of performance in the school. Internal and external teacher development programmes are organised by the School Management Teams to boost their school and learner performance. When good leadership practices are employed, performance will increase, however, if poor leadership practices are employed, underperformance will occur.

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Amtu, Makulua, Matital and Pattiruhu (2020) investigated the role of instructional leadership in turning around low-performing schools in urban districts. Successful turnaround attempts were characterized by a strong emphasis on learner accomplishment, a culture of high standards, and a continuing commitment to professional development for educators and instructional leaders, according to their report. In addition, Ozdemir et al. (2020) as well as Cox and Mullen (2020) evaluated the influence of instructional leadership on rural schools' academic performance. Effective instructional leadership was found to have a favourable correlation with academic success, especially in schools with high levels of poverty and low resources. Most of the schools in Mopani West are located in poor rural areas.

In conclusion, the importance of instructional leadership in boosting academic performance in schools has been proven by past research. Several studies have emphasized the significance of developing a common vision, increasing teacher capacity, maintaining a positive school culture, using data to inform instruction, and engaging in collaborative leadership. In addition, research has focused on the precise ways in which instructional leadership might boost academic achievement in underperforming and disadvantaged schools. The current study intends to investigate the instructional leadership practices by the school management teams in pursuit of improving academic performance in low-performing secondary schools in Mopani West, Limpopo, South Africa, since, the school management teams, as school leaders have a role to play.

3.2.3 Role of the School Management Teams in Underperforming Schools

The SMTs have a managerial role to develop teachers and learners so that their schools can achieve and improve in performance (Baker, Decman & Willis, 2019). They are responsible for teacher development, hence, support teachers in their schools (Sharif, 2020). The purpose of teacher development is to upgrade teachers, preparing them for new roles, as well as providing curriculum-related improvements or refresher courses and certification for on-the-job training. Teacher development is usually in the form of workshops, seminars, conferences and courses with the aim to improve teacher

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performance (Glickman & Burns, 2020). Teacher competency depends, for example, on the support they receive from the SMT, teaching and learning resources, supervisor effectiveness and their workload, hence, support and teacher development are important where a teacher lacks attributes of performance (Lazcano, Guerrero & Volante, 2023). Inadequate support by the SMT for teachers causes poor performance in schools (Macann, 2020).

The researcher aligns with the above roles that instructional leaders play in underperforming schools; these leaders are the ones at the forefront of curriculum management, monitoring and supporting - starting from allocation of duties, assessment of learners to evaluation of results at the end of every term. Educators account to their head of departments who account to their Deputy Principals and in the same way the deputy principals account to the principal for the performance of the school.

In low-performing schools, the SMTs play a critical role in encouraging learner progress and reducing the achievement gap. Leaders of instruction are accountable for developing and implementing instructional leadership practices that improve learning and achievement. Due to inadequate resources, low levels of educator efficacy, and other variables that contribute to low learner achievement, instructional leaders in underachieving schools face challenges in improving learner achievement.

Providing targeted help for challenged children, employing evidence-based teaching techniques, using data to monitor and change instruction, and building a positive school culture are all components of effective instructional leadership. A study by Amtu et al. (2020) identified seven strong claims about successful school leadership - creating a shared vision; building educator capacity; fostering a positive school culture; using data to inform instruction; engaging in collaborative leadership; ensuring school-wide emphasis on learner achievement as well as establishing external partnerships. I consent with Amtu et al. (2020) that for underperforming schools to perform, they should uphold their school vision, build their educator capacity by having workshops, seminars and attending conferences to empower them and keep abreast with changes and

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developments in the education fraternity. A school does not exist in isolation but within a community, which can contribute to the capacity building of the school. By working together with community members who have an interest in education matters, underperformance can be addressed.

In addition, instructional leaders in struggling schools must be able to identify and address the unique needs of their learners and instructors. Mestry (2019) observed, for instance, that instructional leaders in underperforming schools who focused on strengthening educator capacity and creating professional learning communities were more successful than those who did not, in boosting learner achievement. These leaders in schools with low performance should be able to promote equality and social justice in their schools. This involves addressing issues of bias and unfairness in the school's curriculum and culture, as well as promoting a safe and inclusive educational environment. These points align with Mestry (2019) who maintains that inclusive education, according to White Paper 6 stipulates that all learners have a learning potential if well supported. Instructional leaders should enable the school systems and learning methodologies to meet the needs of the identified learners with barriers, since the only difference is that they learn differently, from different methods. It cannot be one size fit all methods in a classroom made up of a number of different learners. By adhering to the White Paper 6, all learners' right to basic education, equality and social justice would be respected. Practices by instructional leaders who adhere to the White Paper 6 will include all learners unlike in schools where some learners will be excluded because differentiated learning methods are not employed (White Paper 6, 2019). Effective instructional leaders at high-poverty schools were able to promote equity and social justice by offering culturally responsive instruction, fostering learner voice and agency, and interacting with families and communities, according to a study by Chase (2020).

The fundamental role of instructional leadership is that SMT's should take the initiative to influence ways the school input of education should take (Robinson et al., 2008). Leithwood et al. (2004) used five aspects to construct Instructional Leadership: direction-setting, fostering employee growth, restructuring the business, overseeing the

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educational program as well as obtaining resources. These tasks when carried out successfully, enhance results and instructional strategies. Leithwood et al. (2004) showed a positive correlation between learner accomplishment and instructional leadership. This emphasizes the significant role of the SMTs in setting the environment for instruction and learning which will impact on the general results of the school. Toropova, Myrberg and Johansson (2021) presented a model that focused on the work satisfaction and teacher commitment and mediation roles in converting teacher performance via instructional leadership. This model posits that if the principals use instructional leadership techniques well, they promote favourable instructor attitudes, dedication and contentment, all which improves teacher work execution. Certain instructional leadership techniques have been linked by research to favourable instructor results, such as establishing explicit expectations and learning objectives (Robinson Lioyd & Rowe, 2008). Principals should keep an eye on instructional methods, provide constructive criticism and ongoing development, as well as raising effectiveness and output of teachers and learners.

Professional learning environment is essential component of training leadership (Svendsen, 2020). When SMTs promote a climate of competition and shared learning, teachers are most likely to participate in continuing education, exchange of useful procedures and enhance educational results. Instructional leadership is connected to teacher's morale and contentment in one's work beyond effects on performance (Marks & Printy, 2003). A happy worker is mainly a productive worker, and the body of research supports the idea that principals may effectively lead teaching, greatly affecting productivity of the teacher's work. SMTs provide teachers with a road plan, encouraging teaching methods to be in line with objectives which results in productivity. The schools' vision statement acts as a compass, a driving force for teachers and assists them in navigating their work obligations in accordance with school goals (Naz & Rashid, 2021). The relationship that exists between teacher performances and well-defined instructional objectives is supported by a body of research on how leadership vision affects institutional results (Bass & Riggio, 2006). When teachers see clear direction for the future, they are

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likely to feel fulfilled to accomplish their work, encouraging diligence in their line of work (Catacutan Kilag, Diano, Tlongzon, Malbas & Abendan, 2023).

Marks and Printy (2003) highlight the need for principals to frequently see classes in action. This process enables the SMTs to evaluate the efficacy of instructional techniques and enables them to pinpoint areas in need of improvement and provide help appropriately. Class observation is an instructional leadership practice where a teacher is observed in action and how the learner receives their learning. After the lesson observed, the teacher should be given feedback on the observation, and it should be discussed. According to Quebec Fuentes and Jimerson (2020), feedback works best when is targeted, timely and detailed on the current work. SMTs which are skilled at giving feedback to teachers support upward development and encourage growth among teachers (Marks & Printy, 2003; Quebec et al., 2020). Professional development is consistent with a larger body of research highlighting the significance of school culture in raising teacher effectiveness and as a result, learner results (Bragg, Walsh & Heyers, 2021). Sharing knowledge is seen as an element of collaborative professional learning and enhance productivity of teachers at work (Steeg & Lambson, 2015). When teachers have teamwork, cooperation, support and group dedication, this promotes achievement of learners (Lambrecht, Lenkeit, Hartmann, Ehlert, Knigge & Sporer, 2022). An environment where teachers flourish, cooperate and take an active role enhances improvement in the academic performance of learners. Research continuously indicates that there is a significant relationship between Instructional leadership and teacher's health, including job satisfaction and morale. Uplifting spirits and contentment at work is the impact of successful Instructional Leadership. These leaders action not only contribute to higher teacher retention but as well as increased dedication to the teaching profession (Marks & Printy, 2003). According to Janjua, Malik and Atta (2020) competent leadership enhances teachers' satisfaction through feelings of independence, acknowledgement and assistance. SMTs use instructional leadership techniques to create an environment at work where educators feel appreciated, encouraged to advance professionally and are linked to the school's goals (Leithwood, Harris & Hopkins, 2020).

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School's instructional leaders' day is occupied with administrative and managerial tasks including - acquiring materials, overseeing learner behaviour, addressing disputes with parents and handling unforeseen emergencies involving teachers and learners - not leaving out teaching (Early, 2013; Spillane & Kenney, 2012). It is essential that these leaders emphasize their role as Instructional leaders to raise the academic performance of learners in underperforming schools.

Instructional leaders play a crucial role in improving learner accomplishment in schools with low performance. Effective instructional leadership practices include a variety of strategies, such as - providing targeted support for struggling students, implementing evidence-based instructional practices, using data to monitor and adjust instruction, fostering a positive school culture, promoting equity and social justice, and developing teacher capacity. By implementing these practices, instructional leaders may contribute to closing the achievement gap and promoting student success for all children. For the achievement gaps to be closed, factors that lead to chronically low performance should be identified for them to be addressed.

3.2.4 Factors Leading to Chronically Low Performance in Schools

Chronically Low Performing Schools (CLPS) are schools that consistently fail to fulfil the necessary requirements of learner performance throughout several evaluation sessions (Agunloye, 2011). Factors that lead to low performance of schools give research reasons why schools become low performers. Factors when identified will assist research projects to understand factors that lead to schools underperforming and in turn, proper strategies will be developed to address this. The proposed framework is developed based on the previous studies on school performance (Darling–Hammond, 2000, Urlofsky, 2002, Shannon & Byslan, 2002). The Framework identifies factors under control of the school community made up of administrators, teachers, staff, learners and the community. They all have a contribution that impact on school performance; therefore, school administrators and all other stakeholders should contribute positively towards the academic performance of the learners for the school. To turnaround low

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performing schools, thorough analysis of each school's characteristic is necessary to determine contributing factors and challenges that lead to underperformance. Consistent contributing elements to low performance according to Agunloye (2011) are discussed below.

3.2.4.1 Poor leadership

Ineffective leadership starts with lack of clear vision, intentional guidance and quantifiable steps for instructive purpose. Indication of poor leadership is when a school leader shows ignorance about the school background and lack capacity to evaluate the demands of the community. A school administrator who is not well vested in best practices for evidence –based leadership, structural leadership, human and community relations to the unique circumstances of a school, will contribute to the downfall of a school. Again, a school administrator who is resistant to change, unmotivated and who is not creative, will contribute to the downfall of the school. When educators in a school have low standards for their learners, it reflects low standards for both teachers and their work (Agunloye, 2011). Inadequate facilities, inadequate leadership direction cause teachers to become disinterested in professional development, have ineffective classroom management, strained relationships with peers and generate learners' low morale, arrogance, exhaustion, burnout and excessive turnover.

Lack of academic excellence by the school leaders bring confusion and inconsistency in performance by both teachers and learners, hence, SMTs need to play a significant role in the performance of the school. Ineffective leadership contributes to low performance in the school through their non – evidence practices. Weak Instructional leaders fail to support teachers and learners and poor instructional quality lead to low learner performance. Poor communication with teachers leads to unclear direction and frustration. Teachers and learners may feel less valued, and this impacts negatively on their performance. Teachers and learners when neglected by their school leaders affects their performance negatively. In addition, mismanagement in provision of resources, school leaders, learners and teachers not having tools of trade needed for academic performance will result in failure. Norms and standard money allocated to schools is

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meant mostly to be spend on learners not in any other areas, while 60% of the allocated money is for curriculum. If money for norms and standards is spent on other areas than the curriculum, this may contribute to low performance. Insufficient support by the school leaders for learners with learning barriers can lead to low morale and exclusion that can lead to low performance. School leaders who do not practice inclusive practices are leaving many learners behind and this influences performance negatively. School leaders should promote a positive school climate that enables high learner engagement, respect and disciple - all of which contribute to high academic performance. A negative school climate leads to bullying, disrespect and disengagement by both teachers and learners leading to low performance. School leaders should ensure that there is accountability by all as lack of it brings underperformance. Blaming external factors is a result of lack of accountability by internal role players.

3.2.4.2 Incompetent Instructors

Another contributing element is low standards of teachers. This leads to the absence of drive, insufficient understanding of successful teaching methods, depressed spirits and annoyance, absence of enthusiasm for career development, exhaustion and burn-out, unsatisfactory rapport with learners as well as ineffective classroom management (Agunloye, 2011).

According to Agunloye (2011), teachers using inappropriate teaching methods which do not engage learners lead to learners losing interest in their learning, leading to low performance. Teaching methods need to meet the diverse needs of all groups of learners on board in the school or classroom, leaving others behind leads to low performance. Teachers should continuously give feedback to learners to correct their mistakes to bring improvement in performance. Teachers who show that they believe in their learners' potential drive them to perform more, however, teachers who do not believe in their learners, discourage them from doing more, leading to low performance.

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3.2.4.3 Disinterested learners

Learners showing absence of ties to education and learning can result in underperformance. Learners' inability to "fit in", low standards of academic performance, recurring issues with discipline, peer pressure, which is against schooling, lack of attendance, inadequate academic achievement, several transfers between schools, retention of grades, misuse of substance and not prepared for college or career are some causes of schools poor achievements (Agunloye, 2011).

According to Agunloye (2011) learners with a lack of interest or motivation in their studies lead to low performance. Learners who do not receive adequate support from home and the school show poor performance. Unstable home circumstances influence learners to perform low and learners with learning challenges or barriers if they are not well supported, their performance will be low. Furthermore, peer association if negative, leads to low performance, hence, poor interpersonal issues and conflict with teachers and learners negatively impact on the school performance. School leaders need to provide adequate resources to learners for them to perform.

3.2.4.4 Lack of support staff

Support staff not assisting the vision of the school contributes to failure. Some of these staff show insufficient knowledge to carry out duties, feel undervalued and absence of enthusiasm for career development, inadequate interpersonal relations, and unsatisfactory rapport with learners, absence of drive and depressed spirits and anger (Alungoye, 2011).

The support staff are responsible for handling administrative duties which if not well attended can cause lack of communication, missed deadlines and lack of coordination. The behaviour of the support staff can either improve the school performance or lower the performance. The school leaders need to provide proper training and development that will contribute positively to the performance of the school. If on the contrary, learners receive inadequate support this will affect learners negatively and teachers might end up not getting the assistance they needed. Unprofessional behaviours and attitudes with

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learners can create poor performance for support staff are meant to work in collaboration with teachers to enhance learner performance.

3.2.4.5 Unconducive socio-economic environment

An unconducive environment can be the result of diverse contributing elements, such as - dysfunctional households, absence of community and parental support, sociological stressors and the school's reputation in the community.

A dysfunctional school climate is caused by dysfunctional administration and support staff, classroom setting and methods of instruction as well as unconducive socio-economic environment. Poor learner performance can be due to the absence of relationship between the community and the school and schooling. This results in low standards for academic performance, recurrent behavioural issues, surrender to peer pressure, anti–schooling behaviour, absenteeism, multi-school transfers, failing grades, substance abuse, delinquency, low academic achievement and dropout rates (Agunloye, 2011).

As a teacher previously but now the Circuit Manager, the researcher learnt that learners from high socio-economic backgrounds have advantage of resources like computers, books, internet and study guides. Most schools in Mopani West are of Quintile 1 and 2, meaning they are no-fee schools and depend on the government for the provision of resources. Such schools mostly suffer from overcrowding of learners and limited funds. Parent involvement and their level of education influence their children's academic performance. Most parents with low level of education faces, usually face challenges when they are supposed to assist their children with home activities. cChildren from lower socio-economic backgrounds may not have opportunities like those in higher economic backgrounds, hence, they may contribute to schools' underperformance.

3.2.4.6 Unsupportive community

Several community-level variables can lead to low school performance. Some are - shifting socio-economic conditions, dysfunctional households, shifting demography, lack

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of parental support for learners and the school, other sociological stress factors, lack of community support for learners and the school and how the community views the school (Alonguye, 2011) .

Studies have established that where learners get community support in their schools, their academic performance improves. In every community, there are retired teachers, former students and other professionals who when involved in the school can impact positively the academic performance of learners. Secondary schools during examination periods have school camps where learners put up at schools throughout the examination period. Parents do sleep at schools to prepare meals and offer safety and security to their children and performance improves. Police also take rounds during the night to provide security to learners for them to learn in a healthy environment, however, there are communities that disturb the normal or smooth running of schools when they are not provided services like water, roads and electricity. That affects performance of learners when their schooling days are disturbed.

In conclusion, factors that lead to chronically low performance in schools were discussed. The factors discussed indicate to us reasons why schools perform low. A framework made up of the following variables of leadership, Instructors, learners support staff, and socio-economic environment and community was discussed. To follow will be challenges faced by instructional leaders in improving academic performance in schools.

3.2.5 Challenges Faced by Instructional Leaders in Improving Academic Performance

In their efforts to increase academic performance, instructional leaders in low-achieving schools encounter several obstacles. These obstacles among others, include insufficient resources, educator resistance to change, a lack of trust and buy-in from stakeholders, and competing demands on their time and focus.

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The minimal resources available to instructional leaders in schools with low performance are significant obstacles. Skaalvik (2020) discovered that schools in low-income communities typically have fewer resources, such as fewer experienced educators and restricted access to technology and instructional materials. This might make it challenging for instructional leaders to apply instructional practices that have been proven to promote learner progress and are supported by empirical evidence. Furthermore, whether a teacher employs modern or conventional teaching techniques, making effective use of class time has substantial effect on the learning of the learners, however, a large body of research has shown that educational quality relies more on how schools are run than on the quantity or capability of the resources that are available (World Bank, 2008). Tickly (2014), Adebayo et al. (2020) and Darling Hammond (2023) disagree with the World Bank that children who attended schools with limited resources, like no library and no classroom supplies were far more likely to demonstrate lower grade repetition than learners attending well-equipped schools.

The researcher aligns with Tickly (2014), Adebayo et al. (2020) and Darling-Hammond (2023) that learners without resources in their schools experience difficulty in learning than their counterparts with adequate resources; for example, learning Physical Sciences without practical experiments because of a lack of apparatus and chemicals in the laboratory, is not easy. Furthermore, some schools have a shortage of teachers while there is a high number of learners. In addition, numerous teachers have challenges with housing and transportation that prevent them from being to school on time and remaining there till the end of the day (Inambao, 2022); Jacob and Ndayebom (2022), found in their research on teachers time management practices that the bulk of them did not write their lesson and arrived late at class without them, hence, lesson preparations and assemblies took most of their time to be in class, therefore, instructional leaders need to manage both physical and human resources for the benefit of the school.

Lack of management expertise by some of the instructional leaders might be a contributing element of poor academic achievement (Harrison & McMullan, 2013). These researchers further argued that departmental heads and deputy principals may have

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management training which may not, however, have been sufficient or thorough enough. Further than that, instructional leaders do not consistently monitor curriculum teaching in the majority of schools in order to guarantee that schools fulfil their goals, monitoring and assessment of learning should be an ongoing effort. The researcher concurs that there is inconsistent monitoring of curriculum teaching by the instructional leaders in schools.

The researcher as a Circuit Manager, when monitoring and supporting curriculum management in schools, often realise that some leaders act like they are only subject educators not school management team members by not monitoring the subjects under their supervision. By not monitoring curriculum management, performance will be low since subject educators realise that there is no second eye or supervision of their work and end up relaxing. Evidence of inconsistency in monitoring curriculum implementation is revealed when instructional leaders discover discrepancies during external visits by Subject Advisors or the Circuit Managers.

When teachers are at school, learners learn when they interact with, instead of focussing on non – instructional tasks, they should participate in instructional activities (Waweru & Orodho, 2014). Learners should be taught and assessed for improvement in performance. In addition, instructional leaders in low-performing schools frequently encounter pushback from teachers who doubt the efficacy of new instructional practices. According to a study by Bryk et al. (2015); Wullur and Werang (2020), successful school reform efforts require a high level of trust and collaboration among stakeholders, which can be difficult to build in schools with a history of mistrust and low levels of engagement. Baker, Decman and Willis, (2019) and Losen and Martinez (2020) support it by stating that despite power inequalities, there is a need for mutually trusting communication to determine teacher performance. Collaboration can be seen as a means of empowering underperforming teachers (Lieberman & Miller, 2001). Teachers may benefit from increased self-esteem and confidence because of the support they get from instructional leaders and one another. Research revealed that when underperforming teachers did see improvement in their performance, it is often linked with the availability of an internal support system and mentorship from other teachers and which in turn affects instruction

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in the classroom (Gibbons, Wilhelm & Cobb, 2019). School leaders, as a result, need to deal with fruitful staff collaboration for professional development. In addition, the authors indicated that grounds for dismissal in a survey of teacher incompetency in the United States were ineffective teaching, poor discipline, the impact of the teacher's behaviour and conduct or views on the learners, whereas, Wragg, Haynes and Chamberlin (2000), considered six major causes of failures in the United Kingdom as poor discipline, lack of planning and preparations, issues with learners' progress, poor relationship with learners and the inability to adapt to change. Ridwan (2021) identified causes of underperformance as rooted in either management, the job or the individual. They further claimed that attempts to deal with poor performance should look at these three factors and in that order. This suggests that the background of the poor teacher performance may be complex, hence, a degree of professional insight is needed on the part of school managers when choosing strategies to remedy underperformance.

According to a study by Bellibas, Polatcan and Kilinc (2022), educators who are reluctant to change may be less likely to properly integrate new teaching practices, which can impair efforts to enhance academic achievement. The researcher consents with these authors as nothing remains constant; teaching methods changes from time to time. Nowadays technology is an innovative way of teaching in schools and learners are also interested in the usage of technology than the routine way of teaching. Teachers need to adapt to the new way of doing things that excite learners more. New ways of using technology come up with advantages like it allows teaching and learning to take place from anywhere, preparing learners for the digital world and learning can take place with people from the whole world online. Insensitive and persistent demands on performance may harm learning relationships and cause caring teachers to have poor self-esteem which may result in lower standards (Winchester, 2020). Sustaining abilities to preserve a positive connection is essential (Aidoo, 2020). When helping underperforming teachers, school managers need to assess the kind of assistance required. Teachers the realise that one-siz- fits all strategy cannot yield positive results. Instructional leaders need to analyse their performance and come up with strategies to improve performance looking into their contextual factors otherwise Instructional leaders may struggle to gain

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the trust and support of stakeholders, such as educators, parents, and community members. According to a study by Bryk, Gomez, Grunowan and LeMahieu (2015), successful school-reform efforts require a high level of trust and collaboration among stakeholders, which can be difficult to build in schools with a history of mistrust and low levels of engagement.

Instructional leaders at schools with low performance may have difficulty balancing competing demands on their time and attention. In addition to their instructional leadership responsibilities, Wangdi (2021) observed that instructional leaders in underperforming schools are frequently required to manage personnel, monitor learner conduct, and address school-safety concerns. Bada and Arfin (2020) state that the majority of school administrators lack management skills training, therefore, there is a suggestion that school managers should receive extensive leadership training on all facets of management in order to realize improved learner academic performance (Jacob & Ndayebom, 2022; Inambe, 2022). Venance (2020) claims that there is teacher shortage, lack of basic amenities, community disruptions, poor instructions, administratively linked issues, including ineffective management.

There are few causes of underperformance in schools and these are discussed below:

- The level of engagement between teachers and learners has an influence on performance. Good-learner interactions tie with teachers to foster a variety of academic and social results (Croninger & Lee, 2001; Zepeda, 2004).

- Finances have a critical role in learner performance and retention since resources influence the standard of physical facilities, instructional materials, teacher motivation and hiring of instructors during teacher shortage (Mobegi, Ondigi & Oburu, 2010; Getange & Orodho, 2014). They further agree that certain school's infrastructure is unsuitable for efficient instruction.

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- Congestion in the classroom is a barrier to raising academic achievement. Teachers are not able to use instructional methods in a suitable way (Agenor, 2012). Teachers have limited time to finish the syllabus, so they often move on to the next charter without completing topics. This in turn negatively affect the learner's academic achievement. Furthermore, t teachers feel pressured in their jobs since they have to oversee teaching and learning processes and classroom management on their own.

- Families and home environment influence the learner's academic success as favourable environmental circumstances would allow the learner to focus on their academics. Support and encouragement from family members is important to reach academic objectives. In secondary schools, learners need a variety of resources that supports education. It includes things like uniform, stationery, school bag and even tutoring if struggling in a particular subject, however, families from underprivileged, marginalised and socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds are unable to be provided with such resources which will impact negatively on their academic performance.

Campbell, Heyward & Jochim (2018), identified the following challenges experienced in underperforming schools:

- Insufficient quantity of competent educators
- Insufficient expert-assistance personnel
- Departure of teachers during the underperformance period
- Lack of ability to hire and maintain efficient teachers
- The leadership team of the school not able to accept and perform their duties.

Research demonstrates that strong instructional leadership can considerably enhance academic outcomes in schools with low performance (Militello, Tredway, Hodgkins & Simon, 2021). Academic accomplishment can be supported by a culture of high standards and accountability fostered by instructional leaders who prioritize academic goals, provide continual professional development for teachers, and regularly monitor and

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assess learner progress (Day et al., 2020). In addition, instructional leaders can encourage the deployment of instructional techniques proven to enhance academic performance in underperforming schools (Harris, 2018; Schmidt, 2016). For instance, instructional leaders can offer teachers access to high-quality curricular materials, instructional coaching, and create professional learning communities that facilitate the application of good teaching practices. In addition, instructional leaders can facilitate the development of robust partnerships with families and the broader community to enhance learning (Day et al, 2020). By integrating families in the educational process and community members in school decision-making, instructional leaders can foster a sense of ownership and engagement in the schools' success, which can have a good effect on academic achievements.

In conclusion, instructional leaders in schools with low academic performance encounter several obstacles in their efforts to increase academic performance. These obstacles include insufficient resources, teacher resistance to change, a lack of trust and buy-in from stakeholders and competing demands on their time and focus. By tackling these obstacles, instructional leaders can enhance their ability to promote learner progress and close the achievement gap. Inandi, Tunc, Yucedaglar and Kilic (2020); claim that schools that are underperforming close due to their poor performance or learners from such schools usually opt to attend better schools elsewhere. It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of instructional leaders in boosting academic achievement in low-performing schools, irrespective of challenges faced. These leaders can create a culture of high expectations and accountability, facilitate the implementation of evidence-based instructional practices, and build strong partnerships with families and the community to support learning using effective instructional leadership. There is a need for Instructional leaders to identify characteristics of underperforming schools for them to be able to address them in improving the academic performance of such schools.

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3.2.6 Characteristics of Underperforming Secondary Schools

Several variables contribute to poor academic performance in secondary schools. These qualities can be grouped into four major categories: school infrastructure, teaching and learning, leadership and administration, and socio-economic considerations.

3.2.6.1 Inadequate school infrastructure

Infrastructure is a crucial aspect in determining the quality of secondary school instruction. Inadequate infrastructure, such as inadequate classrooms, a lack of proper sanitation facilities, and inadequate teaching materials, can harm learners' academic performance (Yangambi, 2023). Overcrowded classrooms can influence the level of teaching and learning negatively since, struggling learners might not receive the attention they deserve, hence, hampering their performance negatively.

3.2.6.2 Inadequate teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is crucial to learners' academic performance, and underperforming schools are characterized by low levels of learner engagement and poor teaching quality (Vazquez & Huerta- Manzanilla, 2021). Vazquez and Huerta (2021) contend that for learners not to perform while attending school means they are not engaged enough. For learners to perform is an indication that teaching and learning is taking place. Teachers, however, might not be committed to their profession, have inadequate training, high teacher turnover rates, and a lack of teaching resources - all these factors contribute to low teaching quality.

3.2.6.3 Leadership and administration

Leadership and administration are essential determinants of a school's efficacy in fostering academic attainment. Poor leadership and poor management methods can significantly affect educator morale and learner achievement in underperforming schools (Landri, 2020). Poor communication, a lack of responsibility, and inadequate support for educators are examples of ineffective leadership approaches. Lack of competent instructional leadership practices exacerbates the difficulties experienced by

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underperforming schools. It is the responsibility of the SMTs to provide instructional assistance, teacher development, and school improvement efforts (Moeketsane, Jita & Jita, 2021). According to Aidoo (2000), effective instructional leadership is crucial for boosting academic achievement in struggling schools, yet instructional leadership in low-performing schools is frequently hampered by a lack of support, insufficient training, and high rates of teacher turnover (Millitello, Tredway, Hodgkins & Simon, 2021). This demonstrates that administration plays the crucial role in improving performance of the learners and teachers. Should teachers who did not receive enough training felt not supported by their school leaders, they end up exiting the system drained by the burden of the environment (Miitello et al. 2021).

3.2.6.4 Socio-economic variables

Socio-economic variables also have a role in schools' performance. Poverty, poor nutrition, and inadequate health care can harm student performance (Klein, Sosu & Dare, 2020; Erdem & Kaya, 2023).

Secondary schools with poor academic performance are defined by a variety of contributing factors - inadequate school infrastructure, poor teaching quality, inefficient leadership techniques, and socio-economic circumstances are examples of these challenges. These variables must be addressed to improve the quality of education in underperforming schools to boost student academic progress. Parents with low socio-economic status tend not to have the time, education and financial resources to engage with their children's education. This includes helping with homework and attending parents' meetings. Furthermore, low-income parents might work far from home or even long hours hence, they cannot engage themselves in the education of their children. There is child –headed families in schools; these learners fend and care for themselves in the absence of their parent/s. Their home environments are not the same as those with parents and it can affect their performance negatively. A stable and warm home environment impacts the performance of the learner, positively, and vice versa. School leaders need to play their roles to help mitigate challenges that these learners are exposed to in a way to support them towards performance.

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According to Du Plessis and Mestry (2019), the relevance of secondary education cannot be neglected as it is the basis for students' personal development. In the Mopani West District, nine (9) secondary schools are underperforming, so there is a need to improve the education quality that learners receive. Improvement can be done by adopting effective instructional leadership practices by the School Management Teams. The concept of instructional leadership is referred to as involving actions and strategies that need to be employed by leaders of the school to create an environment of learning, increase the effectiveness of teachers and improve learner outcomes (Hallinger et al., 2020).

Mopani West District is mainly situated in the Limpopo province which is basically rich in developing potential and achieving cultural diversity. The present education landscape requires effort for the purpose of dealing with challenges that affect the achievement of learners. There are certain factors that are negatively affecting education, such as limited resources, disparities among people, and differences in education level. So, the adoption of an effective approach is necessary for bringing positive change in the educational aspects of the district (Lambrecht, Lenkeit, Hartmann, Ehlert, Knigge & Sporer, 2022). In providing better education, school principals play an important role and are also responsible for providing instructional leadership. Best instructional leadership practices provide benefits to the learners at the time of learning and provide the foundations for subsequent studies. Teachers contribute by providing their experience with their colleagues in relation to the distributed leadership model. Instructional leadership also focuses on the responsibilities of principals considering the hierarchical systems that motivate teachers in considering the positions of leadership (Maponya, 2020).

Instructional leadership practices should be implemented by adopting a holistic approach which considers fulfilling unique needs and aspirations. Underperformance within secondary schools can be dealt with by collaborating with the leadership strategies that contribute to the development of a sustainable educational ecosystem which tends to bring improvements in education (Sibomana, 2022). In the 21st century, most of the educational systems are embracing a new paradigm related to educational management

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which utilizes management teams in schools. School Management Teams are in schools to monitor and support teaching and learning since lack of commitment to the mandate of teachers, learners' ill-discipline, and the involvement of parents are considered crucial factors inhibiting the performance purpose in schools (Aureada, 2021).

According to Ramalepe (2016) the instructional leadership model emphasizes the responsibilities of principals, such as providing teachers with guidance and support in developing best practices in teaching. This model has been adopted by principals for communicating with staff and setting clear goals linked with the achievement of students. Under this model, principals support teachers and provide mentoring and coaching opportunities for professional development which allow teachers to explore best practices in teaching. The main aim related to instructional leadership is principals working closely with teachers to enhance learner achievement (Brolund, 2016).

Instructional leadership involves a long history which mainly emerged through considering the various aspects suitable for providing better education to learners. Instructional leadership also focuses on the creation of a better working environment by promoting learning and helping teachers meet the standards of the curriculum. Principals in schools possess and determine a complex and diverse set of adaptive leadership strategies for the purpose of strengthening learning by concentrating on the learning processes. Instructional leaders also guide learners to ensure that a school is a competitive learning environment and promotes a culture of learning (Shava, Heystek & Chasara, 2021).

Mopani West District is a rural area in Limpopo, South Africa, with around 294,056 inhabitants (StatsSA, 2021). Each of the district's thirteen circuits consists of a cluster of schools. Mopani West District is number one in Limpopo Province in terms of learner performance but there are nine schools that underperformed. The district has underperforming secondary schools, which are defined as schools that do not satisfy the Department of Basic Education's minimal performance requirements (Kleynhans, 2016). According to a report by the Department of Education (2021), many secondary schools in the district suffer from a dearth of resources, poor buildings, limited instructional

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materials, and a teacher shortage. This has led to low academic performance, with many pupils failing to achieve the prerequisites for tertiary study (Budeli, 2018).

According to Mann, Herman and Hansen (2017), low-performing schools are frequently located in impoverished neighbourhoods with restricted access to resources and opportunities. The historical and social backdrop of South Africa, with its legacy of apartheid, has produced entrenched socio-economic disparities that impact educational attainment (Destin, 2020). In the Mopani West District, where poverty, unemployment, and lack of access to basic services are pervasive, these disparities are visible (Mothapo & Mavhandu-Mudzusi, 2018). Conditions in disadvantaged areas create challenges, like learners arriving at schools not equipped to engage in learning. Furthermore, the negative perception associated with being labelled “underperforming” may also impose significant pressure on the school. These stressors contribute to higher rates of teacher absence and turnover and lack of achievement by learners, however there are significant studies that discuss schools that can achieve success even under challenging circumstances (Reynolds, Harris, Clarke, Harris & James, 2006). These schools have been identified as having highly concentrated and unified educational program, robust planning centred on learner accomplishment and culture of cooperation among the teaching staff. On the contrary Reynold et al. (2006) maintain that irrespective of challenges that schools face, some schools perform. Such schools perform because of the planning by the Instructional leaders’ attributes; these are elaborated as follows:

- **Emphasis on the integration of the educational curriculum**

Schools that excel in standards–based accountability prioritize the alignment of their curriculum with the standards that form the accountability system. The components of such a system included the actual material taught, the methodology used in teaching it and evaluations conducted inside the classroom (Corallo & McDonald, 2001). Practices in schools not in alignment with this display poor performance. For instance, even if the standards and curriculum alignment of learner performance is low, the cognitive demands expected by the standards are not consistent with the cognitive demands present in the classroom in terms of teaching and assessment. In the same example, the standards

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necessitate the “analysis” and “evaluation” of information, yet classroom assessments only demand “recall” and “recognition” of the same subject. Additionally, it is crucial to have clear and precise alignment of both the vertical and horizontal curriculum – meaning connection and consistency across different grade levels (Newmann, Smith, Allensworth & Bryk, 2001). It is important to acknowledge that the strength of instructional coherence relies on the educational validity of the goals for learners that are integrated into the school’s instructional program (Newman et al., 2001). Some school staff may find it challenging to tolerate external impositions. They see externally enforced criteria as impeding their academic and professional autonomy, however, schools that have achieved success in standards-based environment have used both external and internal facilitation to accomplish their goals (Newmann et al., 2001).

- **Effective strategic planning approach**

Strategic planning is centred on enhancing learner performance. Both short term and long-term accomplishments are acknowledged (Medwell, 2018).

- **Cooperation and teamwork among staff**

Many schools that thrive despite challenging circumstances are structured in a way that facilitates teacher collaboration (Reynolds & Teddle, 2000). For instance, a group of instructors may be allocated joint planning time and teachers may be engaged in classroom observations with their peers. By so doing, the institution fosters a culture of cooperation and communication among the teachers. Teachers and instructional leaders cultivate a professional culture of respect which directs collective work of the school than individual contributions. These schools are characterized by a focus on collective teacher-learner accomplishment (Nweke & Gbarage, 2022). The school’s targeted plan of action is communicated to the parents as well as other stakeholders. This type of communication leads to a mutual understanding of the desired level of learner performance. Through a shared set of objectives and genuine belief of collective effort, learners are capable of and will succeed at high levels of performance (Reynolds, Teddle, 2000; Medwell, 2018).

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Lack of competent instructional leadership exacerbates the difficulties experienced by underperforming schools in the district. It is the responsibility of the SMTs to provide instructional assistance, teacher development, and school improvement efforts (Bredeson & Johansson, 2015). Effective instructional leadership is crucial for boosting academic achievement in struggling schools, according to research (Munna, 2023). Yet, instructional leadership in low-performing schools is frequently hampered by a lack of support, insufficient training, and high rates of turnover (Militello et al., 2021).

In conclusion, despite the common association between community poverty and underperforming schools, there is a significant amount of research that discusses that schools can achieve high performance despite their challenging circumstances. When examining the qualities of the high-achieving schools, it is possible to speculate that underperforming schools may have organizational, socio-economic and cultural shortcomings. The main issues identified are lack of continuity in the educational program, ineffective instructional practices and lack of planning. To redress the characteristics that lead to underperformance, instructional leaders are essential in improving the academic performance in schools.

3.2.7 Importance of Instructional Leaders in Improving Academic Performance

The importance of instructional leadership cannot be overstated, since it has the power to influence both the quality of education and the attainment by teachers and learners (Wahab, Mansor, Hussin & Kumarasamy, 2020). Instructional leaders are the drivers of teaching and learning in a school. They are the ones who determine when and how curriculum activities should unfold in the school. Since education plays a major role in defining learners' achievement, the school's leadership structure is centred on instruction. In addition, planning, organising and assessing teaching and learning activities in schools, as well as the teacher performance, are all impacted by instructional leadership (Ministry of Education (2013).

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Good instructional leadership is critical for boosting academic achievement in schools with low performance. Instructional leaders, such as principals, deputy principals and departmental heads play a crucial role in establishing a school culture and encouraging academic performance and provides teachers and learners with tools and opportunities they need to thrive.

It is necessary to look at instructional leadership models advocated by different academics. Defining the objective, overseeing the Instructional programme and fostering a positive climate are three pillars of Instructional management framework that Hallinger and Murphy's model (1985) established by analysing the instructional leaders' activities. The Model (1985) pointed out that both directly and indirectly, principals in effective schools with high standards and instruction and learning exhibited good instructional leadership. They developed an instructional leadership framework that focused on sets of activities that had an impact on instruction - formulating the mission and goals of the school, organising, supervising and assessing the curriculum, instruction and assessment; encountering a culture of learning; and establishing a nurturing work environment. Similarly, Weber (1986) came up with five key domains of Instructional leadership - defining school's mission, overseeing curriculum and instruction and evaluating the Instructional programme. Alieg and Mielcarek's instructional leadership model (2002), discovered three key parallels with the other two models- Hallinger and Murphy (1985) and Weber (1996). The significance of goal setting and communication, observation and feedback on the teaching and learning process and encouragement and emphasis on professional development were all mentioned by the three instructional models. Leithwood and Louis (2011) underscore that fundamental leadership behaviours including direction-giving, staff development, organisational culture development and instructional management, have an impact on learner achievement.

These components deal with the principal's responsibility to identify the main goals of the institution. This dimension focuses on the principal's responsibility to collaborate with personnel in order to guarantee that the school has specific, quantifiable, time-bound goals that are centred upon the learners' academic achievement. Depending on the

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needs and skills of a leader, schools may use a variety of leadership techniques (Fullan, 2020; Hallinger, 2020).

According to Green's (2010) book of leadership - *A Framework for leading the 21st Century Schools* - the school leader considers school administrators as visionaries, the book describes them as chief 'Learning officer' and they are those who direct the school's course and help all parties involved in the process strive for a common goal. Despite the school's similarities, schools are distinctively diverse because of the way of life, environment, organisation and interpersonal relationships. Currently, school administrators must go beyond the fundamentals of management but prioritise enhancing instruction and education. They must act in a way that influences those under their supervision to have a degree of contentment that inspires learners to stay in school and improve their accomplishments (Corcoran, Peck & Reitzug, 2013).

Excellent leadership has a big impact on the performance of a school. There is a correlation between teacher effectiveness and instructional leadership (Ramasamy & Wahab, 2020). School leaders use instructional leadership in an appropriate manner to promote school success through innovation and changes in the classroom. According to Tatlah, Akhtar and Hashmi (2019), SMTs who engage in instructional leadership become change-agents and provide supportive learning environment for their learners, which enhances both teacher effectiveness and learner progress. The functional competence of instructors may also be improved by the role of instructional leadership (Ishmael, Muhammed, Omar & Raman 2020).

Sattari, Khodabandehlou, Lashkari (2021) stated that both instructional effectiveness and learner academic attainment are significantly impacted by instructional leadership while Glewwe, Siameh, Sun, Wisniewski (2021); Hamid and Kepimpinan (2017), however argued that sometimes principals are less successful in directing teachers and communicating the objectives of the school as less-defined objectives make it more difficult for teachers to communicate and succeed. SMTs may guarantee effective teaching and learning by setting explicit objectives (Hallinger, 2020). Schildkamp,

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Poortman, Ebbeler and Pieters (2019) agree that SMTs who share objectives with teachers are key to a school's success for teachers who are led and directed will produce more than those who work as individuals without a common or shared vision.

Makgato and Mudzanani (2019) discovered that lack of attention to curriculum management and flaws in leadership are the root causes of issues within school performance. Leaders are the core of what transpires in the school. Effective school leaders will have programs and systems of monitoring curriculum implementation by teachers. From time to time, they will monitor progress and evaluate if learners are given quality assessments as per the assessment plan. Lack of curriculum management by school leaders opens schools for underperformance. Mansor, Hamid, Medina, Vikaraman, Wahab, Nor and Alias (2020), found that many principals of small or rural schools continue to be less aggressive, inventive or creative and they often lose focus while managing curriculum. They further stated that teachers look to their managers for direction, support, assistance, encouragement and helpful counsel, however, some principals may be too preoccupied with other responsibilities to convey teaching-related matters with SMTs. According to Nurhayati, Masnun, Udin and Arifuddin (2019), a principals' capacity to control the amount of time and workload as well as the teacher's preparation for supervision had a significant impact on activities in the school. Razak, Darmawan and Keeves (2009) explain that teachers' dedication to their profession may be shown in their attendance at work, adherence to work and adherence to school policies, work ethics, completion of assignments by the deadline and interactions with other teachers. Effective, supervision by the school leaders, ensuring that teachers are regularly at work, doing their work, making submissions as expected on time and are ethical will all improve performance of learners.

From an international angle, many teachers from Mexico, China, Guinea and India are found to lack both the instructional expertise and topic area expertise necessary for effective presentation about the teaching content and these influence the performance of schools negatively (Nzoka & Orodho, 2014). Mwakajitu and Lekule (2022), note that SMTs need to assume their responsibilities as quality assurance officials in their

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educational institutions and provide sufficient departmental oversight. The authors add that leaders need to present employee evaluation to raise standards and carry out evaluative classroom observations to be sure that quality teaching and learning take place. SMTs need to come up with plans for the provision of high-quality instruction and a principal needs to be able to recognize potential risks to turn things around. To help all stakeholders involved in the education of a learner, principals should serve as a counsellor to the learners as well as to parents and instructors to understand the value of education (Gamede & Uleanya, 2021; Maponya, 2020). These authors agree that the principals together with their SMTs should try to create the ideal learning environment to motivate learners' education by removing all forms of violence, intimidation, hate speech, threats and witch hunts from schools and create a conducive environment even for slow learners to prevent frustration and dropping out. The SMTs should further invest more time and energy into creating engaging academic and curricular programs. Musaniwa and Jakachiro (2024); Hambala, Lopez, Cobrado, Naparan, Pena and Tantog (2023) argue that school discipline is a framework for setting circumstances for performance. The SMTs should help learners to make wise decisions in life with counselling and coaching.

Research demonstrates that strong instructional leadership can considerably enhance academic outcomes in schools with low performance (Rodrigues & Avila de Lima, 2024). Academic accomplishment can be supported by a culture of high standards and accountability fostered by instructional leaders who prioritise academic goals, provide continual professional development for teachers and regularly monitor and assess learner progress (Hunzicker, 2011). In addition, instructional leaders can encourage the deployment of instructional techniques proven to enhance academic performance in underperforming schools (Harris, 2018; Schmidt, 2016). For instance, instructional leaders can offer teachers access to high-quality curricular materials, instructional coaching and professional learning communities that facilitate the application of good teaching practices. Instructional leaders can facilitate the development of robust partnerships with families and the broader community to enhance student learning (Hunzicker, 2011). By integrating families in the educational process and community

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members in school decision-making, instructional leaders can foster a sense of ownership and engagement in the school's success, which can have a good effect on academic achievements.

In conclusion, it is impossible to exaggerate the importance of instructional leaders in boosting the academic achievement in low-performing schools. Instructional leaders can create a culture of high expectations and accountability, facilitate the implementation of evidence-based instructional practices and build strong partnerships with families and the community to support learners' learning. These leaders are the ones to come up with strategies to improve academic performance in their schools.

3.2.8 Strategies Employed to Improve Academic Performance in Schools

The Department of Basic Education, provinces, districts, circuits and schools are yearly under pressure to produce expected academic results. Interest shown by the government and the media, business and everyone, has made academic performance and learner attainment a top priority. To improve performance in schools, different strategies are employed by different countries, provinces, districts, circuits and schools. The "no child left behind" initiative by the Department of Education persuaded teachers to use science-based strategies to make sure that all learners attain at the end (Dufour & Mattos, 2013). Studies on educational reform suggest that, on average, it takes three years for an elementary school to successfully adopt changes that would enhance learner performance while it takes six years for secondary schools to achieve such transformation (Fullan, 2000). Becoming a high-performing school takes years of sustained commitment. High learner performance cannot be the outcome of a single strategy hence different strategies from different researchers will be outlined (Henchery, Dunningan, Gardener, Lessard, Muhtadi, Raham & Violato, 2001).

Schools have come up with strategies to improve learner performance for them not to be categorised as underperforming schools. Extra classes are given in the afternoons and over the weekends. During Easter, June and September holidays learners in Grade 12

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are engaged in schools; some schools hold camps during examination periods to keep learners occupied with teaching and learning in preparation for their examinations. Some of those schools' learners perform well after these activities while others do not. Provincial departments assist in funding holiday enrichment classes. This study aimed to research strategies by instructional leaders that lead to underperformance in schools as various strategies are applied, internationally and locally.

According to Hamilton and Doss (2020) and Hill (2020) strategies have been used in American schools that have caused their learners to achieve at very high levels. The first strategy to achieve improvement of academic performance is to change the school culture and build productive ones. These authors further argue that issues in education are closely connected to social and emotional problems (discipline matters) like learner truancy, classroom tardiness, fighting and drugs. Building productive school cultures in schools effectively brings performance in schools (Deal & Peterson, 2016). This strategy is used internationally, especially in the United States of America. It provides for a collective framework for development of schools in four areas - planning, professional development, program development and assessment of productivity. According to an American National Survey, 17% of American high school learners are drinking, smoking and using drugs during school time. Schneider, Krawozyk, Xuan and Johnson (2018) in their study debated on how schools deal with such challenges and still maintain some achievement. This scenario means teachers are faced with challenges of teaching learners who are drug addicts, drink alcohol and yet are expected to perform at the end. If the school cannot come up with a relevant strategy to address these challenges, performance will not be attained. According to Deal and Peterson (2016), schools that make use of the four areas were the most productive schools unlike some who used two or three of the areas. These areas are discussed below,

3.2.8.1 Planning

Schools that have a dysfunctional culture represent a failing rate at the top levels of management. Performance can be attained by establishing plans using the work culture model. Instead of giving the staff detailed plans and instructions, it is better to

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communicate strategies as intentions of what the school can achieve and why is it important. In addition, plans will help to explain why previous ones have not worked in solving the existing low performance in other schools. Lashway (2002) and Deal and Peterson (2016) suggest that Principals and their SMT's should plan towards their goals and vision to obtain improvement in academic performance. The instructional leaders' commitment towards their vision and mission is what differentiates great and not-so-great schools. Performing and effective schools have clearly set and focused school vision, school curricular, instructional goals and priorities and the learning paradigm should be focused on everyone in the school.

3.2.8.2 Professional development

Professional development is an important component of school culture and account for learner and teacher improvement of performance (Darling & Hammond, 2000). Teams in a school become learning centres when they share, plan, act and critique programs and coach one another. School management teams that work together know each other 's strength and weakness and complement each other for the school to perform.

3.2.8.3 Program development

Instructional leaders who work towards a common program in a cooperative team effort reach their goals and achieve more in terms of learner performance (Kaplan & Evans, 1999). By working towards a common goal and sharing responsibilities among team members will reduce the workload making it manageable.

3.2.8.4 Productivity assessment

Instead of focusing on the test scores and curriculum first, to get performance, leaders should examine school culture and assess the social and emotional status of the school (Johnson & Johnson, 2012). Assessment is a strategy for testing learners not to fail them; its purpose is on how to improve learner instruction. Assessment as a strategy guides teachers in improving their lesson plans and framing instruction (Snyder, 2006). The author explains that assessment can be used as a strategy to improve learner performance, for it is through assessment that a teacher can categorise learners into high,

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average and low performers. The teacher will then be able to come up with differentiated teaching methods to support them all. The teacher will ensure that low performers' gaps are closed for them to achieve. Assessments that focus on progress, standards and learner growth expectation produces quality results (Johnson & Johnson, 2012) and that successful schools improve academic performance by participating in continuous planning and evaluation. Johnson and Johnson (2006) continues that for assessment to improve learner performance and instructional programs, it should be aligned to technology to monitor the progress of learners. This point is controversial, since not all schools are technologically equipped, particularly rural schools like those in this study's research sites; for example, there will be a challenge in terms of access to WI-FI both at home and school due to the economic environment.

According to Kute (2023) learning environment and conditions in the school should maximise the learner's opportunity to learn and succeed. When a school has a safe environment, a positive, cooperative and collaborative environment for both learners and teachers prevails. Learners perform well where they feel valued, safe and teachers have their best interest at heart. Previously, the principals managed the school's instructional programs and management using bureaucratic management, however, democratic instructional leadership allows all stakeholders to freely contribute to the development of the school. Furthermore, to perform in schools, bottom-up leadership driven by a vision of success and shared decision-making yield intended positive results than the bureaucratic one. Not only principals are instructional leaders but all teachers in the management leads. In addition, positive home-school relations are raised as a strategy to achieve high performance in schools. At times parents are reluctantly brought into schools to achieve the mission of the school forgetting that learners spend most of their times with parents at home and can influence and monitor that schoolwork is done. Partnership with parents, between home and school, improves academic performance. Trust, team building and communication are critical in the partnership to yield positive results.

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Teacher time on tasks is another strategy utilised to improve academic performance in schools (Mohte & Dashputre, 2017). When SMTs manage so that teachers are on task on time, academic performance in the school improves. School leaders should come up with strategies to ensure that teacher contact time is utilised profitably, however, sometimes most of the teacher's contact time is not used effectively. Mornings' first periods are lost by assembly or late arrival of both learners and teachers in the classroom, while break times are extended by late coming of both learners and teachers. In addition, at times teachers do not bring to their classes all resources they will need because of lack of preparation and planning. Time will be wasted walking between their offices and the classroom to get things like books, chalk and pen. Teacher time on tasks is critical for annual teaching plans to be finished in time and learners to be ready for assessments set externally.

According to school improvement literature by Askeii, Williams and Koh (2020); Hart, Young, Chen and Zou (2020); Andreoli, Klar, Huggins and Busky (2020), several schools have successfully used the following strategies to enhance learner performance - ensuring that written and taught curricula are in line with established standards, aligning local assessments with curriculum, consistency monitoring learner progress towards meeting the standards, analysing learner achievement data to identify the most pressing areas of improvement and establishing common goals and strategies accordingly, as well as appointing capable leaders to oversee the implementation of structures that monitor both the Instructional process and learner performance. The Professional Learning Community process is another strategy that is utilised to enhance performance in schools.

3.2.8.9 The Professional Learning Community Process (PLC)

Research studies by the Wallace Foundation (Naz & Rashid 2021), the American Educational Research Association (Holland, 2005) and the Annenberg Institute for school reform (2005), confirm the positive effect of PLC on the performance of both teachers and learners. They assert that if principals want to improve school performance, instead of focusing on the teachers teaching, they should also look at the collective evidence of learners learning, for at times teachers teach to complete the annual teaching plans but

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learners do not understand. Teachers, therefore, might be doing their best to teach but learners are not committed to their learning process and not making any efforts. Learners performing will be evident if really learning took place but if learners do not perform on a particular topic taught it means they did not learn or are left behind. According to research by Naz and Rashid (2021) teaching should not be separated from the learning part. Furthermore, to ensure improvement in academic performance, teachers must ensure good teaching in the classroom all the time. Successful schools structure their systems PLCs to suit their situation (Barber & Mourshed, 2009). A report from International Academy of Education (Temperley, 2008) concluded that the key to improving learner performance was that teachers should participate in PLC that respond to learner outcomes targeted.

In PLC, instructional leaders engage in a collective inquiry on what will benefit learners. To help learners learn at high levels, team members ask themselves:

- What knowledge and skills should learners acquire from what is about to be taught?
- How much time will be allocated to the work to be done?
- How will evidence of learning by learners be gathered?
- How can the evidence of learning gathered be used to improve teacher practice and teachers' collective capacity help learners?

PLC has five (5) steps to be followed for this strategy to produce better result which are:

- To build teams which will help learners learn fundamental content and skills
- Teams should be allocated time to collaborate
- Clarify the work to be done by teams
- Accessibility of resources by team members
- Support team members to actualise the objectives of the team.

Elmore (2004), Fullan (2010) and Hattie (2009) maintain that collective analysis of learning is more likely to improve instructional practice than a principal stopping by a

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classroom few times in a year to observe if the teacher is doing the right things. With the PLC process, teachers determine what to teach, how to go about it, which instructional strategies to use and how to assess learners and the principals hold teams accountable for results. Principals also confront those teachers who fail to honour commitments to their team and their obligations to learners. PLC puts the teacher in charge of the work to be done and how it is to be done while Instructional leaders are to monitor and supervise to determine if the work is done satisfactorily.

According to Campbell et al. (2018), strategies to improve performance in schools differ from location to location because contextual factors such as leadership politics and resources are not the same everywhere and there is no guarantee of outcomes when strategies are implemented. Success depends on how strategies are implemented much than what the strategy is. Implementation challenges are common to teachers and instructional leaders, hence, Campbell et al. (2018), came up with the following turn-around strategies aiming at improving existing performance in underperforming schools:

3.2.8.9.1 School reconstitution

This strategy is applied by replacing almost all school leaders and staff as it is believed that new teachers will bring fresh energy and skills. This strategy also come with common challenges like:

- Inadequate number of qualified teachers and principals to replace existing staff
- Lack of high-quality professional support staff
- Loss of effective incumbent teachers who leave during reconstitution process
- Support resources required may not be sustainable over time

Examples of places implementing this strategy are Chicago, Los Angeles and Washington DC. Available evidence suggests that reconstitution has had uneven impacts (Ogbu, 2022), since for example, effects of staff replacement depend on the recruitment and retention of effective teachers and principals. Studies suggest that schools that replaced more teachers were most likely to improve (Rice & Malaen, 2010), but other studies find no difference and some even identified negative impacts (Duke, 2012). This

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is because, school leaders can be trained and be empowered on management of the school to produce good results and maybe there will be a shortage of new educators to replace the existing staff, hence, this strategy might not be sustainable in the long run.

3.2.8.9.2 Innovation zones

It is a strategy in which cluster schools receive additional funding and flexibility over staffing and budgeting. The rationale of this strategy is that with greater funding schools will come up with changes to improve learner performance. The following challenges were found in the implementation of this strategy:

- Schools were unable to recruit and retain effective teachers
- Extra funding sources dried up and could not be sustained

Examples of places where this strategy was applied are Denver, Indianapolis, Shelby County and Springfield and there was some evidence that positive results were attained (Duke, 2012). Good results were driven by the selection and retention of effective teachers and leaders. As much as resources can bring in better performance in the school, it is staffing that can bring change in performance of the school. The teaching staff are the main curriculum and learning drivers, hence, there is nothing that can replace a teacher in the classroom. Resources can boost the teacher's performance for the better but not replace them. A well-staffed school will be able to address learner's personalised challenges and improve their performance, therefore, when funding sources can no longer provide it, challenges will be experienced and learning will suffer.

3.2.8.9.3 Charter conversion

With this strategy, Charter operators take over management of a low-performing school and typically change staff, instructional practices and schedule. This strategy enables schools to hire staff and alter instruction to better align with learner needs, however, common challenges faced by this strategy were:

- Operators are not often prepared to deal with turnaround challenge in the school-based context
- Lack of strong Charter operators' interest

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- Politics around Charter schools may limit conversion options

There is an indication that results are shaped by the preparedness of the Charter operator, access to qualified teachers and support providers as well as local stakeholders. Some researchers do not align with changing of staff members but changing of Instructional practices that did not bear productivity or improve performance. A school therefore, needs to evaluate itself and change to winning leadership practices that can change the complexion of the school; examples of places where this strategy was applied are Tennessee, Massachusetts and California.

3.2.8.9.4 School closure

This strategy is applied because of persistent low performance in schools. Schools are held to high standards; hence, schools that cannot meet the standards are closed - poor performing schools either improve or are closed. If schools are closed, it is assumed learners will attend better schools elsewhere. Challenges that are faced by this strategy are:

- Politics of closure and unaccountability of empty facilities can make the strategy unsustainable over time.
- Poor community engagement practices impede poor performing schools from closing.
- Destabilizing impact of school closure on learners and communities.

Examples of places where this strategy was applied are Oakland and Washington DC. This strategy is very extreme because it is very harsh on school leaders, teachers, learners and the community in which the low-performing school is situated. Learners in that area will have to move to performing neighbouring school which will be costly, if in poor rural areas learners will have to walk many kilometres to reach the neighbouring performing school. The strategy is not clear on what happens to underperforming teachers.

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3.2.8.9.5 Request for Proposal (RFP)

This strategy is when a district requests for a new school and proposes where it is needed, since, new schools are operated by Districts. The rationale for this strategy is that new school, new staff and learners will bring a "fresh start" and build a new culture. Challenges associated with this strategy are:

- Districts unable to attract qualified new school leaders
- Politics and lack of facilities limit growth and quality of the new school.
- New schools are not vetted to ensure they are prepared to succeed.
- Learners cannot all access the new school
- Location and information of the new school not accessible to all learners.

These challenges addressed above gives an indication that this strategy cannot be sustained since it is costly and getting qualified teachers and learners who might be able to access the school with ease. Baltimore, Cleveland, Denver, New Orleans, New York, Philadelphia and Indianapolis are examples of places where this strategy was implemented. In New Orleans, initially sustained improvement of academic performance in the new school but there has been a decline lately. In Baltimore, new schools struggled to make academic gains and eventually closed. According to Campbell et al (2018), there are questions to ask when choosing or assessing an improvement strategy. Every strategy has a distinctive way to improve the performance of schools.

The following critical questions need to be asked:

- Do schools have the staff they need? If not, are there strategies to attract them? School improvement strategies need qualified teachers and school leaders.
- A school needs to assess the quality and quantity of its talent for them to adjust policies related to recruitment, placement, training and development.
- What role can Districts play?
- Can the school build support and survive opposition?

Districts need to support school improvement initiatives; they need to work together to contribute to the improvement strategy. Lack of collaboration between the two can

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hamper success of schools. Success of underperforming schools depend on the loyal constituency the school build. Families and educators need to hold hands and find natural leaders who are willing to partner with the school. Improvement strategies need support from multiple levels - families, teachers, funders, business community and the public. Instructional leaders can build trust by being transparent and realistic and avoid overprovisioning and under-delivery.

- Can Instructional leaders monitor the success of the strategy?

Schools should communicate challenges that exist in low-performing schools and strategies clearly to reverse underperformance. Leaders need to be transparent about progress or lack thereof so that the school should be accountable. Instructional leaders should know strategies that work best and under which condition. Progress and lack thereof should be opened to the school community.

- Are long term financial resources available?

Many improvement strategies require the insertion of resources. Each strategy ‘s long term financial obligations should be assessed and plans to sustain it be put in place.

According to Green (2010), there are four leadership aspects that positively impact to the efficacy of schools. Researchers (Turner, 2002; Leithwood, Harris & Srauss, 2010; Herman, Dawson, Dee, Greene, Maynard, Redding & Darwin, 2008) have demonstrated that principals have used these four dimensions to turn struggling schools into schools that excel. Among the four dimensions of leadership are - self-and-other-awareness, recognising the intricacy of organisational life, establishing connections that create bridges and applying best practices for leadership. These four dimensions are explained as to how they can improve academic performance in schools:

- Self-awareness and mutual understanding

School leaders must have a thorough understanding of both them and the school before they can effectively lead it (Hartung, 2020). Furthermore, when school administrators are conscious of who they are, their limitations and areas in which they need to be made

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stronger, they will understand how to use their abilities and qualities to their fullest to support learners in the school to improve their performance.

- Recognising the intricacy of organisational life

Schools are social systems, hence, the interdependence of its constituent parts such as structure, climate, culture and interpersonal interactions, have a significant impact on the cooperative partnership among the school (Steding & Ciancutti, 2001). Internal and external culture affect the institutional organisation at a school. Another crucial factor is the atmosphere of the school. The leader must promote favourable school environment that impacts how teachers and other people understand their work environment and efficacy (Fredrickson, 2003; Killinger and Wade – Wolley, 2012). They further identified the following aspects that need to be taken into account for the school to perform how school administrators communicate with one another, equitable task distribution, and organising people into groups to finish projects is significant as well as creating a channel of communication, passing laws and restrictions that controls people's behaviour. These actions by leaders foster teaching, make teachers happy and encourage them to stick around and start producing desirable results (Du Four, 2004).

- Collaboration/ Partnership

For school administrators to run a school efficiently, they must establish favourable interactions with all parties involved, both inside and beyond the school administrators (Green, 2010). Every relationship matters. Within the school community, parent- teacher connections have a significant impact on the schools. Principal/teacher, teacher/teacher, teacher/learner relationships are important and have an impact on the school atmosphere and culture. Relationships involve verbal and non-verbal communication, hence, refraining from passing judgement and actively listening were found to be beneficial strategies. Clearly, that collaboration between all stakeholders is beneficial to the performance of the school for holding hands with stakeholders reduces conflict which hampers progress.

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- Best practices of leadership

Best practices of leadership are procedures for revitalising education. School administrators must possess the ability to recognize and make use of best teaching methods which includes, activities, programs and behaviours, to produce desired results (Marzano & Marzano, 2003). According to Green (2020), there are ten steps plans if adhered to, schools can improve from being underperforming to excelling:

Step 1: Establishing the bar of Excellence

The school's Strength, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) need to be examined first, then Root Cause Analysis (RCA), which determines the cause of underperformance need to be established. By emphasising these strategies, leaders can comprehend the requirements of the school and develop a common vision, mission, set of values and strategic aims and objectives.

Step 2: Evaluating the situation as it is

The second step is to evaluate the existing circumstances. The gap in learners' achievement needs to be grasped. Teachers at this stage are frequently assembled in school improvement teams to analyse the situation as it stands.

Step 3: Finding the Inconsistency

The third step is referred to as "discrepancy analysis". School administrators evaluate the disparity between the declared objective or vision and the situation at the moment. They study information to identify the areas of underperformance. Since all areas cannot be addressed at once, priorities must be set. Teacher teams play a bigger role in the process and can help determine discrepancies.

Step 4: Evaluating the discrepancy's cause(s)

Pointing out discrepancy is not sufficient. Initiatives and tactics are to be implemented with the goal of eradicating disparity so that the cause or causes of it is found. Additionally, principals should look at the efficacy of teachers, learner attendance data on learner discipline and instructor attendance levels.

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Step 5: Identifying the change or modification that is necessary

Following successful identification of the disparity and its sources, leadership should determine what adjustments or revisions are required. School administrators are to investigate best practices, techniques and approaches that can be used to resolve or eliminate the disparity.

Step 6: Evaluating the ability to modify or change

It is advisable for the principal to evaluate the school's adaptability. There is a need to confirm the following - the change may need finances, the school 's understanding of the program, techniques to be used and preparedness of the school to work together to attain learner success.

Step 7: If there is no capacity, create it

If capacity as in step 6 above, does not exist, create it. The principal needs to be behind creating the capability through obtaining funding, encouraging group decision-making and creating an atmosphere that supports cooperation.

Step 8: Putting the change in action

It is the responsibility of the principal to carry out the action. In the course of implementation process, frequently, principals should do class visits to support teachers in choosing and implementing effective teaching techniques and give insightful criticism targeting professional development.

Step 9: Performing a Formative Assessment

Formative assessments are crucial to the change process because they provide valuable information, if adjustments or revisions are required. Assessments are also carried out during the teaching and learning process. Formative assessments give assurance to the implementation phase, hence, to ascertain whether expectations are being met, every stage of the implementing process needs to be evaluated (Waters, Marzano & Mc Nutty, 2003).

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Step 10: Carrying out a Summative Assessment

Summative assessment is aimed at evaluating the learners' development in their academics. Summative assessment address two fundamentals:

- Were guidelines followed when implementing the programme?
- Did the completed course produce the desired learner outcomes?

According to Bergeson (2007); Henchery, Dunningham, Gardener, Lessard, Muhtali, Raham and Violato (2001) high performing schools have the following common characteristics that made them to be excelling schools - a clear and shared focus, high standards and expectations for all learners, effective school leadership, high level of collaboration and communication, curriculum, instruction and assessments aligned with standards, frequent monitoring of learning and teaching, focussed professional development, a supportive learning environment and high levels of community involvement.

In conclusion, there is no one perfect method for improving an underperforming school. It calls for a courageous leadership to assess the situation and come up with suitable strategies. People must acknowledge the necessity of change and employ precise and calculated choices to put the necessary adjustments into action. None of the strategies offers a guarantee to improve schools' performance, but any of them is likely to succeed when operated under the right circumstances. When multiple strategies are implemented, it is more likely that schools will transform and find success through Instructional leadership provided. For schools to implement their strategies effectively, instructional leaders have a role to support both teachers and learners for teaching and learning to take place effectively.

The following is how instructional leaders should support teachers and learners to enhance the academic performance of the school.

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3.2.8.10 Instructional leadership support to teachers and learners

For effective teaching and learning to take place in a school, instructional leaders have a role to support teachers and learners to ensure effective teaching and learning. Instructional leaders' support on teaching and learning, provision of resources, monitoring curriculum, continuous professional teacher development, class visits and shared leadership will be discussed:

The main core business of school leaders is to ensure that teaching and learning takes place effectively in a school (Amtu et al., 2019). This support for teaching and learning requires principals, Deputy Principals, Departmental heads and senior teachers. According to Bush (2007), instructional leaders hold the responsibility of giving direction and teachers have the responsibility of implementing it. The Deputy Principals and the Heads of Department hold the responsibility to manage their departments according to their specialities so that quality teaching and learning take place for the benefit of learners. According to Bellibas (2015); Martinez and Mc bee (2020), Instructional leaders should support teachers very closely to improve learner performance. Teachers' perception of their school leaders influences their motivation and learners' academic achievement (Arar, Abramoritz, Daod & Khalil, 2016). Mestry (2017) contends that Instructional leaders are the ones to ensure that academic standards are upheld and that learners should master such in each grade and topic, therefore Instructional leaders by monitoring curriculum ensures that learners are taught according to their grade level and standards. According to Heck and Hallinger (2014), instructional leaders should determine positive learning environment and coordinate teacher's Instructional practices to enhance learner academic achievement. Positive work environment is possible when Instructional leaders give purpose and value to people led (Naidoo, 2019). Maponya (2020) supports Naidoo (2019) that Instructional leaders must give clear communication to their staff towards their school vision. Maponya (2020) further states that Instructional leaders should set a clear tone that teachers need to follow as well as set expectations in academic goals by clear directives to teachers (Sibomama, 2020). They are the ones responsible for coming up with systems in the school to enable educators to perform in their functions.

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- **Instructional Leaders Support by Providing Resources**

Instructional leaders should ensure that sufficient resources are allocated to support instructional activities (Sibomama, 2020). Teachers are supported when provided with educational and teaching resources which are to be provided timeously to enable teachers to prepare well for curriculum delivery. Sibomama (2020) argues that teachers function effectively in the classroom when they have resources required to assist their teaching and learning. Similarly, Mestry (2017), supports that Instructional leaders are in charge of fostering a supportive learning environment, motivating staff and learners by providing resources to advance their instructional methods. Sibomama (2020) adds that by providing resources to teachers timeously, Instructional Leaders will be perceived as effective.

- **Instructional Leaders Support by Monitoring the Curriculum**

The Department of Education (DoE) provides schools with Annual Teaching Plans (ATPs) to stipulate, what is to be taught and by when, and Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) which specifies what is to be assessed and how. Instructional leaders are to monitor curriculum implementation while teachers are to teach. According to Mestry (2017), instructional leaders are obligated to oversee curriculum at school to ensure that learners are taught accordingly, thus, promoting learner performance. Instructional leaders must monitor teacher's work through, supervision of their work schedules, lesson preparations, learner portfolios, assessing learner performance through school-based tests and formal tests, arrange class visits and ultimately provide feedback to teachers and learners' through academic results (Mestry, 2019).

According to Maponya (2020), a well-managed curriculum within the school has a potential to enable quality teaching and learning. With the monitoring of curriculum, teachers ensure that the entire curriculum is covered with learners, including high-order assessment activities. Monitoring curriculum assists Instructional leaders to monitor learner progress and ensure that assessment activities given to learners are planned, marked and learners receive timeous feedback in order to focus on their areas of development. Curriculum monitoring by instructional leaders can ensure that learner is

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taught well as per their grade and curriculum set. Research shows that where Instructional leaders are not monitoring curriculum, some teachers do not complete their teaching plans; learners tasks given might be of the same order or lower; learners task often not marked; feedback given in bulk at the same time, school-based tests are not given to prepare for formal tasks, low number of activities given per annum. Lack of curriculum management support by instructional leaders will jeopardise performance of learners. Curriculum monitoring and support by Instructional leaders is therefore, an urgent part of successful schools. Instructional leaders are to develop teachers for them to grow in their profession. Supporting teachers' professional development is discussed in the next session.

- **Instructional Leaders Supporting Continual Professional Teacher Development (CPTD)**

Brown and Matthew (2016) define CPTD as an all-encompassing, ongoing and complete method to enhance the effectiveness of teachers to guarantee learner achievement. It is necessary that Instructional leaders should provide opportunities for teachers to enhance effectiveness in teaching and learning. Teacher training is vital to ensure effective teaching and learning take place. Literature on Instructional leaders providing teachers with CPTD is reviewed, next.

The professional growth of teachers is essential towards teaching and learning that bring satisfactory performance of learners and that of the school (Ajani, 2019). According to Shah, Khan and Ahmed (2015) and Martinez and Mc bee (2020), teacher training is vital because teachers fulfil a wide range of duties - developing the potential of their learners, role modelling learners and encouraging self-confidence and creativity among learners. Ajani (2019) concurs that teachers' professional development gives them the knowledge, approaches and abilities they need to employ in the classroom; therefore, the quality of the teacher determines the quality of the education and the country. According to Ajani (2019), enhancing teacher skills will bring positive changes and influence teacher achievements. Instructional leaders are to support teachers and learners by doing class visits which is to be reviewed in the next section.

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- **Instructional Leadership Support by Class Visits**

Girardet, Vaudzoz and Crahay (2018) state that the way a teacher manages the classroom has a strong influence on the cognitive and behavioural participation of learners, determining ultimately their academic performance. Bozkus (2021) states that classroom management includes the presentation of the lesson, the duration of the lesson, lesson preparation, setting classroom rules and ensuring participation of learners - there will be no participation if there is no effective presentation of the lesson. This means that Instructional leaders need to support teachers and learners in how classrooms are to be managed effectively and by doing class visits, they will give feedback on how to improve their class management impacting positively on learner academic performance. In conclusion, Instructional leaders play a supportive role to teachers and learners in order to enhance the academic performance of the learners; these leaders play a vital role in schools.

The effect of Transformational leadership and Instructional leadership on learner performance to be reviewed in the next session.

3.2.8.11 Effect of transformational leadership and instructional leadership on learner performance

The impact of leadership practices on learner outcomes in literature focus mostly on Instructional leadership or transformational approach. The two approaches diverge regarding the responsibilities expected of the school principals. Instructional leadership approach assumes that principals monitor teaching activities, while transformational leadership approach views the principal's role as enhancing teaching quality by developing the capacity and dedication of teachers (Bush, 2014). According to Gumus, Bellibas and Esen (2020), Instructional leadership dominated from 1980 to 1995 until giving way to Transformational leadership in the mid-1990s in their evaluation of research on educational leadership models. There has been a shift towards Instructional leadership due to the increased accountability placed on schools to enhance learning. Some studies have suggested that these efforts have a co-existing effect on learner outcomes (Marks & Printy, 2003). Robinson, Lloyd and Rowe's (2008) in their work with

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meta-analysis found that Instructional leadership had at least three times greater impact on learning outcomes than transformational leadership; this elevated the former. Additionally, certain studies (Karatas, 2020) make a case for their cohabitation; Marks and Printy's (2003) work is noteworthy in this regard. These authors established the cohabitation of these leadership styles, referring to this pattern as "integrated leadership", based on data set gathered from twenty-two (22) American schools. They further argued that Instructional leadership required Transformational leadership as a "necessity, although insufficient condition" (Marks & Printy, 2003: 385).

Hallinger and Murphy's (1985) instructional framework was the one most often acknowledged in literature. It covers three sets of leadership activities, totalling ten sub-functions with significant implications for instruction:

- Defining the school mission (articulating and monitoring clear goals); managing the instructional programmes (supervising and evaluating instruction; coordinating curriculum and tracking learner progress); creating a positive school climate (preserving instructional time, encouraging professional development, keeping the school visible, offering incentives for teachers and offering incentives for learning). Principal-centred instructional monitoring activities made up the majority of the understanding of Instructional leadership (Gumus et al., 2018).

Researchers began to doubt the repertoire of instructional leadership strategies in underprivileged schools and the benefits associated with instructional leadership diminished (Cuban, 1984). After the school reforms that called for teacher empowerment and decentralisation, principals were no longer regarded as the main source of educational competence (Marks & Louis, 1997). The 1990s saw interest in the potential benefits of Transformational leadership for schools as it was regarded as the superior leadership approach (Leithwood, 1992, 1994; Leithwood & Jantz, 1990; 1999). The idea of Instructional leadership which includes strong and direct principal supervision and teacher performance monitoring, was seen as comparable to Transactional leadership (Berkovich, 2021). Leithwood et al. (2006) continue that fostering an atmosphere at work where teachers are inspired to pursue a school vision and objectives is primarily the

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responsibility of school management, subsequently, research on Transformational leadership pecked in the 1990s (Gumus et al., 2016).

The multi-factor leadership Kwan 325 questionnaire created by Bass and Avolio (1995) is one of the most used tools in education literature. It represents Transformation leadership through four dimensions:

- Idealized Influence - is the capacity of a leader to articulate an appealing and inspiring vision to the followers.
- Individualised Inspirational Motivation - is the ability to do as expected.
- Intellectual Stimulation - is the process of encouraging and developing followers' concerns.
- Individualised Consideration – is the act of attending to each follower's unique needs and concerns.

Scholars endeavoured to juxtapose the impact of Transformational leadership and Instructional leadership on learner outcomes due to the belief that these approaches are diametrically opposed (Robinson et al., 2008). Berkovich (2021) classified leadership behaviours as either Transformative or Instructional. Instructional leadership was defined as classroom-based practices like creating "a learning climate free of disruption, a system of clear teaching objectives and higher expectations for students" (Berovich, 2021:683), as opposed to whole –school developed practices like "building a common vision" According to Berkovich (2021)'s findings, Transformational leadership had less direct impact on learner achievement. Shatzer, Caldarella, Hallam and Brown (2014) found that Instructional leadership explained more of the variance in learner achievement than Transformational leadership did. Comparing the effect of the two approaches in the United States, the study was conducted, based on a data set that focused on 37 schools (Kwan, 2017). Urick and Bowers (2014) tested the integrative concept by Marks & Printy (2003) and three kinds of principles were distinguished - Integrating, Controlling and Balkanizing. Results indicated that 53,93% belonged to integrating principals which were the majority; balkanizing (22%) and controlling (24,07%). Balkanizing principals exhibited less transformational leadership, controlling principals displayed medium

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transformational leadership and integrated principals showed both transformational leadership and instructional leadership qualities Balkanizing and controlling principals were often men employed in low-performing schools; integrating principals were frequently female employed in high-performing schools (Kwan, 2019). These observations can be seen in actual situations since most female principals are in high-performing schools while most men are in low-performing schools for the latter are controlling and less transformative while women are integrative of transformational and instructional approaches.

Scholars have identified three main responsibilities that school management teams need to carry out - establishing goals and objectives, fostering trust and concentration on instruction. The three have been operationalized and quantified as indicators of leadership, however, no relationship was seen between the three and the two leadership constructs. The variables – setting direction, rebuilding the organization, leader confidence in instructions and developing people - were found to have an impact on transformational orientation, as proposed by Leithwood and Jantu (2005). Scholars, Liu and Huang (2022) have supported the idea of shared instructional leadership; this has a different orientation towards staff development than transformational leadership. Shared instructional leadership is more focussed on curriculum-related matters while Transformational leadership is concerned with development of teacher values and general competency.

Berkovich (2017), found that the relationship between Transformational and Instructional leadership behaviours varies greatly, ranging from comprehensive to contradictory. He went on to say that there was insufficient data to prove that one leadership style was more effective than the other in influencing learner achievement. Knippenberg and Sitkin (2013) pointed out three shortcomings in the existing literature on transformational leadership research: a well-defined set of criteria for the inclusion and exclusion of dimensions, validation of the high order construct and distinct separation of behaviour and effects in the measuring instrument. The conceptualisation and operationalization

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flaws identified in transformational leadership, however, apply also in Instructional leadership.

One important aspect of education has been leadership. Leaders are seen as anchors since they are completely accountable for the organisation's success. According to Leithwood, Sun and Pollock (2017), learning is significantly impacted by leadership and the quality of teaching provided by instructions and the curriculum. Instructional leaders impact on the learning by encouraging a vision and objectives, while making sure that tools and procedures are in place to support teachers in giving their best efforts.

When a school is declared to be failing, the main cause is usually inadequate leadership, which does not often concentrate on creating instructional delivery methods in the school (Wahyuddin, 2017). Badenhorst, Radlle (2008) and Mcbee (2016) concluded that without suitable instructional leadership, no teaching and successful academic achievement is possible in educational settings. Their study showed that there is a link between academic achievement and instructional command.

A school is made up of educators, SMTs, learners and support staff who need to come together as a single unit on teaching learners. According to Short and Spencer (2012), there are many components of instructional leadership necessary for the SMTs to achieve academic accomplishment. Prioritisation of teaching and learning should always be the main business of the instructional leaders of the school in every task. Even though public schools are governed under the Education Act (Ratnasih, 2017), the principal is responsible for the achievement of a school under his/her supervision. The accomplishment of any school's success or failure relates to the kind of leadership which oversees the school. Teachers are seldom held accountable for a school's success or failure, therefore, if a school is demonstrating academic success, it might be assumed that the leader has accepted responsibility and oversees the administration of the establishment. The evaluation of literature offers relevant information on the impact of instructional leadership on learner achievement. Li, Cai and Tang (2023) suggest that instructional leaders ought to be educationally grounded. They further classified

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instructional leaders fit to run schools into six main classification - leadership in instruction, virtuous guidance, leadership that is interactive, leadership in the event of emergency, leadership that transforms and leadership in management.

Effective leadership as defined by Leithwood and Riehl (2005) is more about changing followers in order to accomplish set goals. They further highlighted that achieving well in a secondary school requires taking into account academic rigors. In the case of a school, teachers might not perform at their ideal range in the absence of an instructional foundation for leadership (Mahmood, W.A.Q.A, Ismail & Fauzee, 2020). It is widely acknowledged that school instructional leaders have a strong impact on learning and the quality of instruction. In the literature review conducted for the American Education Research Association, Leithwood and Riehl (2005) agreed that learning is significantly impacted by leadership, second to curriculum quality and teacher instruction quality. Research on schools indicates that instructional leaders have an impact on learning mostly though focusing on objectives and by creating circumstances that benefit both teachers and learners to achieve (Hallinger, 2011). Instructional leaders support the culture of learning by making provision of tools with which teachers can teach effectively (Ismael et al., 2020). Availability of resources and encouragement of teachers and high standards have an impact on how well learners learn (Glewwe, Siameh & Wisniewski, 2021). Principals are crucial players to changing instruction in their schools. Their degree of participation determines whether attempts to change is successful or not. Furthermore, Instructional leaders in poor performing schools usually do not do a good job of supporting and coaching to enhance instruction, as well as giving guidance and resources within professional development and teacher growth (Ahmad & Hamid, 2021). This trend has persisted despite substantial body of research demonstrating the significance of the principal's role as a leader of instruction (Pietsch & Tulowitzki, 2017). Instructional leadership involves a common vision of good instruction; building relationships, empowering staff to be innovative in instruction, giving one another feedback and share best practices (Lunenburg & Irby, 2014).

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Jones provides a good summative prospective on framework for Instructional leadership, roles, responsibilities and duties of a leader (Jones, 2018). It can be deduced from author's work that Instructional supervision is more that dictating and providing regulations to supervising the teaching – learning process. He went further to detail framework of instructional leadership by a list of twenty-five item elements of leadership.

These are: 1) Academic intervention, 2) Balanced assessment, 3) Celebrations, 4) Classroom walk-throughs, 5) Co-teaching/team-teaching, 6) Grading, 7) Professional learning, 8) Instructional coaching, 9) Instructional teaching/Strategic planning, 10) Leadership teams, 11) Mentoring, 12) Needs assessment/Strategic, 13) Peer review of learner's work, 14) Personnel and budgets , 15) Policies and procedures, 16) Professional development workshop, 17) Professional learning community, 18) Rigor/relevance framework, 19) Master schedule/teacher assignments, 20) Staff meetings, 21) Staff reviews and evaluation, 22) Student achievement and data analysis , 23) Teacher incentives and rewards, 24) Teacher observations/study tours and 25) Vision/Mission/Goals.

The National Association of secondary school principals (Gram-Hassen, 2021), assert that principals should provide leadership in the school community, but argued that the principal should not act alone and Reid in (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970), the principal of Jamaica Observer, alluded to the idea that principals are ineffective when there is decrease in school performance. Allen, the principal of Shortwood Teacher's college in the same article stated that problems faced in the school are often compounded by poor command by the school leaders. From these two sources one can ascertain that the concept of good or sound leadership is linked to the success of any educational institution. Instructional leaders are to continuously monitor learner's progress towards school achievement and teacher effectiveness in accomplishing set goals (Chua, 2012). Instructional leaders can consistently utilize appraisal of teachers which includes classroom visitations and consistent feedback. Donaldson in (Blasé' & Blasé', 1999) endorsed the view that evaluation practices in schools manifest in various inadequacies such as absence of quality feedback to teachers by those conducting the process.

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Feedback is mostly beneficial as it allows the teacher to re-assess his/her strategies to garner achievement in the school. A principal who deems himself/herself an institutional leader will consistently review the evaluation and supervision processes in the school. An effective principal engages in Instructional activities which promote learner achievement (Aryanti & Suhardan, 2020). Gurr, Drysdale, Longmuir and McCrohan (2019) reinforced the idea that Instructional leadership could have positive impact on teaching and learning environment and processes leading to improvements in learners' performance.

A report by Keitty (2015) maintains that the nature of schools has little or no effect on learner achievement, concluding that family background was the key factor influencing learner achievements, but Cruickshank (2017) refuted this point as he believed school leadership behaviour is critical in determining the quality of education. The researcher aligns with the latter that school leadership practices are the determining quality of education. Family support boosts the educational support of the learner for the better but cannot operate in solo without the contribution of the school. Cruikshank (2017) furthered his research on instructionally effective schools in Detroit using previous review of studies involving New York, California and Michigan, and he concluded that school factors have predominantly contributed towards creation of instructionally effective schools. These factors include among others, administrative leadership, high expectations in learner achievements, orderly but not oppressive school climate and conducive atmosphere to instructional processes. The definition of instructional leadership is expanded towards deeper involvement in the core business of schooling which is teaching and learning. Attention has shifted from teaching to learning and some proposed the term "learning leader" over "instructional leader" (McMahan & Woods, 2023).

The academic performance of both teachers and learners may be linked to the culture and climate of the institution as well as the type of leadership demonstrated in the school. (Mac Neil, Prater & Bush, 2009). This may have an impact on the quality of academic standards achieved by learners both in internal and external examinations. Every school

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has a specific climate and culture; hence, the organisational leader has a vital role to play in the reinforcement of such to boost the academic standard of the school. A school with a negative or practices of not respecting time on task will ultimately lose many hours that will negatively affect academic performance of the school. Organisational climate is those characteristics that distinguishes the school from another school (Erturk & Ziblim, 2020). Instructional leaders need to embrace a school that has open climate that embraces cooperation and respect for teachers, one whose principal listens to open suggestions, gives teachers the liberty to be creative without scrutiny. This type of climate will boost staff and learner performance. All schools at some point undergo inspection by the circuits, district, province and the National Department of Education (DBE). The effort is to improve and identify areas of weakness to be supported to improve the academic outcomes for all the learners. In addition, the main role of the school principal is to maximise teacher effectiveness and learner achievement. In 2016, the Prime Minister of Jamaica, Andrew Holmes, reiterated that any school that is performing well has a strong leadership, Hutton (2013). The varied and wide disparity in performance are due to the differences in leadership.

3.3 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, there is no one perfect method for improving an underperforming school. It calls for a courageous leadership to assess the situation and come up with suitable strategies. People must acknowledge the necessity of change and employ precise and calculated choices to put the necessary adjustments into action. None of the strategies offers a guarantee to improve schools' performance, but any of them is likely to succeed when operated under the right circumstances. When multiple strategies are implemented, it is more likely that schools will transform and find success through Instructional leadership provided. For schools to implement their strategies effectively, instructional leaders have a role to support both teachers and learners for teaching and learning to take place effectively. The following chapter focuses on research design and methodology.

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CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The literature review on this subject was covered in detail in the previous chapter. The methodological procedures used in this study are the main topics of this chapter. The discussions commence with details on the research design, the paradigm, the sampling type and phase of sample population recruitment. The use of questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and document reviews as research instruments in this study is justified. The methods for data analysis employed in this investigation are described in connection with the research tools utilized.

Concerns about trustworthiness are discussed in the context of this study in order to ascertain that all data is accurate, consistent, and credible. The procedures taken will guarantee that ethical concerns are adhered to during this study are described. Finally, a few restrictions that affected this study are talked about.

4.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Leavy (2022) views research methodology as a plan to follow to build “a house”, therefore a good research methodology explains the procedure that a researcher must follow to conduct the study in detail, while Rudolph, Leedy and Ormod (2015) define research methodology as “systematic process of collecting, analysing and interpreting information in order to increase our understanding of a phenomena about which we are interested or concerned”. Research methodology is described as encompassing several components and involves adhering to fundamental principles that guide the entire process. These principles include objectivity, validity, reliability and ethical considerations. The choice of techniques depends on the nature of the research questions, the type of data needed and the research design. Research methodology also involves the use of tools to facilitate

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data collection, analysis and interpretation. By following a systematic process, researchers ensure that their study is methodologically sound and capable of producing reliable results.

Rudolph et al. (2015) focus on the comprehensive nature of research methodology, highlighting its role in guiding researchers through the entire process - from conceptualisation to dissemination of findings. By employing principles, techniques and tools systematically, researchers can effectively investigate phenomena.

4.3 RESEARCH PARADIGM

Research paradigm refers to a theoretical or philosophical ground for the research work (Walker, 2010). De Kock (2015) describes the term “paradigm” as the researcher’s ‘worldview’ while Guba and Lincoln (1994) define research paradigm as a core framework of beliefs, assumptions and rules that govern the conduct of research, the perception of knowledge and the interaction between researchers and the phenomena they are examining. According to Willis (2007), research paradigm comprises of four elements - Epistemology, Ontology, Methodology and Axiology.

According to Butecea (2017), there are four research paradigms - positivism/positivist, anti-positivism/ interpretivism/ constructivist, critical/ transformative and pragmatism/ pragmatic (Butucea, 2017). The choice of paradigm determines the research design and methods. This study was underpinned by pragmatism as a research paradigm that can adopt a mixed-research design and provides a middle position methodologically and philosophically (Johnson & Onwuegbbuzie, 2004; Cresswell, Plano & Clark, 2023; Dawadi, Shresha & Giri, 2021). Pragmatic approach was adopted because it allows researcher’s flexibility to adopt the most practicable approach to address research questions. This flexibility allowed the researcher to derive singular and multiple realities from the quantitative and qualitative research (Creswell, Plano & Clark, 2023). The pragmatist approach was appealing and relevant to this study not only because of its compatibility with the design adopted, but also because it offered the researcher great

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opportunities to have an in-depth understanding of the instructional leadership practices of the SMT. The rationale, therefore, for adopting the pragmatic paradigm in this study is that the approach embraces both positivist or anti-positivist paradigms of quantitative design and the constructivist or interpretive paradigm of qualitative design to answer the research questions (Creswell et al., 2023). According to McBeath (2023), the pragmatism paradigm assists in connecting theory to data by allowing the researcher to move forward and backward between deduction and induction, therefore, by integrating the results of quantitative and qualitative research, this study helped the researcher connect theory to data and make inferences from data without making initial assertions about the social world. Quantitative research is objective and qualitative research is subjective, however, a pragmatic approach to research challenges the traditional distinctions between them in the conduct of research. Brierley (2017) asserts that pragmatists, at some stage during research, took an objective approach by not interacting with the subjects, while at other stages, it took a more subjective approach by interacting with the subjects to construct realities (Morgan, 2022; Gobo, 2023). With inferences from data, quantitative research seeks to generalize its results, while the results of qualitative research are context-specific (Brierley, 2017), although a pragmatic approach allows for the transferability of the results (Morgan, 2022). It also helps to ensure the validity and reliability of the research (Newman & Gough, 2020). Determining the research problem is considered the first step associated with research methodology and supports defining the scope and objectives of the study by creating the foundation for achieving certain aspects (Farrow et al., 2020). A well-defined research question is important for guiding the research process and facilitating focus on the data collection methods.

Based on the elements of research paradigm, pragmatists process reality as a fluid and developing entity, influenced by human experiences and interactions as Ontology, highlights the pragmatic implications of knowledge and usefulness rather than fixating on absolute facts as epistemology. A mixed-methods approach utilises a combination of both qualitative and quantitative methodologies to effectively answer research concerns and emphasises the usefulness of research findings to solve existing world problems

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4.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

This study adopted an explanatory sequential mixed design to analyse the instructional practices adopted by the school management teams in improving the performance of underperforming schools.

The quantitative data were first collected using structured questionnaires from the SMTs and senior teachers in Mopani West District. The results then informed the researcher in designing the qualitative instrument (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2012). Subsequently, a semi-structured interview was administered to the school management teams and senior educators in underperforming schools.

4.5 RESEARCH SETTING

Research setting is the area where research data is collected (Akcam, Guney & Cresswell, 2019). The study took place at Mopani West Education District, Limpopo Province, South Africa. Nine underperforming schools, according to the previous year's results were investigated.

4.6 POPULATION

A population of study entails a group of people the researcher aims to obtain information from to answer the research question (Van Rensburg & Goede, 2019). This study's population comprised of principals, deputy principals, and departmental heads of underperforming schools in the Mopani West District of Limpopo Province.

4.6.1 Sampling

"A sample is a group of people, objects, or items that are taken from a large population for a measurement," states Mujere (2016: 365). According to the author, sampling is also defined as the process of choosing a notable population that possesses noteworthy characteristics that are crucial for the research study. In order to generate data that

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accurately represents the population under study, small sample groups are selected from the population (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2017). In this investigation, purposeful sampling was used. Purposive sampling, according to Ritchie, Lewis and Elam (2013), is a technique used to choose participants whose traits or attributes will complement the phenomenon under study. There were 45 SMT members (9 principals, 9 deputy principals, 18 departmental heads and 9 senior teachers) who were chosen through the use of purposeful sampling from 9 underperforming schools in the Mopani West District of the Limpopo District, South Africa. The sampled school's principals were contacted during the study's recruitment phase, and the purpose of the investigation was described. Permission to conduct this study was sought from the Department of Basic Education (DBE) in the Limpopo Province,

The Limpopo Department of Basic Education has designated some secondary schools as “underperforming schools” based on the previous year's National Senior Certificate (NSC) results. The SMT members were specifically chosen to be considered as “information-rich key informants” since they have between three and seven years of first-hand experience with the phenomenon under investigation (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). Based on their more than 20 years of management experience as well as, and perhaps more importantly, their knowledge and experiences in the context of the underperforming schools. Management members are ultimately responsible for the NSC results in secondary schools, hence, the SMT members were identified as information-rich participants for the study.

The schools were chosen based on the NSC results from the previous three years, which showed their pass rates below 70%. As a result, the schools are designated as an “underperforming” and placed on the Limpopo Department of Basic Education’s underperforming schools list. The National Strategy for Learner Attainment (NSLA) Framework (2007), School's Improvement Plans (SIP), Academic Improvement Plans (AIP), annual Academic Performance Report (AAPR), audit of written work tools, assessment plans, content coverage tools, term analysis of results, minutes books (SMT and staff), master file, curriculum monitoring tools, lesson preparation monitoring tool

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from the 9 selected schools were analysed. The schools' improvement plans were selected because they include the fundamental tactics employed by the schools' SMTs in their efforts to raise the NSC results. The NSLA Framework (2007) was chosen in its current form.

4.6.2 Sampling Procedure

In the sampling procedure, proper planning was done to select the study participants accurately who represent the target population; hence, the first step was to collect the list of 9 underperforming secondary schools in the Mopani West District. The sampling technique entailed a targeted sample of SMTs and senior educators, which are 9 Principals, 9 deputy principals, 18 departmental heads (two departmental heads from each of the 9 underperforming schools), and 9 senior teachers who are regarded as part of school management teams; they were purposively sampled from Mopani West District. The purposive random sampling method was adopted to ensure the representation of various categories of underperforming schools, including urban and rural schools, and to consider the socio-economic backgrounds of different populations of learners from the 13 circuits in the district. This supported the capturing of diversity in the underperforming schools in the Mopani West District. In the sampling procedure, it is essential to maintain transparency, ethics, and fairness. It has been determined that employing a systematic sampling procedure helps provide valuable insights linked with instructional leadership practices that improve the performance of underperforming secondary schools in the Mopani West District.

Firstly, structured questionnaires were distributed to the 9 school principals,9 deputy principals, 18 departmental heads and 9 senior teachers and be complemented by semi–structured interviews to gain additional information with 6 principals, 6 deputy principals, 6 departmental heads, and 6 senior teachers was selected from different circuits.

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4.6.3 Sample Size

For the quantitative data collection, a total of 45 SMT's had completed questionnaires through Google forms shared with the participants. The SMTs composed of 9 principals, 9 deputy principals, 18 departmental heads and 9 senior teachers who are the management in the schools. Qualitative interviews were done face-to-face with 6 principals, 6 deputy principals, 6 departmental heads and 6 senior teachers who were purposively sampled from the 9 underperforming schools in Mopani West District.

4.7 DATA COLLECTION STRATEGIES

A Mixed-method design was used for this study; hence, data was collected through quantitative and qualitative designs as follows:

4.7.1 Quantitative Data Collection Strategy

4.7.1.1 Questionnaires

Structured questionnaires were administered to all School Management Teams from the 9 underperforming schools in the district, 9 Principals, 9 deputy principals, 18 departmental heads and 9 senior teachers. A questionnaire enabled the researcher to easily access the information of the participants (Morgan & Harmon, 2001).

4.7.2 Qualitative Data Collection Strategies

4.7.2.1 Interviews

As a follow-up to gain additional and detailed information about the research questions, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 6 principals, 6 deputy principals, 6 departmental heads, and 6 senior educators. A random sampling procedure was applied to select the participants from underperforming schools. Semi-structured interviews were followed to gain more information on instructional practices related to the research questions (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2012).

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4.8 DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

This is a way of analysing printed or computer-based materials. Document analysis requires their examination and interpretation to understand and develop empirical knowledge (Salaum, Mills& Usher, 2014; Bowen, 2009); this is a typical data-analysing technique in research, and it enables the researcher to comprehend the context and the backdrop of the investigated phenomenon (Creswell, Coleman, Smith, Swainson, Slee & Sheiki, 2016). Documentation such as minute's books (SMT and staff), curriculum journal and subjects' departmental files were analysed for information.

4.9 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis entails scrutinizing and elucidating data to make sense, obtain understanding and develop factual knowledge (Chamberlain, Stochl, Redden & Grant, 2008). The analysis begun with - preparing data, defining the units of analysis, developing categories and coding, testing coding on sample text, coding all text, assessing coding consistency, drawing conclusions, and reporting on methods and findings.

The researcher employed verification and triangulation to confirm the precision and validity of the data analysis. Participation verification involves presenting the findings to the members to confirm their accuracy and completeness (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Triangulation, on the other hand, requires using various sources or procedures to confirm the conclusions (Patton, 2002).

4.9.1 Data Analysis from Questionnaires

Questionnaire data were captured and analysed through SAS/STAT 13.1 software. This method is preferred because of its directedness and applicability to educational and social research, its comparable simplicity of use, and its comprehensive labelling.

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According to Phellas, Bloch and Seale (2011), questionnaires have little administrative costs as the only expenses incurred was related to the production or creation of the questionnaires. Through the usage of a software, questionnaires were sent and completed on the web. The other advantages were that a wide geographical area can easily be covered; they are cheap to administer; they reduce biasness and the absence of the interviewer provides greater anonymity for the respondents.

4.9.2 Data Analysis from Interviews

Interviews were transcribed thematically and verbatim, without annotations for behaviour (for example, laughing, crying, pausing) and without phonetic transcription. The protocols and transcripts were coded, that is, marked (or tagged, labelled) with one or more short descriptors of the content of a sentence or paragraph (Busetto, Wick & Gumbinger, 2020).

4.9.3 Data Analysis from Documents

As Bowen (2009) has stated, document analysis involves skimming (superficial examination), reading (thorough examination), and interpretation. This iterative process combined elements of content analysis and thematic analysis. Content analysis is the process of organising information into categories according to research questions and objectives. The process involved a careful, more focused re-reading and data review. The researcher took a closer look at the selected data and perform coding and category construction, based on the data's characteristics, to uncover themes pertinent to a phenomenon. If possible, predefined codes may be used, as the document analysis is supplementary to other research methods employed in a study.

4.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

Ethics is a matter related to principles and ethical guidelines that form the basis for the investigation to assess one's behaviour (Mirza, Mirza & Bellalem, 2023). All research studies incorporate ethical considerations. The researcher adhered to the principles of

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research ethics to preserve the rights and well-being of the participants. In this study, the researcher adhered to the tenets of research ethics, including informed consent permission, anonymity and confidentiality (Mirza et al., 2023). The University of Venda granted ethical clearance permission FHSSE/25/CSEM/02/2201. The researcher applied to Mopani West District, circuits and schools to conduct research and permission was granted. Informed consent was achieved by providing participants with sufficient information about the study for them to make an educated decision on participation (Broom, 2018). Maintaining confidentiality protects participants' privacy and prevents unlawful disclosure of their personal information (Mirza et al., 2023). The participant's anonymity is accomplished by not associating their names or other identifying information with their responses (Yu, 2020). Participants were assured of their confidentiality that only the researcher and the supervisor would have access to their personal information in order to make it easier to do a follow up during interviews. The researcher ensured that subjects were not coerced or pressured into participation and were allowed to leave the study at any moment, without repercussions (Gordon, Levine, Mazure, Rubin, Schaller & Young, 2011).

4.11 TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE STUDY

Trustworthiness refers to the rigor of a research study, which builds trust and confidence in the findings and conclusion (Shenton, 2004). Mixed methods were used therefore the trustworthiness had to conform to both quantitative and qualitative study. L incoln and Enworo (2023) note internal and external validity, reliability and objectivity for quantitative data and credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability to determine the true picture of the phenomenon in qualitative study.

4.11.1 Quantitative Study

The section below defines the methods which were used to test the trustworthiness of the quantitative study.

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4.11.1.1 Validity

Internal validity determines how confidently it can be concluded that change in dependent variable was produced solely by the independent variable as opposed to external ones (Lincoln & Guba, 1985); hence, refers to how well the study is run (Jimenez-Buedo & Miller, 2010). External validity describes the ability to generalise a study, which is threatened if people, places, or times are poorly chosen (Findley, Kikuta & Denly, 2021).

4.11.1.2 Reliability

It refers to consistency which can only be achieved if a measure will always provide the same result (Findley, Kikuta & Denly, 2021). Reliability issues often arise when the researchers adopt a subjective approach.

4.11.2 Qualitative Study

This section addresses the steps taken in determining the trustworthiness of the qualitative part of the study.

4.11.2.1 Credibility

Credibility is the extent to which the results of a study approximate reality and are thus judged to be trustworthy and reasonable (Wood, Sebar & Vecchio, 2020). Shenton (2004) refers to credibility as the assurance that the study measures or tests what it is intended to promote confidence in the accuracy of the phenomenon under study. According to Bondmass (2013), credibility is influenced by numerous factors, including the inquiry plan, the information collection strategies and the information investigation strategies. The researcher assessed the legitimacy of the data and utilised worthy methods that guaranteed that conclusions precisely reflect the reality of the phenomenon under study.

4.11.2.2 Transferability

Transferability is the degree to which research findings can be related to different settings (Munthe-Kaas et al., 2020). It is vital to affirm that the research is pertinent to areas other

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than the one under study. Employing an assortment of tests and purposively examining strategies can help in moving forward transferability.

4.11.2.3 Dependability

Dependability is an unwavering quality of consistency and steadiness of data collected (Creswell & Poth, 2016). To boost the unwavering quality, hence, the researcher must follow strict conventions for information collection and investigation (Morse, 1991). Unwavering quality can be raised by keeping up a review path that records the choices taken throughout the investigation process (Munthe-Kaas et al., 2020). The researcher checked with participants as a way of verifying the truthfulness of captured data.

4.11.2.4 Confirmability

According to Chung, Biddix and Park (2020), confirmability is the process to ensure that the findings of the study are the ideas and experiences of the participants not assumptions and ideas of the researcher. It is basic to make sure that the research is not affected by the researcher's biases or individual objectives. Participant-checking procedures can make strides in conformability by inquiring the veracity of investigative findings (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

In conclusion, ethical issues are of the utmost relevance in all research studies, including this one. Throughout the research process, the researcher ensured that all ethical norms were adhered to preserve the rights and welfare of the participants.

4.12 DELIMITATION OF STUDY

This study is limited to the Mopani West Education District of Limpopo, South Africa, and focuses on the instructional leadership practices in improving academic performance in underperforming secondary schools. It is limited to the viewpoints and experiences of instructional leaders in low-performing schools (Waters, Marzano & Mc Nutty, 2004). The researcher mainly focused on underperforming secondary schools in the Mopani West District. Geographical location is considered a limitation of the study as it restricted the

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collection of information and data to the Mopani West Education District in Limpopo, South Africa only.

This study's small sample size may not be reflective of other secondary schools in the Mopani West District with low academic performance (Christensen, Stanley, Oro, Carlson, Novel, Shalita & Telitz, 2022). Another limitation was the lack of money for this research, which may impede the ability to collect data from a broader diversity of schools, which would involve visiting all 13 circuits within the district (Edwards & Holland, 2013). In addition, this study is limited to the perspectives of instructional leaders and educators, thereby not involving other stakeholders, such as parents and community members, who may also play a role in boosting academic attainment in underperforming schools (Wahlstrom, 2014).

Despite these limitations, the goal of this study is to provide substantial insights into the impact of instructional leadership practices on improving academic performance in underperforming secondary schools in the Mopani West District of South Africa. By addressing the constraints of the study and recognizing its scope, the outcomes can be analysed and applied with greater precision and relevance (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

4.13 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, research methodology and design were covered in this chapter. The pragmatic paradigm was used to accommodate a mixed-method design. Data was collected through Google Forms and interviews from SMTs of underperforming schools in Mopani West District. The study adhered to ethical considerations of both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies. The trustworthiness is also confined to both quantitative and qualitative research methods. The next chapter will discuss data presentation, interpretation and findings.

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CHAPTER 5

DATA PRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Data presentation, interpretation and discussion of findings are the main topics of this chapter. In Chapter 3, research paradigms were discussed, and the interpretive paradigm was selected for the study and a mixed method of design and Pragmatic approach was selected for the study. For the quantitative data, a STATS 13.1 software was used to analyse the data while for the qualitative method, semi-structured interviews and document analysis were used. Questionnaires and Interviews were completed by school Principals, Deputy Principals (DP), Departmental Heads (DH) and Senior Teachers (ST). After collecting data with questionnaires, a follow-up to gain more information was done using interviews. The data presented in this chapter answers the following research questions:

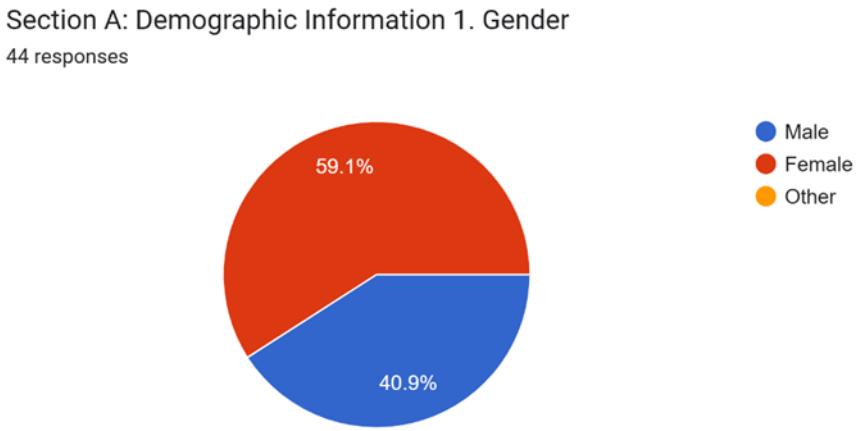
- How do the School Management Teams support teachers and learners in implementing evidence-based instructional practices?
- What is the effectiveness of instructional leadership practices in improving the academic performance in underperforming secondary schools?
- What are the key challenges faced by the School Management Teams in underperforming secondary schools?
- What instructional leadership practices do the School Management Teams employ to improve the academic performance in underperforming schools?
- Which strategies could be developed to improve SMTs' performance in underperforming schools?

The following is a presentation, interpretation and discussion of data collected through the quantitative method of answering questionnaires from Google Forms shared with SMTs.

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5.2 QUANTITATIVE DATA

Quantitative data were collected using questionnaires. A Google form was used to collect data sent to 9 Principals (P), 9 deputy principals (DP), 18 departmental heads (DH) and 9 senior teachers (ST). The 9 schools were categorised, in line with their Grade 12 results, as "underperforming". These schools are underperforming for various reasons and the principals, deputy principals, departmental heads and co-opted senior teachers were requested to complete and submit the questionnaire on Google form. The responses were captured as 100% of the selected respondents. The responses were categorised into sections - Section A was demographic Information, Section B was instructional leadership practices, and Section C was open-ended questions.



Pie Chart 5.1: Gender

- **Findings and Interpretations on Demographic: Gender**

The participants who responded to the questionnaire were 40.9% males and 59.1% females. There were no undecided or undisclosed genders in the sample. This is a representation of the gender parities of SMT members in the Mopani West District sampled for the study who responded to the questionnaire. From sampled underperforming schools, the SMTs comprise more females than men. The sampled underperforming secondary schools comprised more females than males.

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- **Discussion on Demographic Information: Gender**

When comparing females and males in terms of **school management**, several key themes emerge across global and local contexts leadership in school management:

- **Gender Comparisons in School Management**

The discourse on gender in school leadership highlights several critical dimensions, **approaches**, representation**, performance, and systemic challenges**. These areas reveal persistent inequalities while also acknowledging the strengths and contributions of female leaders in education.

- **Gender Representation in Leadership Roles**

Despite the high proportion of women in the teaching profession globally, their representation in senior management positions remains disproportionately low. This trend is evident in many contexts, including South Africa, where leadership roles such as principals and education managers are still predominantly occupied by men (Lumby & Azaola, 2011). Although policy efforts have sought to promote gender equality in school leadership, female educators often face barriers in accessing these positions.

- **Leadership Approaches and Styles**

Research has consistently shown that female leaders often adopt **transformational** and **instructional leadership** styles, characterized by a focus on collaboration, professional growth, and the enhancement of teaching and learning (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011). Conversely, male leaders are more commonly associated with **transactional or directive leadership styles**, although these generalizations vary depending on individual traits and organizational culture.

- **Leadership Effectiveness and School Performance**

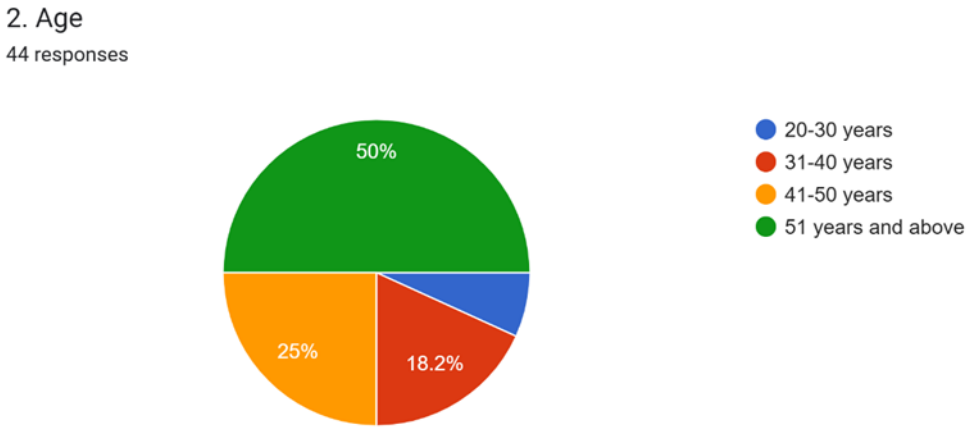
Studies indicate that there are no significant performance disparities between male and female school leaders. Instead, the quality of leadership—regardless of gender—is the determining factor in school improvement and learner achievement. Factors such as

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continuous professional development, strategic planning, and supportive working environments have a greater influence than gender alone (Bush & Glover, 2014).

- **Barriers Faced by Female School Leaders**

Women aspiring to leadership positions often confront multiple obstacles, including gender-based stereotypes that undermine their authority and decision-making capabilities. These biases are especially prevalent in patriarchal societies. Additionally, women are more likely to encounter difficulties in balancing professional responsibilities with familial roles, which may hinder their career progression. Moreover, the lack of mentorship and access to leadership networks limits their opportunities for advancement compared to their male counterparts (Lumby & Azaola, 2011).



Pie Chart 5.2: Age

- **Findings and Interpretation of Age**

The age levels of the sample who responded ranged as indicated above. Fifty percent of the respondents are aged 51 and above. Twenty-five percent of the respondents range from 41 to 50 years. Eighteen point two, 18.2%, of the respondents range from ages 31 to 40 years. This indicates that most of the sampled respondents are experienced educators and should have comprehensive understanding of the concepts underlying the study. Half of the SMT's (50%) in sampled underperforming schools are about to retire. It means that they are experienced in their in the education field. 6.8% of the SMT's are

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between the age of 20 and 30. They are still new in the management positions and need support, coaching and mentoring from the experienced ones.

- **Discussion on Demographic Information: Age**

- **The Influence of Age on the Performance of School Management Teams**

Age plays a significant role in shaping the performance and dynamics of school management teams (SMTs). Its influence is reflected in areas such as leadership effectiveness, adaptability, communication, and decision-making. However, age must be considered in conjunction with factors like professional experience, training, and institutional context.

- **Professional Experience and Organizational Insight**

Senior members of SMTs often contribute a wealth of **experience and contextual knowledge**, enabling them to navigate complex school environments effectively. Their long-standing engagement in education equips them with strategic insight and the ability to guide policy implementation and organizational planning (Ngcobo & Tikly, 2010). Nevertheless, such experience may be accompanied by reluctance to embrace new methods or reforms, particularly in technology and pedagogy.

- **Adaptability and Responsiveness to Innovation**

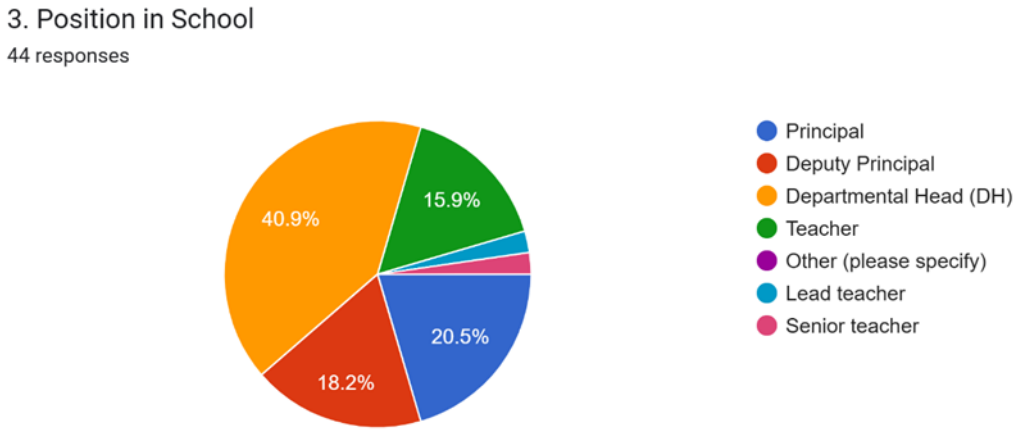
In contrast, younger SMT members typically exhibit **greater adaptability and technological fluency**, making them more open to contemporary innovations in teaching and school management. Their ability to integrate digital tools and learner-centred pedagogies often contributes to more progressive school environments (Bush, Bell & Middlewood, 2010). However, limited experience in leadership may pose challenges when dealing with high-stakes decision-making or managing complex stakeholder relationships.

- **Generational Leadership Approaches**

Age may influence leadership preferences and interpersonal relationships within the school setting. Older SMT members often favors more **authoritative and traditional**

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leadership models, whereas younger leaders are inclined toward **transformational and collaborative leadership approaches** (Day & Sammons, 2014). The effectiveness of each approach varies depending on school culture and specific contextual needs.



Pie Chart 5.3: Position in School

- **Presentation and Interpretation: Position in the School**

In the total of respondents, twenty-point five percent of respondents are holding principals' posts; eighteen-point two percent are deputy principals; forty-point nine percent of respondents are departmental head and fifteen-point nine percent are educators who have been co-opted in the school to assist with management roles by the SMT of the schools in the sample.4.4 % is made up of senior teachers which constitutes the least in the SMT's. Deputy Principals are curriculum heads while departmental heads are specialists of subjects in the schools. The sampled schools have representation of Principals, Deputy Principals, DH's and some have senior teachers.

- **The Significance of School Management Teams According to their Roles**

School Management Teams (SMTs) are central to the governance, instructional direction, and operational efficiency of schools. The team comprises of individuals with specific designations—such as the principal, deputy principal, heads of department (DH's), and in some case, senior educators—who perform distinct but interconnected leadership functions that drive school success.

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- **Principals: Visionary Leadership and School Oversight**

As the lead figure in school leadership, the principal is responsible for shaping the school's vision, providing strategic direction, and ensuring the effective implementation of both academic and administrative policies. Principals are accountable for the overall performance of the school and act as the chief instructional leaders, maintaining the focus on teaching and learning as core priorities (Bush, 2007). Additionally, they serve as the main link between the school and external stakeholders such as the community, education authorities, and parents (Mestry, 2017).

- **Deputy Principals: Administrative Leadership and Organisational Coordination**

Deputy Principals are primarily responsible for supporting the principal in executing daily operational tasks. Their duties often involve managing discipline, coordinating school timetables, supervising staff, and implementing school policies. Furthermore, they assist in monitoring the delivery of the curriculum and learner progress, ensuring continuity in school leadership in the absence of the principal (Bush, Bell & Middlewood, 2010).

- **Heads of Department (DH's): Instructional Supervision and Curriculum Leadership**

DH's provide subject-specific leadership and are key to ensuring curriculum quality and compliance. Their responsibilities include monitoring teaching practices, mentoring educators, and analyzing learner performance to improve classroom delivery. Through these duties, DH's support the professional growth of teachers and promote academic achievement within their departments (Van Deventer & Kruger, 2009).

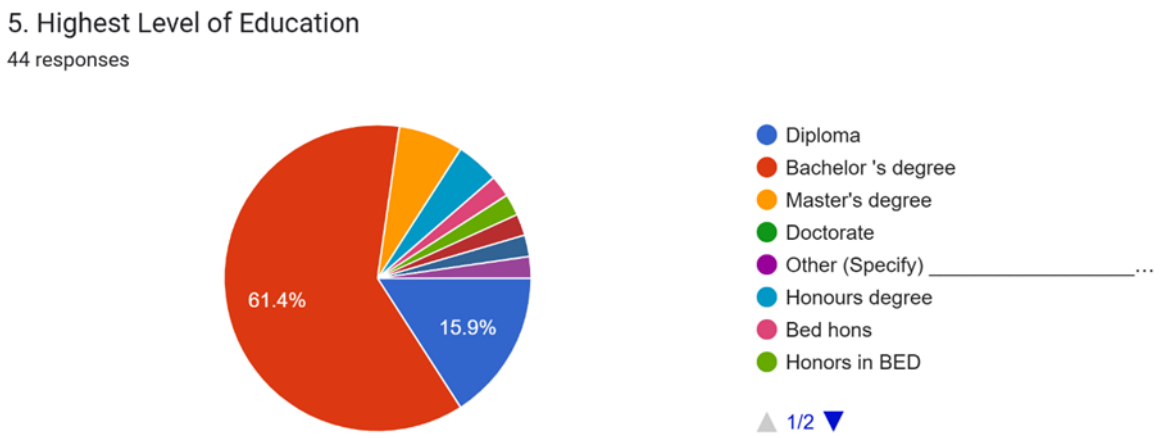
- **Senior Educators: Pedagogical Leadership and Teacher Support**

In many schools, senior educators form part of the SMT. These teachers bring in-depth subject knowledge and classroom experience, which they use to mentor less experienced staff and enhance learning outcomes. Their instructional expertise strengthens decision-making processes related to curriculum implementation and learner support strategies (Department of Basic Education, 2016).

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- **Collaborative Leadership and Team Synergy**

The SMT functions most effectively when leadership is shared and collaborative. A participative approach fosters innovation, accountability, and collective decision-making, allowing the team to address challenges comprehensively. This shared leadership model enhances school effectiveness by drawing on the diverse skills and perspectives of team members (Spillane, 2006).



Pie Chart 5.4: Highest Level of Education

- **Presentation and Interpretation: Levels of Education**

In terms of the qualification levels as a way of investigating the effectiveness of the SMTs the diagram above shows the levels of their education. Most of the respondents have a bachelor's degree, 61.4% (sixty-one-point four percent) while fifteen-point nine percent, 15.9%, have diplomas as their highest qualification. The SMT's are qualified for their positions and most acquired even honours and bachelors of education. Very few attained masters and Doctorate. Their qualifications implies that they are fit for their positions in terms of acquired knowledge.

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- **Discussion on Demographic Information: Level of Education**

- **The Influence of Educational Qualifications on the Performance of School Management Teams**

The academic qualifications of School Management Team (SMT) members play a vital role in shaping the overall effectiveness of school leadership. Higher levels of formal education provide SMT members with enhanced knowledge, leadership capabilities, and the ability to apply educational theory to practice. This has a direct influence on areas such as strategic management, curriculum oversight, and the implementation of school improvement initiatives.

- **Development of Strategic and Organizational Leadership Skills**

School leaders with advanced qualifications, such as degrees in education or educational leadership, are often better equipped to make strategic decisions. These qualifications enable them to engage with educational policies, school governance frameworks, and leadership models more effectively. Consequently, they are more likely to adopt structured approaches to school planning and development (Bush, 2008). Such leaders often display increased confidence in handling institutional challenges and guiding school vision.

- **Stronger Instructional Supervision and Curriculum Oversight**

Higher academic qualifications contribute significantly to the SMT's capacity to monitor teaching quality, support educators, and drive curriculum implementation. Educators who have undertaken postgraduate training are generally more familiar with current assessment practices, differentiated instruction, and curriculum innovation. This knowledge is particularly important for Heads of Department (DH's) who are responsible for maintaining instructional quality and learner achievement (Mestry, 2017).

- **Enhanced Professional Authority and Influence**

Members of SMTs with higher qualifications tend to command more professional respect among their colleagues. This can strengthen their influence when leading change, mentoring peers, or resolving workplace conflicts. Their academic achievements can also

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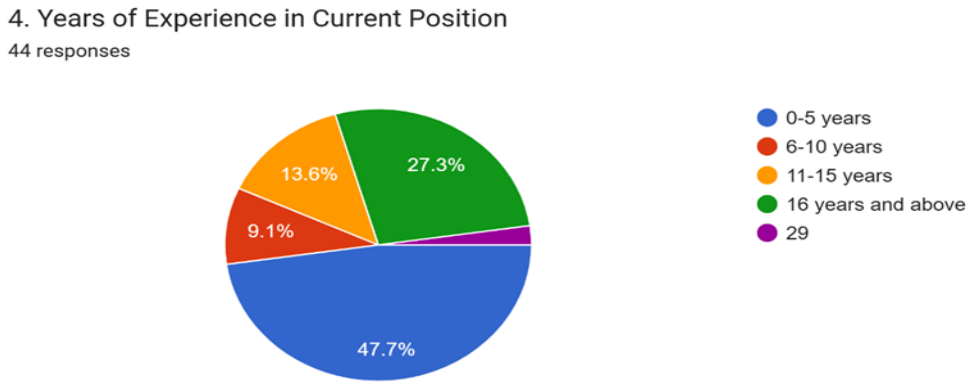
promote a culture of academic excellence and lifelong learning within the school (Van der Westhuizen, 2010).

- **Improved Capacity for Innovation and Policy Adaptation**

Advanced education allows school leaders to better understand educational reforms, school governance changes, and learner-centred pedagogies. SMT members with qualifications in educational leadership are often more open to innovation and are capable of adapting school policies to meet evolving educational needs (Bush & Glover, 2014). Their theoretical understanding supports the development and implementation of evidence-based strategies.

- **Challenges and Limitations**

Despite its value, formal education alone does not guarantee effective leadership. Some individuals may hold advanced degrees but lack essential interpersonal skills, practical experience, or the emotional intelligence required for effective school leadership. Moreover, disparities in access to higher education, especially in rural and under-resourced areas, can result in unequal leadership capacities within SMTs (Heystek, 2011). Therefore, continuous professional development is necessary to bridge these gaps



Pie Chart 5.5: Years of Experience in Current Position

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- **Presentation and Interpretation: Years of Experience in Current Position**

Outlining the number of experience years in the position most respondents are between 0 to 5 years at forty-seven-point seven percent, 47.7%. Nine-point one percent, 9.1% have 6 to 10 years; thirteen-point six percent 13.6% have 11 to 15 years' experience in the position they are holding. Twenty-seven-point three percent, 27.3% have sixteen years of experience and above in the position. This implies that the SMTs' members are experienced in managerial roles and responsibility. The more experienced ones are to support, mentor and coach the ones with low experience. Trainings and workshops should be provided to senior teachers and those SMT's that need it by the experienced ones. Looking into how this underperforming school management teams manage their curriculum from documents analysed. Their long years of experience is not evident. There are not enough means of verification to that effect. DH's departmental meetings minutes and the SMT' meetings are no evident to activities they are engaged in.

- **Discussion: Years of Experience in current position**

- **The Influence of Professional Experience on the Performance of School Management Teams**

The length of time that School Management Team (SMT) members have served in leadership positions significantly influences their performance and contribution to school effectiveness. Extensive experience enhances SMT members' decision-making abilities, institutional understanding, leadership confidence, and their capacity to support teaching and learning. However, while experience brings many advantages, it may also create barriers to change if not accompanied by continuous professional development.

- **Institutional Insight and Leadership Effectiveness**

Experienced SMT members often possess a comprehensive understanding of the school's operations, culture, and context. This institutional memory allows them to make more informed decisions, manage resources efficiently, and implement school policies with greater confidence (Bush, 2007). Their long-term engagement supports consistency in school leadership and contributes to organizational stability.

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- **Improved Decision-Making and Conflict Resolution**

With years of practice, SMT members develop strong **problem-solving skills** and a refined approach to leadership. Their familiarity with recurring challenges enables them to address issues such as discipline, curriculum gaps, and staff relations more effectively. Experience enhances their ability to align school decisions with broader educational goals and policies (Day & Sammons, 2014).

- **Professional Authority and Mentorship Capacity**

Experienced leaders are often regarded as credible figures within the school, earning the trust and respect of staff, learners, and parents. Their leadership history provides them with the authority to influence organisational culture positively. Moreover, they play a crucial role in mentoring novice educators and nurturing leadership capacity in junior staff (Mestry, 2017).

- **Resistance to Innovation and Need for Ongoing Learning**

While experience can foster competence, it may also result in reluctance to adopt new practices. Leaders with many years in service may prefer established routines and exhibit hesitation towards modern teaching approaches or digital tools. Such resistance can hinder school improvement if not addressed through continuous learning and reflective practice (Lumby, 2013). Hence, experience must be complemented by a willingness to adapt and engage with innovation.

- **Stakeholder Engagement and Relationship Management**

Long-serving SMT members often have strong interpersonal and communication skills developed through years of interaction with learners, staff, and external stakeholders. This enhances their ability to manage school-community relationships, improve stakeholder confidence, and foster inclusive school governance (Heystek, 2011).

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SECTION B: INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP PRACTICES

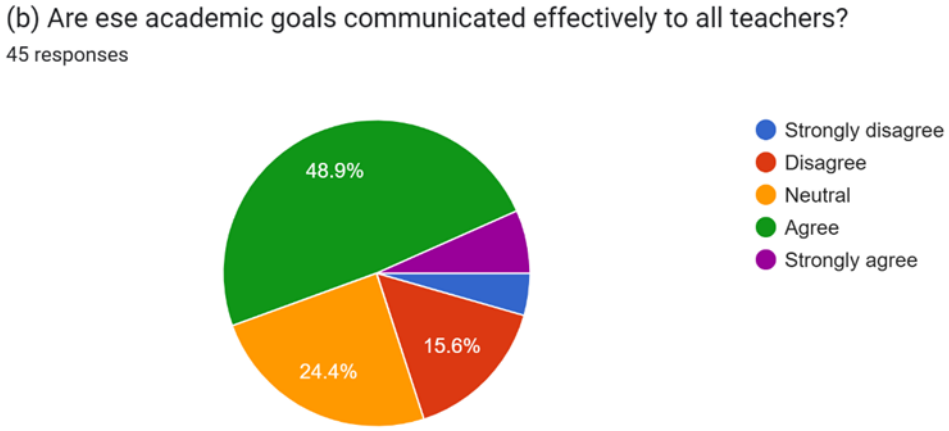


Pie Chart 5.6: Setting Clear Academic Goals

- **Presentation and Interpretation: Goal Setting**

The respondents gave an indication that most of them set clear goals in their schools at thirty-eight-point six percent, 38.6%. Twenty five percent 25% of the respondents indicated that they set clear goals sometimes; eighteen-point two percent 18.2% of the respondents rarely set clear goals; eleven-point four percent, 11,4% of the respondents often set clear goals. 25% recorded that goal setting is done sometimes while 6.8% answered that they rarely while others never set goals. From qualitative data collected, some SMT's answered that goals were rarely set while in the quantitative data collected, some answered that sometimes. This is an indication that some of the SMT's are not clearly setting goals in their schools hence this underperformance. Literature has clearly outlined that where there are no clear set goals, there will be no performance (Tabar, 2014). Interviews have indicated that there is a challenge of not involving stakeholders in most of their schools in goal setting. Through goal setting, Instructional leaders commit all stakeholders to shared goals (Hallinger, 2003). Transformational leaders in the school should strive to generate new ideas to present direction to stakeholders.

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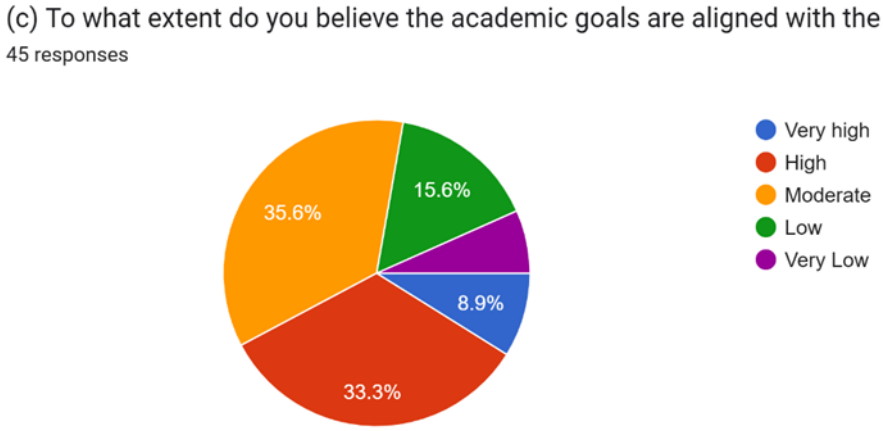


Pie Chart 5.7: Communication of Academic Goals

- **Presentation and Interpretation: Communication of Academic Goals**

Forty-eight-point nine percent, 48.9% of the respondents agreed that they communicate the set goals to the school stakeholders as required. Twenty-four-point four percent, 24.4% are neutral in their respondents as to whether they communicate the set goals as required. Fifteen-point six percent 15.6% disagree - that they do not communicate the set goals as required. Most respondents agree that goals set are communicated to the stakeholders though some are neutral while others disagree to that. Communication by the SMT and Staff was verified from the agendas of meetings held in the documents analysed. The items discussed serve as means of verification. Looking at the minutes from SMT's and staff meetings, not much was recorded to qualify that goals are communicated to teachers and even among themselves as SMT's.

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Pie Chart 5.8: Alignment of Goals with Learners

- **Presentation and Interpretation: Alignment of Goals with Learners**

In responding to the alignment of the academic goals to the needs of the learners the respondents gave the following responses. Eight-point nine percent 8.9% indicated that there is a very high alignment; thirty-three-point three percent, 30.3%, indicated that the alignment is high; thirty-five-point six percent 35.6%, are moderately aligned to the learners needs while fifteen-point six percent, 15.6% are low in terms of the alignment to the learners' needs. The responses given on setting of goals, communication of goals and alignment of academic goals with learners is confusing and does not agree. Same SMT's who responded that goals are set rarely and sometimes; answered that academic goals are communicated mostly to stakeholders and are aligned to learner needs. This might mean that SMT's knows what is expected of their roles and responsibility but doesn't execute them. When interviewed and responds to the Google Form some answered as they know what the right thing is, while others answered as they do. SMT's and staff meeting minutes does not attest to them involving stakeholders and involving learners and aligning them to learner needs.

- **Discussion on Goal Setting**

The establishment and clear communication of academic goals is essential for advancing learner performance and promoting a results-driven school environment. These goals

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provide a structured path for school improvement by aligning teaching efforts, informing decision-making, and facilitating collaboration among all educational stakeholders. The quantitative and qualitative data collected indicate that goals are set by respondents though some indicated that set goals are not clearly set. From the documents analysed there is an indication that goals are set by the SMT's and a directive made to set goals with teachers and learners. Setting of goals in a school can enhance academic performance as follows:

Purpose of Academic Goal Setting: Formulating academic goals enables schools to focus their instructional strategies and allocate resources effectively. Clear, well-structured objectives help educators and learners stay committed to educational targets. According to Locke and Latham (2002), well-defined, challenging goals contribute to increased motivation, better planning, and improved performance. In educational contexts, this implies that learner achievement is enhanced when goals are specific, measurable, and time-bound (Day & Sammons, 2014).

Inclusive and Collaborative Goal Formulation: Involving various stakeholders such as teachers, SMTs, parents, and learners in the goal-setting process encourages shared ownership and accountability. Collaborative development of goals ensures they are contextually relevant and address specific school needs. This participatory approach fosters a sense of collective responsibility, which is crucial for successful implementation (Spillane, 2006). Shared decision-making further empowers school staff and creates a unified direction for school advancement.

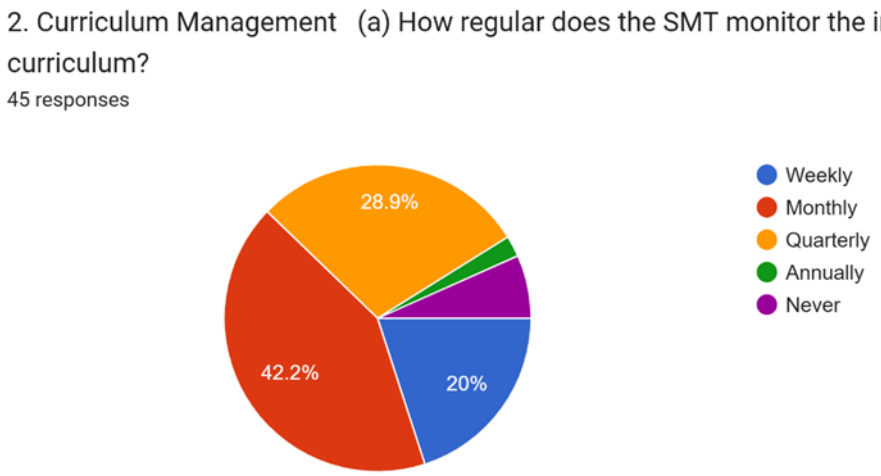
Effective Communication of Academic Goals: Once goals are defined, it is critical to communicate them clearly across all levels of the school community. This can be achieved through formal channels such as meetings, bulletins, school assemblies, and communication with parents. Clear articulation of the goals, including the rationale, expectations, and implementation strategies, ensures stakeholders understand their roles in achieving shared goals (Bush & Glover, 2014). Transparent communication strengthens trust, clarity, and collaboration throughout the institution.

Progress Monitoring and Feedback: Ongoing communication is vital to assess the progress of academic goals. Schools must establish systems for monitoring performance, collecting data, and

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evaluating outcomes. Moreover, feedback mechanisms should be integrated to allow adjustments where needed. Two-way communication, where leaders also listen to input from staff and learners, enhances relevance and improves implementation (Robinson, Hohepa & Lloyd, 2008).

Contribution to School Culture and Performance: When academic goals are strategically set and widely communicated, they help to cultivate a **positive school culture** centered on high expectations and continuous improvement. Clearly communicated goals promote teacher motivation, focused lesson planning, and improved learner achievement. A shared vision also enhances organizational coherence and staff alignment toward long-term development goals (Harris, 2014).



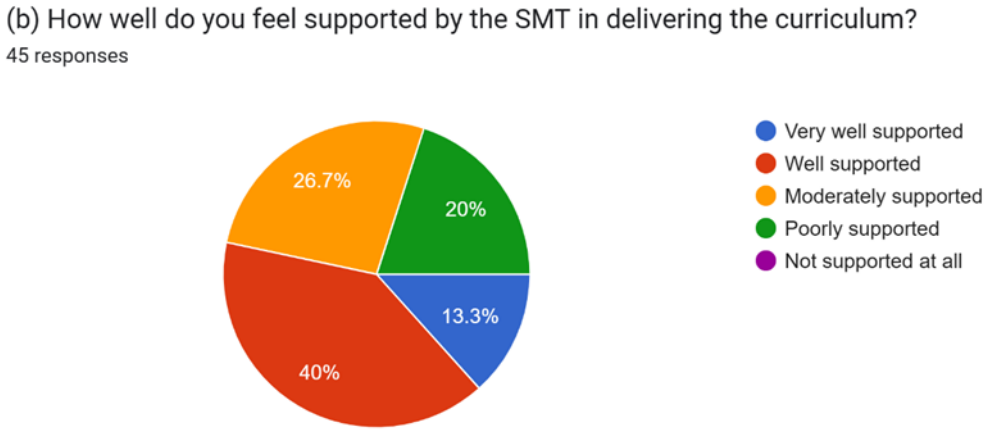
Pie Chart 5.9: Frequency of Curriculum Management

- **Presentation and Interpretation: Frequency of Curriculum Management**

In responding to the frequency of monitoring curriculum implementation, the respondents gave the following responses. The majority of respondents at forty-two-point two, 42.2% percent check their implementation of curriculum on a monthly basis; twenty percent 20% reveal that they check the work weekly; while twenty-eight-point nine percent, 28.9% of the respondents monitor their work on quarterly basis. Most of the SMT's according to google form data monitor implementation of curriculum either monthly or quarterly. 20 % monitor curriculum implementation on weekly basis. The shorter the time of monitoring, the earlier the SMT can detect if the implementation is not in order. It will also allow

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intervention process to mediate timeously. It might be very late to discover that curriculum is not well implemented in the next quarter of the year. The Intervention processes can also be challenged after such a long time while expected to implement curriculum of the current quarter. In the curriculum journals, subject advisors frequently indicated that Annual Teaching Plans (ATP's) were not followed in some subjects. Content for the term not covered. This implies that learners sit for examinations not ready for the papers if the ATP's were not followed and the content set in the papers were not covered by the subject teachers. This happens because the SMT's do not monitor curriculum implementation regularly.



Pie Chart 5.10: SMT Support in Delivering Curriculum

- **Presentation and Interpretation: SMT Support in Delivering Curriculum**

The pie chart illustrates responses to the question "(b) How well do you feel supported by the SMT in delivering the curriculum?" from a total of 45 respondents. The distribution of responses is as follows:

- 13.3% of respondents feel "Very well supported".
- 40% of respondents feel "Well supported".
- 26.7% of respondents feel "Moderately supported".
- 20% of respondents feel "Poorly supported".
- 0% of respondents feel "Not supported at all".

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In summary most respondents (40%) feel "Well supported" by the SMT in delivering the curriculum. A smaller portion, 13.3%, feel "Very well supported," while 26.7% feel "Moderately supported." Unfortunately, 20% of respondents feel "Poorly supported," and no respondents feel "Not supported at all."

The data suggests that while most respondents feel some level of support, there is room for improvement, particularly for those who feel "Poorly supported. “This is an indication that the SMTs are not fully providing support to teachers.

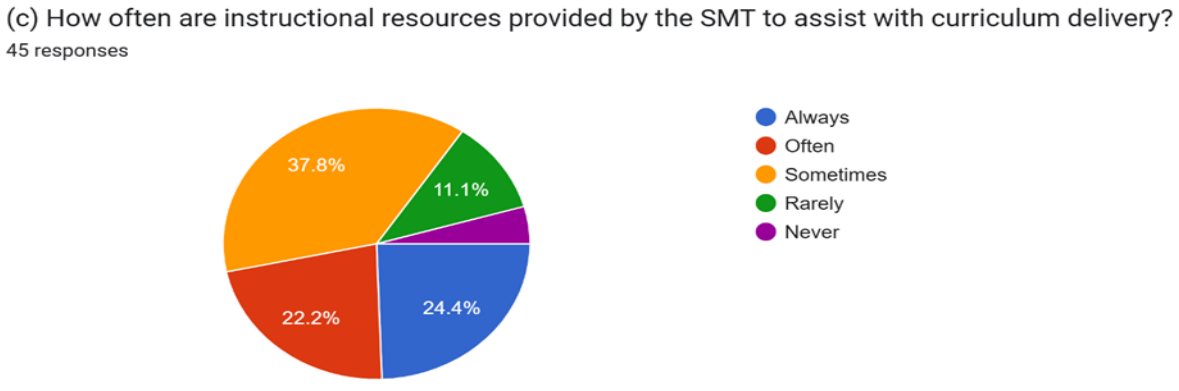
Given that a significant portion of respondents feel "Well supported," it might be useful to identify and replicate the practices contributing to this positive perception, while addressing the concerns of the 20% who feel "Poorly supported" could significantly improve the overall support perception. Mixed opinions are shared by the respondents. Looking into SMT’s and Staff minute books, there is not enough support evidence on curriculum management by the SMT’s. Curriculum journals have entries by the subject advisors that ATP’s are mostly not followed by subject educators in the presence of Departmental heads who are expected to note that when supporting teachers. Departmental meetings are not held regularly to guide and advise teachers on curriculum management and implementation. The evidence from documents analysed contrast that curriculum is well managed.

- **Discussion on Curriculum Management**

The mixed opinions indicates that SMT’s monitors curriculum in some of this underperforming schools while in some schools curriculum is not well monitored. Transformational leadership inspires that teachers and learners should strive for excellence while Instructional leadership supervise curriculum to improve academic performance. Managing curriculum, instruction and supervision, assessment procedures are essential components of Instructional leadership (Arar et al., 2017). For the SMT’s to indicate that sometimes the curriculum is not well monitored, is a crucial concern leading to underperformance (Makgato & Mudzanani, 2019). Instructional leadership impact on both Instructional effectiveness and learner academic attainment (Sattari,

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Khadabandelou & Lashkari., 2021). According to Leithwood, Sun and Pollock (2017), learning in a school is significantly impacted by leadership and the quality of teaching provided by instructions and the curriculum. Further stated that when a school is underperforming, the main cause is the problem of inadequate leadership which does not often create instructional delivery methods. 13,3% of the SMT's responded that are very well supported and 40% are well supported while 20% responded that are poorly supported. While some feel some level of curriculum delivery support, there is a need to improve to those who feel that there is poor curriculum delivery support. 26.7% reported moderately supported which calls for supported to be elevated in terms of curriculum delivery. From interview data, the majority of the respondents believe that curriculum management is well monitored and supported while some responded that curriculum management is not well monitored. This discrepancy may imply variations in leadership effectiveness among different schools and within the same school hence schools are underperforming. Looking into evidence for audit of written work by SMT's, a concern was raised by the frequency of monitoring written work. Mostly, it was done monthly and even quarterly. Curriculum journal also indicated that learners were not given enough written work. If written work is insufficient, it means learners did not cover all the expected content to be taught leading to underperformance. Subject advisors recorded that ATP's are not followed , meaning learners are taught irrelevant content not to be covered in their external assessments.



Pie Chart 5.11: Provision of Instructional Resources

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- **Presentation and Interpretation: Provision of Instructional Resources**

From the chart above, it appears that most responses indicated that instructional resources are provided by the SMT (School Management Team) "sometimes" (37.8%); a significant portion also feels that resources are provided "always" (24.4%) and "often" (22.2%). Some respondents, however, believe that resources are provided "rarely" (11.1%) or "never" (4.4%). 37.8% answered that resources are provided sometimes. From the respondents answering rarely and never, one can deduce that these underperforming schools experience constraints in resources which might be contributing to underperformance. Some responded that resources are provided to them always and often, meaning their underperformance is not because of shortage of instructional resources.

- **Discussion on Provision of Resources by SMTs**

The ability of teachers to deliver quality education is greatly influenced by the availability of appropriate instructional resources. It is the responsibility of the School Management Team (SMT) to ensure that these resources are effectively sourced, allocated, and used to support curriculum implementation and enhance learning outcomes. Effective resource management not only improves classroom practices but also promotes equity and excellence across the school. From the data collected from interviews, the SMTs indicated that laptops and overhead projectors were provided to enhance teaching and learning. SMTs provide resources like ATPs, Assessment guidelines and extra learner-teacher support materials. Underperformance in the schools can therefore not be alluded to lack of provision of resources by the SMTs. In terms of resource provision, SMTs should ensure the following:

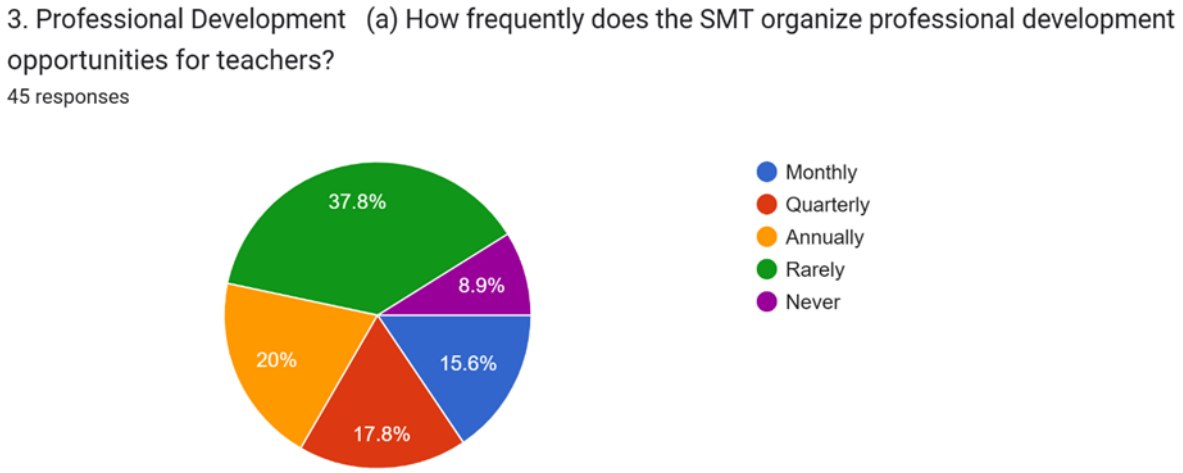
Resource Planning and Distribution: SMTs are accountable for the strategic planning and distribution of teaching and learning materials. This process includes identifying the specific needs of various subjects and phases, budgeting for materials, and ensuring timely procurement and fair distribution. When resources are aligned with curriculum goals and classroom demands, teachers are better equipped to deliver effective lessons

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(Van Deventer & Kruger, 2009). Planning also helps the SMT to ensure that limited resources are used efficiently.

Enhancing Teaching and Curriculum Implementation: Instructional materials such as textbooks, laboratory kits, audio-visual aids, and ICT tools are essential for effective curriculum delivery. It is the duty of SMTs to provide these materials to support teachers in delivering content in innovative and engaging ways. Inadequate resources can compromise the quality of teaching and limit learner engagement, leading to poor academic performance (Bush, Bell & Middlewood, 2010).

Monitoring Resource Use and Effectiveness: SMTs must go beyond distributing resources they should also monitor how resources are used in classrooms. This includes conducting classroom visits, obtaining feedback from staff, and evaluating whether the resources are effectively enhancing teaching and learning. Such monitoring ensures accountability and provides insight into additional or changing resource needs (Bush, 2007).



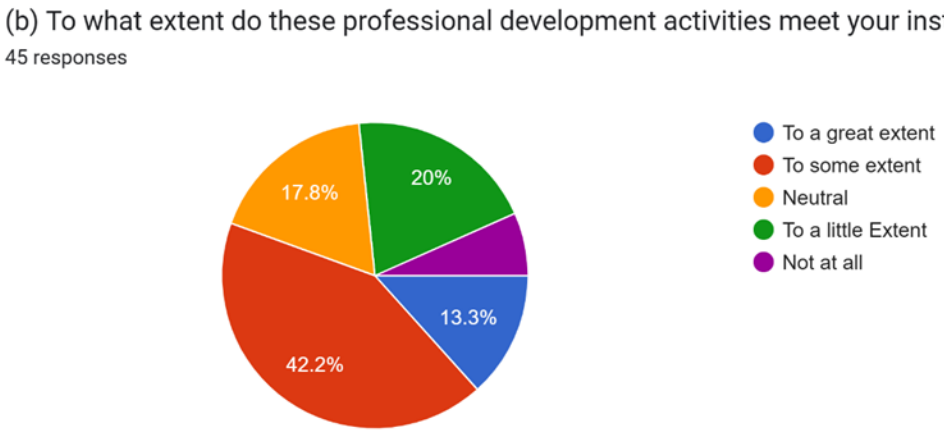
Pie Chart 5.12: Professional Development (PD) Opportunities for Teachers

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- **Presentation and Interpretation: Professional Development (PD)**

The pie chart indicates that most respondents feel that the School Management Teams (SMT) "rarely" organize professional development opportunities for teachers (37.8%). Only a smaller percentage believe these opportunities are provided "monthly" (15.6%) or "quarterly" (20%).

This could be an indication that there is room for improvement in ensuring more consistent and frequent professional development for teachers. Regular professional development is vital for keeping educators updated with the latest teaching methods and educational technologies. Schools depend on professional development programs from circuits, districts and provinces. From interviews conducted, schools mostly used teachers performing from other schools to teach their learners. This process does not develop the teacher with a gap or challenge. It means every year the teacher will be outsourced to come and assist the challenged teacher. It is not developmental in nature. There are some SMT's 8.9% who responded that never provide professional development to their teachers. SMTs are expected to provide workshops and training to their teachers in the areas of their need. Teams in a school become learning centres when they share, plan, act, critique and coach one another. Transformational leadership strives to bring change to their followers. This can take place if there is room for professional development by the SMTs.



Pie Chart 5.13: Professional Development and Instructional Needs

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- **Presentation and Interpretation on Professional Development and Instructional Needs**

The data on the extent of meeting Instructional needs is summarised below.

- To a Great Extent - only 13.3% of respondents feel that professional development activities largely meet their instructional needs.
- To Some Extent - the majority (42.2%) believe that these activities meet their needs to some extent.
- Neutral - 17.8% of respondents have a neutral opinion on the matter.
- To a Little Extent - 20% feel that the activities only meet their needs to a little extent.
- Not at All - 6.7% think that these activities do not meet their needs at all.

The following key observations are made from the data above.

- There is a significant portion of respondents who feel that professional development activities are somewhat beneficial (42.2%).
- A smaller percentage of respondents feel that these activities are highly effective (13.3%).
- A notable number of respondents are either neutral or believe the activities provide, little to no-benefit (43.3% combined).

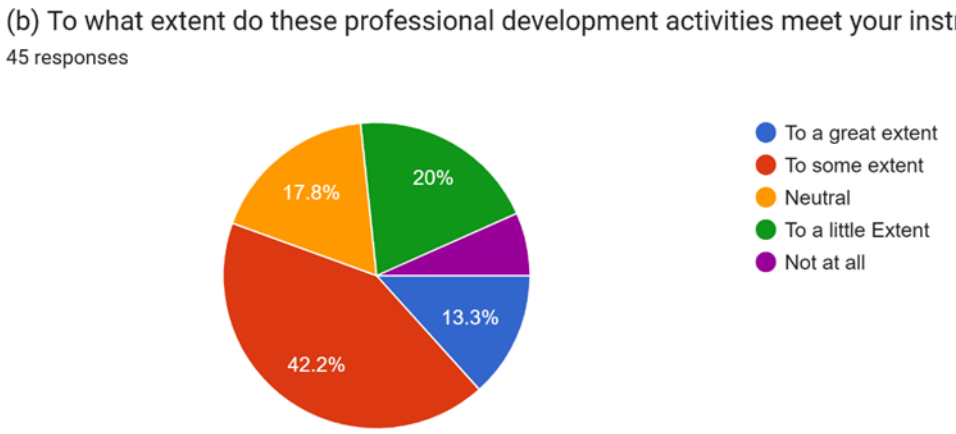
The recommendations to the SMTs are listed below from the responses to the questions.

- **Enhance the Relevance and Quality of Professional Development** - Focus on tailoring professional development activities to address the specific instructional needs of teachers. Gather feedback from teachers to identify areas where professional development can be offered.

- **Increase Engagement -** Develop interactive and practical training sessions to ensure that professional development is engaging and applicable. Consider different formats, such as workshops, peer collaboration, and hands-on activities, to enhance learning experiences.

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- **Regular Assessment and Improvement -** Regularly assess the effectiveness of professional development activities through surveys and feedback. Use the collected data to continuously improve and adapt professional development programs to better meet teachers' needs.



Pie Chart 5.14: Professional Development Activities and Instructional Needs

The Professional Development Activities and Instructional Needs

- **Extent of Meeting Instructional Needs**
  - To a Great Extent: Only 13.3% of respondents feel that professional development activities mostly meet their instructional needs.
  - To Some Extent: The majority (42.2%) believe that these activities meet their needs to some extent.
  - Neutral: 17.8% of respondents have a neutral opinion on the matter.
  - To a Little Extent: 20% feel that the activities only meet their needs to a little extent.
  - Not at All: 6.7% think that these activities do not meet their needs at all.
  - The key observations from the data are listed below.
  - There is a significant portion of respondents who feel that professional development activities are somewhat beneficial (42.2%).
  - A smaller percentage of respondents feel that these activities are highly effective (13.3%).

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- A notable number of respondents are either neutral or believe the activities provide little to no-benefit (43.3% combined).

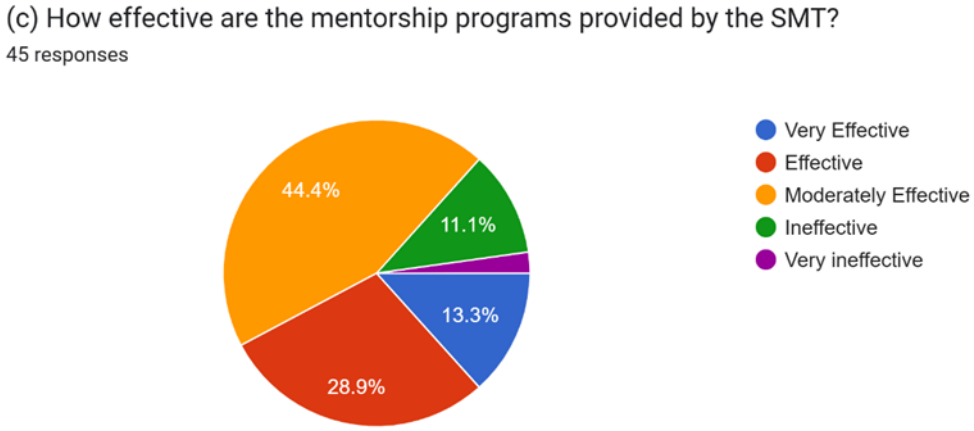
The recommendations to the SMTs from the data are as follows.

- **Enhance the Relevance and Quality of Professional Development:**
  - Focus on tailoring professional development activities to more directly address the specific instructional needs of teachers.
  - Gather feedback from teachers to identify areas where professional development can be improved.

- **Increase Engagement:**
  - Develop interactive and practical training sessions to ensure that professional development is engaging and applicable.
  - Consider different formats, such as workshops, peer collaboration, and hands-on activities, to enhance learning experiences.

- **Regular Assessment and Improvement:**
  - Regularly assess the effectiveness of professional development activities through surveys and feedback.
  - Use the collected data to continuously improve and adapt professional development programs to better meet teachers' needs.

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Pie Chart 5.15: Mentorship Programs Provided by the SMT

Data on the effectiveness of Mentorship Programs by the SMTs is presented hereunder as received from the respondents.

- Very Effective - 13.3% of respondents found the mentorship programs to be very effective.
- Effective: - 28.9% of respondents rated the programs as effective.
- Moderately Effective: - The majority (44.4%) of respondents believe that the mentorship programs are moderately effective.
- Ineffective: - 11.1% of respondents think the mentorship programs are ineffective.
- Very Ineffective: - A small percentage (2.2%) found the programs to be very ineffective.

The key observations realised from the data is spelled out hereunder

- A large portion of respondents (44.4%) find the mentorship programs to be moderately effective, indicating need for improvement.
- A significant percentage (28.9%) rate the programs as effective, showing that the programs do have a positive impact.
- There is a smaller but notable group of respondents (13.3%) who find the programs very effective, demonstrating that the SMTs' efforts are successful for some.

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- Conversely, 13.3% of respondents' collectively rating the programs as "ineffective" or "very ineffective", highlighted areas that may need attention. When mentoring is not effective there will be no professional development.

The recommendations from the data as analysed provide for the following recommendations to the SMTs:

- **Enhance Mentorship Program Quality:** Review and refine the mentorship program content and structure to better meet teachers' needs and expectations. Provide mentors with additional training to improve the effectiveness of their support.
- **Increase Engagement and Participation:** Encourage more active participation from both mentors and mentees. Create opportunities for regular feedback and discussion to address any issues or concerns promptly.
- **Regular Evaluation and Improvement:** Conduct regular evaluations of the mentorship programs to assess their effectiveness and make necessary adjustments. Utilize feedback from participants to continuously improve the programs.

- **Discussion on Professional Development**

During interviews, respondents indicated that most of the schools have professional development opportunities, but documents analysed don't have evidence to that effect. SMTs and departmental minutes book should have indicated evidence for provision of professional developmental opportunities. There should have been mentors allocated to mentees, especially to senior teachers. Some senior teachers indicated that they don't receive enough support, though not experienced in management matters. School-based workshops and training in management matters are not evident in the SMTs and staff meetings to indicate mentorship provided to teachers and to SMTs. Some SMTs in their interviews indicated robbing teachers from other schools that are performing to assist the underperforming teacher and results improved. At times, the robed-in teacher might be teaching in the absence of the struggling teacher, which will not develop the teacher. It might develop the struggling teacher if is present to observe how some content are

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approached for learners to understand. Outsourcing in the absence of the struggling teacher will be a yearly process unless the teacher is offered professional development.

School Management Teams (SMTs) that embody transformational and instructional leadership styles play a fundamental role in the implementation of effective professional development programmes for teachers. These leadership approaches ensure that staff development is strategically aligned with both individual teacher needs and institutional goals.

- **Transformational Leadership and Professional Development**

Transformational leaders work to inspire and mobilise staff around a shared vision for school improvement. SMTs who use this leadership style cultivate a culture of trust, innovation, and collaboration. They encourage shared decision-making and empower educators by involving them in planning professional learning activities. Moreover, transformational leaders foster a reflective school culture where continuous self-assessment and professional growth are prioritised (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006; Shields, 2010). Establishing Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), promoting team teaching, and supporting peer mentoring are common practices aligned with this approach (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009).

- **Instructional Leadership and Professional Development**

Instructional leadership, on the other hand, is primarily focused on enhancing teaching practices and learner outcomes. SMTs who adopt this leadership model ensure that Professional Development is data-informed and targeted toward specific instructional needs. They prioritize Professional Development activities that develop teachers' curriculum knowledge, assessment skills, and pedagogical strategies (Hallinger, 2005; Robinson, Lloyd & Rowe, 2008). Instructional leaders also provide classroom-based professional support such as coaching, modelling, and feedback to reinforce the application of new strategies in practice. Furthermore, they evaluate the impact of Professional Development programmes to ensure they lead to measurable improvements in teaching and learning (Blasé & Blasé, 1999). Professional Development (PD) is a

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central component of educational improvement, particularly when it is guided and facilitated by School Management Teams (SMTs). The role of SMTs in organizing and supporting PD initiatives is instrumental in strengthening teaching practices, enhancing school culture, and improving learner outcomes.

- **Advancement of Pedagogical Skills**

PD led by SMTs enables teachers to regularly enhance their instructional strategies, assessment methods, and subject content knowledge. Through activities such as in-service training, workshops, and mentorship programmes, SMTs ensure that educators are well-equipped to handle curriculum demands and classroom challenges (Guskey, 2002). This continual learning supports adaptability and responsiveness in teaching.

- **Encouragement of Reflective Teaching**

School leaders promote reflective practice by integrating PD into the school's professional culture. Initiatives such as collaborative planning, peer feedback, and lesson reviews create opportunities for teachers to analyse their teaching methods and improve their effectiveness (Day & Sachs, 2004). Such reflective processes foster personal and professional growth.

- **Increased Teacher Motivation and Job Satisfaction**

Professional development initiatives signal that the school values its teachers, which contributes to a more motivated and engaged workforce. Teachers who feel supported in their growth are more likely to demonstrate commitment, take professional risks, and contribute positively to the school environment (Sparks, 2002). SMTs thus play a role in promoting job satisfaction through ongoing development opportunities.

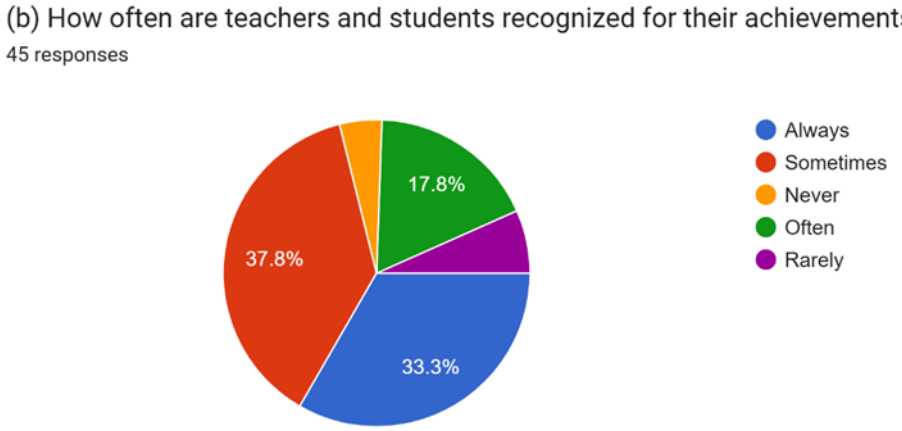
- **Positive Impact on Learner Achievement**

There is a direct relationship between quality teaching and learner achievement. SMT-supported PD enables teachers to implement improved instructional practices that enhance student engagement and performance (Yoon et al., 2007). Therefore, effective PD is an indirect yet powerful tool for raising academic outcomes.

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- **Promotion of Collaborative Culture**

When SMTs facilitate professional learning communities and shared teaching practices, it encourages teachers to engage in collaborative learning. Such collegiality supports knowledge exchange, shared problem-solving, and the building of a unified professional ethos within the school (Lieberman & Miller, 2001). This collective growth enhances overall school effectiveness.



Pie Chart 5.16: Teacher and Learner Recognition of Achievements

- **Presentation and Interpretation: Teacher and Learner Recognition of Achievements**

The quantitative data responses regarding how often teachers and students are recognized for their achievements were as follows:

- Always: - 33.3% of respondents indicated that teachers and students are always recognised for their achievements.
- Sometimes: - The largest portion, 37.8%, mentioned that recognition happens sometimes.
- Often: -17.8% of respondents feel that recognition is given often.
- Rarely & Never: - There are small segments that reported recognition is “rare” or “never” happens (11.1%)

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- **Discussion on Teacher and Learner Recognition for Achievements**

Acknowledging and celebrating good performance is a fundamental responsibility of School Management Teams (SMTs) and contributes significantly to building a supportive and productive school environment. When school leaders recognize the achievements of educators and learners, it fosters increased motivation, job satisfaction, and professional growth (Steyn, 2015).

The key observations from the data are that while a significant percentage of respondents feel that recognition happens always or often (51.1% combined), the largest group believes it occurs only sometimes; however, there is a noteworthy portion of respondents who feel that recognition is “rare” or “non-existent” at 11.1%. Respondents in the interview indicated that recognition of teachers and learners is done in their schools. Motivating teachers and learners is significant for the improvement of performance in a school. The SMT, which does not reward good performance, discourages hard work from both teachers and learners. Recognising good performance can improve the level of performance. Among both teachers and learners, competition will arise, leading to improvement in good performance.

Recognition can take various forms, including both formal and informal approaches. These may involve awarding certificates, announcing achievements during staff meetings or assemblies, or recommending high-performing staff for leadership opportunities. Such practices enhance staff morale and reinforce behaviours that align with the school's vision and objectives (Bush, 2020).

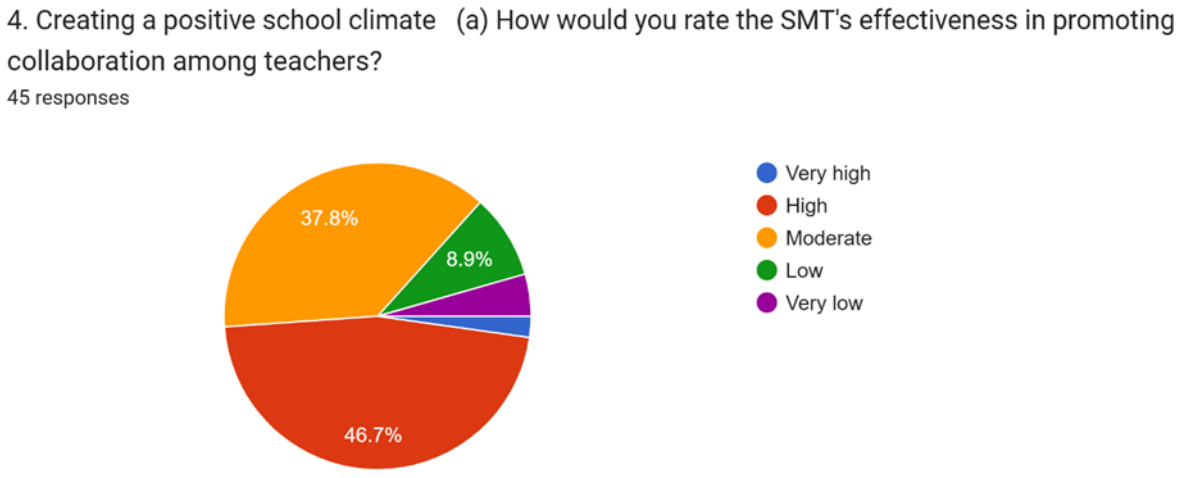
This approach aligns with the principles of transformational leadership, which emphasise individual support and encouragement to inspire commitment toward shared goals (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005). When staff members feel valued for their contributions, they are more likely to remain engaged, take initiative, and contribute positively to the school's culture and academic performance.

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Moreover, recognising good performance contributes to a culture of accountability and continuous improvement. It serves as a positive feedback mechanism that highlights the impact of individual and collective efforts on the school's success. Research shows that teachers who feel appreciated are more committed to their professional roles and are more willing to adopt innovative and effective teaching methods (Steyn, 2013).

The recommendations to the SMTs are:

- **Increase Consistency in Recognition:** Develop a consistent and formalized recognition program to ensure that achievements are acknowledged regularly and visibly.
- **Celebrate Achievements Publicly:** Hold regular assemblies, newsletters, or social media posts to publicly celebrate the achievements of both teachers and students.
- **Create Diverse Recognition Opportunities:** Offer a variety of recognition methods, such as awards, certificates, and verbal acknowledgments, to cater to different preferences and achievements.
- **Encourage Peer Recognition:** Implement peer recognition programs where students and teachers can acknowledge each other's accomplishments.



Pie Chart 5.17: SMTs Creation of Positive Climate

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- **Presentation and Interpretation on SMT's Creation of Positive Climate**

The data on the effectiveness of the SMT in promoting collaboration among teachers is presented as indicated below.

- Very high (2.2%): A small portion of respondents feel that the SMTs are very effective in promoting collaboration among teachers.
- High (37.8%): A significant number of respondents believe that the SMTs are effective in fostering collaboration.
- Moderate (46.7%): Most respondents rate the SMTs' effectiveness as moderate.
- Low (8.9%): Some respondents feel that the SMTs' efforts in promoting collaboration are low.
- Very Low (4.4%): A small segment of respondents rates the SMTs' effectiveness as very low.

The key observations derived from the data are outlined as follows:

- Most of the respondents (46.7%) rate the SMTs' effectiveness in promoting collaboration as "moderate", indicating room for improvement.
- A significant portion (37.8%) believes the SMT is effective, showing that there are positive efforts being made.
- There are smaller but notable groups that feel the effectiveness is "low" or "very low" (13.3% combined).

There is a need for improvement to build a positive school climate for all stakeholders. When a positive school climate is not created by the SMTs in a school environment, it means there is no collaborative working environment, leading to ineffective relationships that can hamper academic performance. During interviews, one respondent indicated that they hear directives with learners as they are announced at the assembly. Senior teachers who are not professionally developed for the expected roles and responsibilities might also feel left out and not perform because of gaps they have in management and leadership. They need to be professionally developed for them to be equal to their task, leading to an increase in learner outcomes. A conducive working environment provides satisfaction and enhances academic performance. When learner' needs are aligned and

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involved in goal settings, they will do their best to achieve them. If goals are imposed on learners, there is no ownership, leading to low learner outcomes.

- **Discussion on Creating a Positive School Climate**

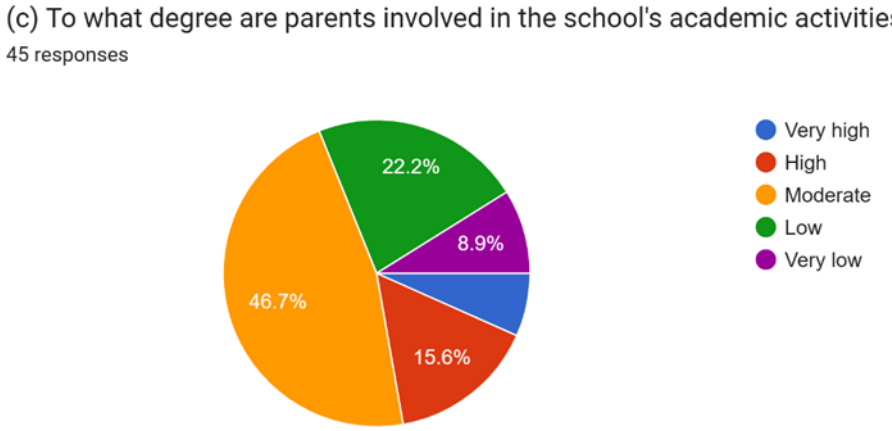
Research indicates that a positive school climate is closely linked to improved learner achievement, better teacher retention, and stronger relationships among school community members (Steyn, 2013). SMTs that actively engage with staff, learners, and parents, while fostering inclusivity and fairness, are more likely to build a resilient and effective educational environment.

The creation of a positive school climate is a strategic responsibility of SMTs. By providing visionary, supportive, and instructional leadership, SMTs can build an atmosphere where both educators and learners can thrive.

The key recommendations to the SMTs from the data received are:

- **Enhance Collaboration Initiatives:** Develop structured collaboration opportunities such as team meetings, joint lesson planning, and collaborative projects. Encourage a culture of teamwork and open communication among teachers.
- **Provide Support and Resources:** Ensure that teachers have access to the necessary resources and support to collaborate effectively. Offer professional development focused on collaborative teaching strategies.
- **Regular Assessment and Feedback:** Regularly assess the effectiveness of collaboration initiatives through surveys and feedback. Use the collected data to continuously improve and adapt collaboration programs.

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Pie Chart 5.18: Parental Involvement

- **Presentation and Interpretation of Parental Involvement**

The data on parental Involvement in School Academic Activities shows:

- Very high (8.9%): A small portion of respondents feel that parental involvement in academic activities is very high.
- High (15.6%): A significant number of respondents believe that parental involvement is high.
- Moderate (46.7%): Most respondents rate parental involvement as moderate.
- Low (22.2%): Some respondents feel that parental involvement is low.
- Very Low (6.7%): A small segment of respondents rate parental involvement as very low.

The key observations discovered from the data are presented as follows:

- Most of the respondents (46.7%) rate parental involvement as moderate, indicating that there is room for improvement.
- A notable portion of respondents (22.2%) feel that parental involvement is low, suggesting a need for initiatives to boost engagement. Interviews with respondents indicated that parental involvement is low. In most cases only Grade 12 parents are communicated to through minutes analysed. All grades parents need to be engaged in the education of their children. The schools might not have involved

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parents of other grades, but Grade 12 only, and that affected performance in their schools. It means throughout other grades, parental involvement is not recognised until the learner reaches Grade 12, hence some parents are not participating because of the school culture developed.

- There are smaller but significant groups that rate involvement as high or very high (24.5% combined). This smaller group is an indication that parental involvement has not yet been observed by all SMTs.

- **Discussion on Parental Involvement by SMTs**

From the interviews, it was alluded to by some SMTs that attendance of parents at meetings is not satisfactory. Some parents are not actively involved in the education of their children. It was also noted in some SMT minutes that attendance of parents to their meetings needs to improve. Every school is mandated to constitute Quality Learning Teaching Committees, which comprise different community structures to enhance the quality of teaching and learning in schools. It might imply that this structure in not functional in these underperforming schools. Schools should also assess times in which parents meetings are held. From documents analyzed , the researcher noted that mostly meetings are called for 10H00 during the week. Nonattendance might be caused by that parents are at work during the week at that time. Again, Saturday and Sunday mornings are busy with many activities like funerals, societies and attending to church. Recommending that SMTs should consult with parents on suitable times to attend meetings.

Parental involvement is an essential element in enhancing learner academic success and fostering a positive and inclusive school environment. School Management Teams (SMTs) play a pivotal role in facilitating and promoting this involvement by ensuring effective communication, implementing participatory policies, and encouraging parents to take an active role in the education of their children.

SMTs act as intermediaries between the home and school, promoting regular interaction through structured activities such as parent-teacher meetings, workshops, and active

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participation in School Governing Bodies (SGBs). Epstein (2011) argues that strong partnerships between schools and families are associated with improved learner achievement, increased motivation, and better school attendance. By making use of newsletters, social media platforms, and formal consultations, SMTs help to strengthen the school-parent relationship and maintain transparency.

Creating a welcoming and respectful school culture is also essential. When SMTs acknowledge parents as critical stakeholders in education, they are more likely to receive support and cooperation (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Furthermore, SMTs can empower parents by organizing training sessions that equip them with skills and knowledge to support learning at home.

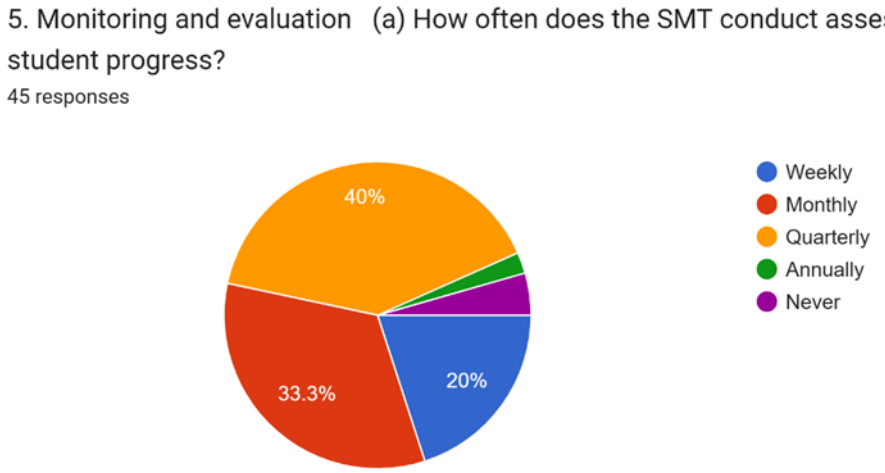
In the South African context, the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 mandates parental representation in school governance structures, particularly in SGBs. This requirement ensures that parents play a formal role in decision-making processes and that SMTs facilitate democratic, inclusive, and accountable governance (Republic of South Africa, 1996).

The recommendations to the SMTs from the data are outlined as follows:

- **Increase Communication with Parents:** Develop regular communication channels such as newsletters, emails, or parent-teacher meetings to keep parents informed and engaged in academic activities.
- **Create Opportunities for Parental Involvement:** Organize events and activities where parents can actively participate and contribute to the school's academic environment. Encourage parents to volunteer in classroom activities, school events, and extracurricular programs
- **Provide Resources and Support:** Offer workshops and resources to help parents support their children's academic progress at home. Provide guidance on how parents can effectively contribute to their children's education.

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- **Recognise and Celebrate Parental Contributions:** Acknowledge and celebrate the efforts of parents who actively participate in school activities, fostering a positive and collaborative atmosphere.



Pie Chart 5.19: Frequency of Assessments

- **Presentation and Interpretation on Frequency of Assessments**

The data on the frequency of assessments to monitor learner progress by the SMT is presented hereunder:

- Weekly (20%): 20% of respondents indicated that assessments are monitored weekly.
- Monthly (33.3%): A significant portion (33.3%) mentioned that assessments are monitored monthly.
- Quarterly (40%): Most respondents (40%) indicated that assessments are monitored quarterly.
- Annually (2.2%): A small percentage (2.2%) reported that assessments monitoring are conducted annually.
- Never (4.4%): A small segment (4.4%) mentioned that assessments monitoring are never monitored.

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The key observations derived from the data above are presented below:

- A significant portion (33.3%) stated that assessments are monitored monthly, suggesting a more frequent approach. Learners need to be regularly assessed and the SMTs should frequently monitor such assessments and learner progress. When monitoring and evaluation periods take place after long duration, learner performance might be negatively affected if learning programs were not effectively followed. Curriculum journals have entries were curriculum advisors recorded that ATP's not followed, written work not adequate and content not covered. Learners will be exposed to tests or examinations not ready hence underperformance.

- There is a smaller percentage of respondents who reported weekly assessment monitoring, while a very small number mentioned annual or not monitored and evaluated at all. Weekly monitoring ensures that teachers and learners are on par with the annual teaching plans. Intervention strategies can be implemented on time when SMTs monitor and evaluate assessments like weekly. Learners will be engaged in weekly assessments which promotes effective teaching and learning leading to increased learner outcomes.

- **Discussion on Monitoring and Evaluation by SMTs**

School Management Teams (SMTs) play a vital role in monitoring assessment processes to ensure the maintenance of academic standards and the achievement of learning outcomes. Their involvement is crucial for supporting effective teaching, tracking learner progress, and making data-informed decisions to improve school performance.

Looking into documents analysed it is evident that SMT do not monitor and evaluate as expexted by their roles and responsibilities. Curriculum implementation, assessments and class visits are not monitored. Monitoring tools like content coverage ones are still not utilized in their files. Curriculum journals by the subject advisors attest to that by findings were insufficient work is given to learners. Annual teachings are not followed in some subjects under the watch of departmental heads. Departmental heads' minute books send a message of non-functionality of departments. Where there is no regular

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monitoring and evaluation, underperformance thrives. Learner tracking of performance is another form of monitoring progress by the SMTs. The SMTs in these underperforming schools need to improve in this area of monitoring and evaluation.

Monitoring assessments includes overseeing the planning, implementation, and evaluation of various forms of learner evaluations, such as class tests, formal examinations, and continuous assessment tasks. SMTs are responsible for ensuring that assessment policies are followed in line with curriculum requirements and departmental guidelines (Department of Basic Education, 2011). This involves moderating assessment tools, reviewing mark schedules, and ensuring that tasks are fair, valid, and aligned with the expected learning outcomes.

According to Bush and Middlewood (2013), effective assessment monitoring allows SMTs to identify academic challenges early and implement appropriate interventions. Regular analysis of learner performance data enables SMTs to guide teachers in curriculum coverage, remedial planning, and differentiated instruction. In this way, the monitoring of assessments directly supports instructional leadership.

SMTs ensure consistency and quality through internal moderation processes. These include checking assessment standards across grades, aligning assessment instruments with the curriculum, and verifying that marking is fair and accurate (Van Deventer & Kruger, 2011). By facilitating collaborative moderation sessions, SMTs promote professional development among teachers and encourage a culture of accountability and continuous improvement.

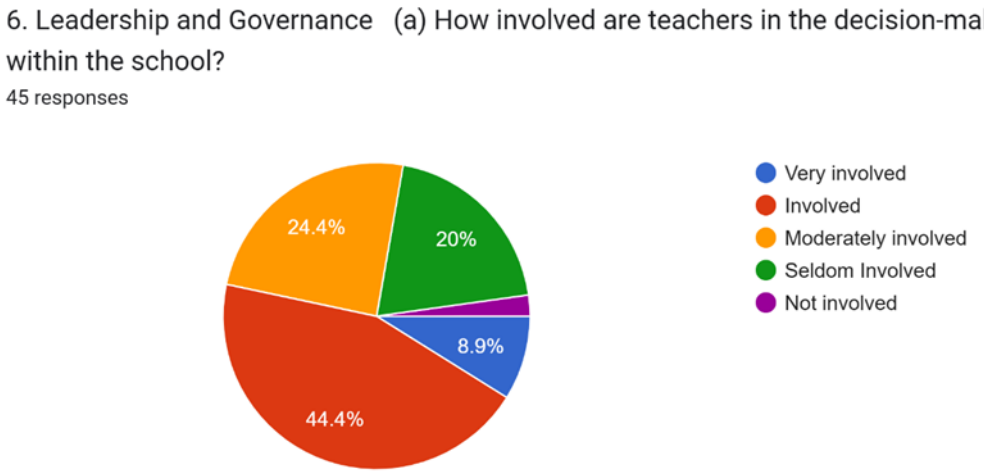
The key recommendations derived from the data are given hereunder:

- Optimize Monitoring Assessment Frequency: Consider the balance between weekly and quarterly monitoring assessments to ensure that student progress is monitored effectively without overwhelming teachers and students. Establish a standardized monitoring assessment schedule that aligns with educational goals and provides timely feedback.

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- Increase Communication and Feedback: - Regularly communicate assessment results to teachers, students, and parents to keep them informed about student progress. Provide actionable feedback based on assessment results to guide instructional improvements and learner support.

- Review and Adapt Assessment Methods: Continuously review and adapt assessment methods to ensure they are effective and relevant to current educational standards. Incorporate diverse assessment techniques to capture a comprehensive picture of learner progress.



Pie Chart 5.20: Leadership and Governance by the SMTs

- **Presentation and Interpretation of Leadership and Governance by the SMT's**

The pie chart above addresses the involvement of teachers in the decision-making processes within the school. The chart shows responses from 45 individuals and is divided into the following segments:

- Not involved (Red): 44.4%
- Moderately involved (Orange): 24.4%
- Seldom involved (Green): 20%
- Very involved (Blue): 8.9%

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- Involved (Purple): 2.2%

- **Discussion on Leadership and Governance by the SMTs**

Transformational and instructional leadership approaches adopted by School Management Teams (SMTs) significantly influence how teachers are engaged in school-based decision-making. These leadership styles foster collaboration, shared vision, and empowerment, which are essential for creating inclusive and participatory school environments.

From this data, it is clear that a significant portion of respondents (44.4%) feel they are not involved in decision-making processes. It is concerning to note that such a portion of the SMTs responded that they do not involve teachers in the decision-making where they are holding a management post. It implies that not all school management teams are actively involved in decision-making mostly by the principals. Additionally, a combined 44.4% (24.4% moderately involved and 20% seldom involved) suggests that teacher involvement is limited. Only a small percentage (11.1%) feel they are very involved or involved. The percentage of teacher involvement is low while 20% responded that they seldom involve teachers. Teachers are stakeholders in their school and need to be involved in decision making of things that involve them. From SMTs and Staff meeting minutes, not enough consultative meetings are recorded. In most cases, meetings are about reporting on district meetings attended by the SMTs. Some of the SMTs from interviews indicated that they are not involved in the decision making of the school. Meaning principals might not be involving them. Research indicated that all stakeholders need to be involved. Shared vision and decision making will improve academic performance in schools.

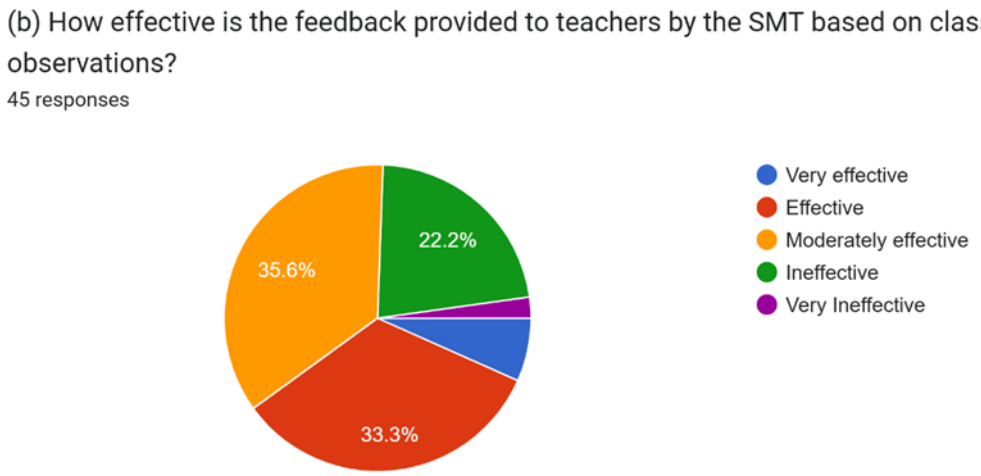
Transformational leadership, in particular, focuses on inspiring and motivating staff members to work toward common goals. It emphasizes professional trust, individual consideration, and intellectual stimulation, which encourages teachers to actively contribute to decision-making processes (Bass & Riggio, 2006). SMTs using this approach create a culture of openness, where teachers feel valued and empowered to

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share their perspectives on curriculum planning, school policies, and learner support strategies (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005).

Instructional leadership, while primarily focused on improving teaching and learning, also involves teachers in data-informed decisions that directly affect classroom practices. Instructional leaders prioritize collaboration, often inviting teachers to participate in curriculum review meetings, assessment planning, and the development of instructional strategies (Hallinger, 2009). This inclusive leadership approach strengthens teachers' professional agency and accountability.

In practice, SMTs facilitate teacher involvement by forming committees, conducting staff meetings, and promoting professional learning communities. These structures enable shared decision-making and distributed leadership, which research shows contributes to school improvement and teacher morale (Spillane, 2006). When teachers are included in meaningful decisions, they are more likely to support school policies and engage actively in school improvement initiatives.

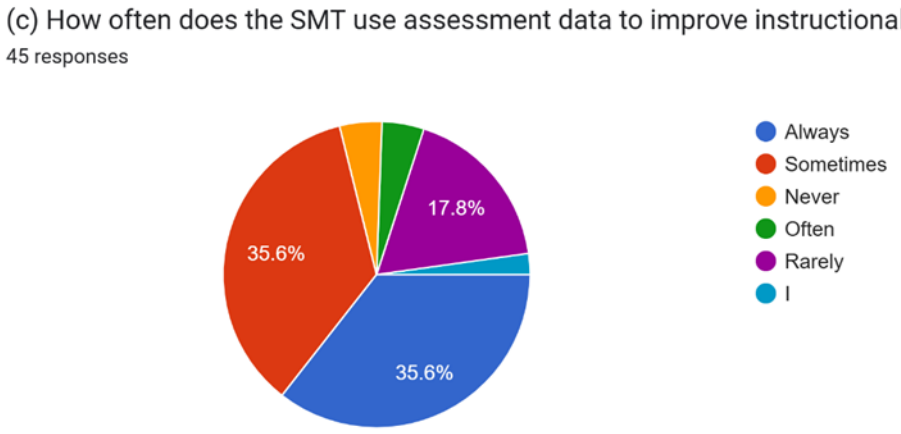


Pie Chart 5.21: Providing Feedback to Teachers by SMTs

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- **Presentation and Interpretation on Providing Feedback to Teachers by SMTs**

- The image above is a pie chart showing the effectiveness of feedback provided to teachers by the SMT (School Management Team) based on classroom observations. Here are the details:
- Very effective (blue): 8.9%
- Effective (red): 33.3%
- Moderately effective (orange): 35.6%
- Ineffective (green): 22.2%
- Very ineffective (purple): 0%



Pie Chart 5.22: Assessment Data Usage by the SMTs

- **Presentation and Interpretation on the Assessment Data Usage by the SMTs**
  - Always (35.6%): A significant portion of respondents indicated that the SMTs always use assessment data to improve instructional practices.
  - Sometimes (35.6%): Another significant portion mentioned that assessment data is used sometimes to improve instructional practices.
  - Often (4.4%): A smaller percentage of respondents believe that assessment data is often used.
  - Rarely: (17.8%): Some respondents feel that assessment data is rarely used.

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- Never (2.2%): A small segment of 2.2% reported that assessment data is never used.

The key observations from the data above is presented below as follows:

- A combined majority (71.2%) of respondents feel that assessment data is used either always or sometimes.
- There is still a notable portion (17.8%) that feels assessment data is rarely utilized, indicating room for improvement.
- A very small percentage (2.2%) believes that assessment data is never used.

- **Discussion on the Usage of Assessment Data to Improve Instructional Practices**

School Management Teams (SMTs) play a pivotal role in using assessment data to guide and enhance instructional practices within schools. The effective analysis and application of learner performance data enables SMTs to make evidence-based decisions that strengthen teaching strategies and improve learner outcomes. No matter how small 2.2% looks, its impact on academic performance is detrimental. Only 4.4% and 35.6% acknowledge that it is significant that as SMTs they use assessment data to improve instructional practices. The 17.8% rarely use assessment data to improve instructional practices. It means these SMTs do not track performance of learners using assessment data. To those who always consider assessment data of learners, they will be able to detect if the learner's performance is increasing or declining and intervention measures be applied timeously. For the SMTs who rarely and never use assessment data, their end of the year results will take them by surprise. They also don't know their high performers and struggling learners. Diffentiated teaching is not applied in this case. All learners are taught using the same method irrespective of their performance capabilities.

Assessment data provides critical insights into learners' academic strengths and this chart suggests that while a significant portion of respondents (42.2%) find the feedback effective or very effective, a notable percentage (35.6%) consider it only moderately effective, and 22.2% find it ineffective. The greater percentage is made up by

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respondents noting that SMTs feedback on classroom observation is effective and very effective to their teachers. By doing classroom observation, teachers will be developed by the SMTs in implementing the curriculum through giving feedback. 22.2% responded that the feedback given is ineffective. There is a need for improvement by the SMTs on how to give feedback and support teachers during and after classroom observation. By systematically examining this data, SMTs can identify performance trends across subjects and grade levels, pinpoint gaps in curriculum coverage, and highlight areas requiring targeted intervention (Hamilton et al., 2009). Such data-driven practices are essential for improving teaching effectiveness and aligning instruction with learners' needs.

Instructional leaders within SMTs use this information to provide feedback to teachers, promote collaborative planning, and facilitate professional development activities tailored to identify areas of need (Van der Berg et al., 2016). For instance, if data reveals that learners are underperforming in mathematics, SMTs may recommend specific instructional techniques, adjust pacing plans, or organize workshops focused on teaching numeracy skills.

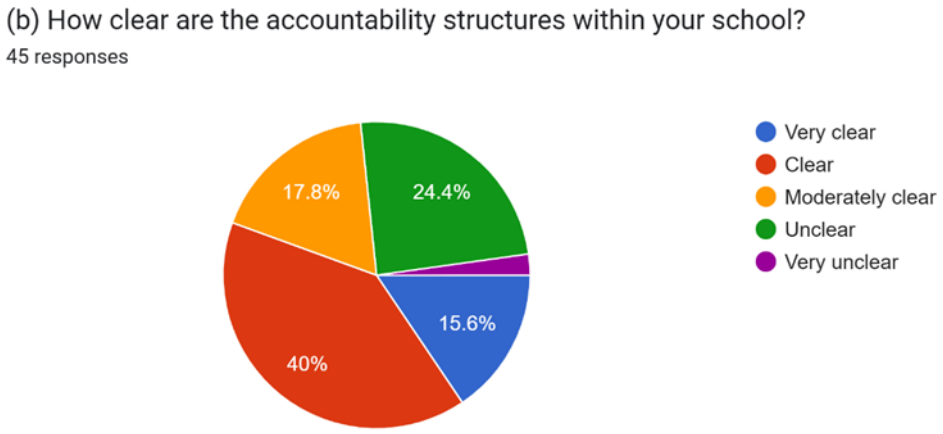
Moreover, assessment data support differentiated instruction by helping teachers modify their approaches based on learner progress and individual learning profiles. SMTs can guide teachers in grouping learners strategically, designing remedial programmes, and monitoring the impact of instructional adjustments (Datnow & Hubbard, 2016).

In the South African context, the Department of Basic Education emphasizes the use of School-Based Assessment (SBA) and systemic evaluation data to inform instructional decisions (DBE, 2011). SMTs are thus required to conduct regular data analysis meetings, collaborate with educators, and align teaching strategies with curriculum standards and performance indicators.

The recommendations to the SMTs from the data are presented as follows:

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- **Increase Consistency in Data Usage:** Develop standardized procedures to ensure that assessment data is consistently used to inform and improve instructional practices.
- **Promote Data-Driven Decision Making**: Encourage a culture of data-driven decision-making among teachers and the SMTs. Provide training on how to effectively analyse and use assessment data to enhance teaching strategies.
- **Regular Review and Feedback**: Conduct regular reviews of how assessment data is being used and provide feedback to ensure continuous improvement. Use assessment data to identify areas for professional development and targeted support for teachers.



Pie Chart 5.23: Accountability Structures by the SMTs

Presentation and Interpretation of Accountability Structures by the SMTs

The image is a pie chart showing the responses to the question "(b) *How clear are the accountability structures within your school?"* based on a total of 45 responses. The breakdown is as follows:

- Very clear (blue): 15.6%
- Clear (red): 40%
- Moderately clear (orange): 17.8%
- Unclear (green): 24.4%
- Very unclear (purple): 2.2%

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- **Discussion on Accountability Structures by the SMTs**

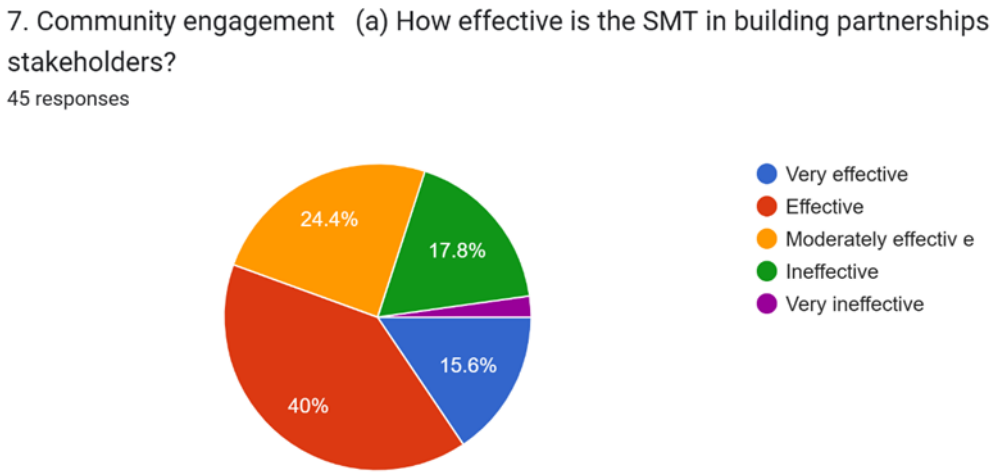
Accountability structures within schools, implemented by School Management Teams (SMTs), are essential for promoting academic excellence and ensuring that teaching and learning processes meet established educational standards. These structures create clear expectations, foster responsibility, and encourage continuous performance monitoring among educators and learners.

From this data, we can observe that 55.6% of respondents find the accountability structures to be clear or very clear, however, there is still a notable portion (24.4%) who find them unclear, and a smaller percentage (2.2%) who find them very unclear. From interviews collected data, there is a contrasting perspective from different SMTs. Their responses show mixed perspectives. Most respondents on quantitative data collection answered that accountability within the school are clear to moderately clear. When triangulating with departmental, SMT and staff meeting minutes, there is no clear evidence to accountability within the school. Where teachers do not account, performance will mostly be low. All stakeholders should account for the roles they play in the school. From minutes analysed, SMTs account every term to the district and circuits for their performance. Curriculum journals have records of ATPs not followed, curriculum content not covered and insufficient learner tasks given. Curriculum advisors record same again and again with no accountability by SMTs to subject educators within the school. Due to this lack of clear accountability structures, underperformance will prevail. There is a noticeable minority that do not believe that accountability structures can lead to academic improvement while the majority from the interviews believe that academic performance can be improved.

SMTs establish accountability mechanisms through performance appraisals, assessments, monitoring, and curriculum management systems that ensure every teacher is responsible for learner outcomes. According to Bush (2013), accountability in schools involves holding staff members accountable for delivering quality education and meeting performance targets, which contributes to a culture of high expectations and academic achievement.

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One of the key components of these structures includes regular lesson observations, learner performance analysis, and feedback sessions. These practices enable SMTs to identify areas requiring support, provide targeted professional development, and ensure that teaching aligns with the curriculum and national standards (Mestry, 2017). When teachers are aware that their work is being monitored constructively, they are more likely to remain focused, reflect on their practices, and strive for continuous improvement.



Pie Chart 5.24: Community Engagement by the SMTs

- **Presentation and Interpretation on Community Engagement by the SMTs**

Most respondents (55.6%) believe the SMT is effective or very effective in building partnerships with local stakeholders, while 24.4% find it moderately effective, and 17.8% think it is ineffective. There was also a very small portion that found it very ineffective.

From this data, we can see that most respondents feel that the school engages with the community through outreach programs "Occasionally" (35.6%) or "Frequently" (31.1%). A similar portion (31.1%), however, also feels that this engagement is "Rarely" happening, with a very small percentage (2.2%) believing it occurs "Very frequently". Notably, none of the respondents feel that the school ever engages with the community. From the interview data, most respondents also agree to community involvement in the schools.

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- **Discussion on Community Engagement by the SMTs**

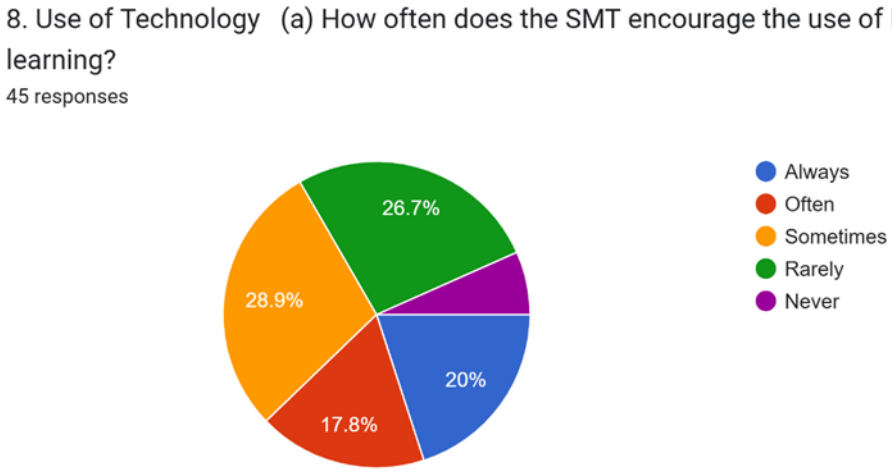
School Management Teams (SMTs) that adopt a transformative leadership approach actively promote meaningful community engagement to foster inclusive and sustainable educational improvement. Transformative leaders prioritize collaboration, equity, and social justice, making community involvement a cornerstone of school development.

Transformative leadership focuses on empowering all stakeholders—teachers, learners, parents, and the broader community to take part in shaping the school's vision and direction (Shields, 2010). SMTs who lead transformatively view the community as a vital partner rather than an external actor. They engage parents and local stakeholders in school governance, encourage open communication, and address social and educational barriers that may hinder learner success.

Additionally, transformative SMTs work to integrate community resources into the schooling system. Partnerships with local organisations, NGOs, and businesses help provide material support, mentorship programmes, and health and welfare services, which in turn support holistic learner development (Naicker, 2011). Such collaboration strengthens the school's capacity to address both academic and socio-economic challenges.

In the South African context, education policy encourages participatory governance and social cohesion through community engagement. The Schools Act (Republic of South Africa, 1996) supports this by mandating the inclusion of parents and community representatives in School Governing Bodies. SMTs applying transformative leadership uphold these values by ensuring that schools act as agents of change within their communities.

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Pie Chart 5.25: Usage of Technology by the SMTs

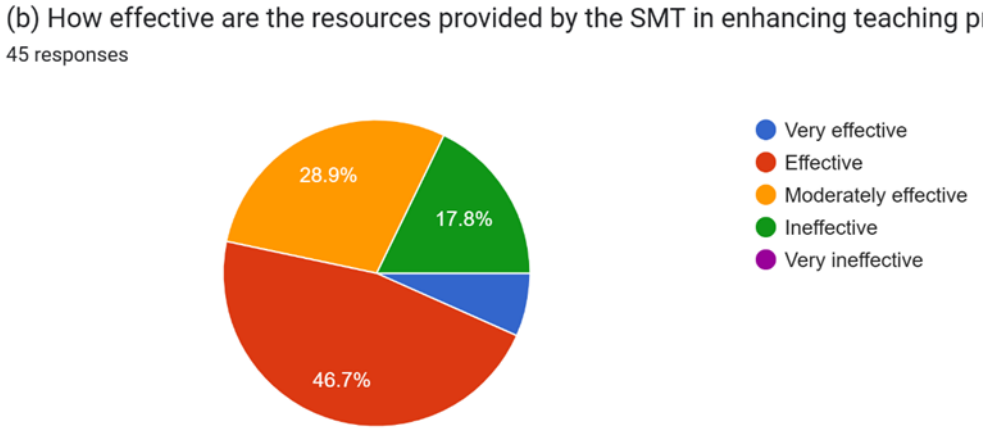
- **Presentation and Interpretation on the Usage of Technology by the SMTs**

Looking at the pie chart, it reflects the responses to the question about how often the School Management Team (SMT) encourages the use of ICT in teaching and learning. Here is the breakdown:

- Always: 20%
- Often: 28.9%
- Sometimes: 17.8%
- Rarely: 26.7%
- Never: 6.7%

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Pie Chart 5.26: Resources Provided in Enhancing Teaching Practice by the SMTs

Based on this data, it seems that a significant majority of respondents (64.5%) find the resources provided by the SMT to be effective or very effective, however, there is still a notable portion (28.9%) who find them only "moderately effective", and a small percentage (6.7%) who find them "very ineffective".

The data collected indicates a positive and negative trend in terms of goal setting and how they are communicated and insufficient curriculum management by the school management teams. The majority felt supported by the SMTs while others felt not adequately supported, professional development not adequately provided, community engagement not adequate, and while majority felt the school climate was positive and integration of ICT was perceived positively.

The inconsistencies of these responses in various areas suggest that there is a need for those areas to be addressed by the SMTs, ultimately contributing to better academic outcomes in the underperforming schools of Mopani District.

- **Discussion on the Usage of ICT by SMTs**

The integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in schools is a critical responsibility of School Management Teams (SMTs), as it supports innovation in

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teaching, enhances administrative efficiency, and prepares learners for the demands of a digital world. SMTs play a central role in planning, implementing, and supporting the The respondents who answered “often” might be the SMTs of the age groups 20 – 30 and 31 – 40 who are used to technological applications. A combined 48.9% of respondents indicated that the SMTs encourage the use of ICT "Always" or "Often," which is a positive sign, however, there is also a notable portion (17.8%) who feel that the encouragement is "Sometimes" or "Rarely," and a small group (6.7%) who believe it “never” happens.33.3% of respondents indicated that they rarely or never encourage the usage of technology in their school. In this technological world, 33.3% of respondents rarely and never encourage the usage of technology will slow the integration of technology in our schools. Possibly it might be because the SMT are also experiencing a challenge to use them. Considering the age group of most of them, they were born before the usage of technology. Learner usage of technology was noted from interviews with respondents that though beneficial, it comes with own challenges. SMTs are the ones to encourage the integration of ICT by teachers and learners. Where there are challenges, training should be organised by the SMTs. They should not leave it to chanceeffective use of ICT across all areas of school functioning.

Effective ICT integration begins with strategic leadership. SMTs are responsible for setting clear policies, allocating resources, and ensuring infrastructure development to support digital learning. According to Anderson and Dexter (2005), strong administrative leadership is a key factor influencing the successful adoption of ICT in schools. SMTs must therefore create a supportive environment by investing in technology tools, connectivity, and teacher capacity-building.

In addition to providing infrastructure, SMTs must promote the professional development of staff in digital literacy and pedagogical use of technology. Teachers need continuous training to effectively use ICT in lesson planning, delivery, and learner assessment (Hennessy, Harrison & Wamakote, 2010). SMTs facilitate this by organizing workshops, encouraging peer collaboration, and linking teachers to external ICT support networks.

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Furthermore, SMTs use ICT for data management, communication, and decision-making. Digital tools assist in tracking learner performance, streamlining administrative tasks, and enhancing communication with parents and stakeholders (Pelgrum, 2001). Through such practices, SMTs improve the overall efficiency of school operations and support evidence-based school improvement.

In the South African context, national policies such as the White Paper on e-Education (Department of Education, 2004) advocate for the use of ICT to transform teaching and learning. SMTs are expected to lead the integration of technology in alignment with this policy, ensuring equitable access and usage among teachers and learners.

The next section focused on the presentation, interpretation and discussion of qualitative findings data.

5.3 QUALITATIVE DATA

Quantitative data were collected using semi-structured interviews with 6 Principals (P), 6 Deputy Principals (DP), 6 Departmental Heads (DH), and 6 Senior Teachers (ST) - who were randomly sampled from the nine underperforming schools in Mopani West District. The interview questions were categorized into three sections - A: background information, B: Instructional leadership practices, and C: open-ended interview questions. Table 5.1 represents how participants were identified for this study. Following are the presentation, interpretation and discussion of the qualitative data collected.

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Table 5.1: Naming of Qualitative Participants

Schools	Principals	Deputy Principals	Department Heads	Senior Teachers
S1	P1	DP1	DH1	ST1
S2	P2	DP2	DH2	ST2
S3	P3	DP3	DH3	ST3
S4	P4	DP4	DH4	ST4
S5	P5	DP5	DH5	ST5
S6	P6	DP6	DH6	ST6

5.3.1 Findings, Interpretation and Discussion

The first theme discussed in this chapter is the clarity in setting academic goals, which explores participants' perceptions regarding the communication of academic expectations in schools. This is one of the critical aspects for effective school leadership and management.

5.3.1.1 Clarity in the setting of academic goals

Setting and communicating academic goals is crucial for ensuring effective teaching and learning, particularly in schools operating as underperforming schools. The study sought to determine whether academic goals are clearly communicated among school leaders and educators. Most of the participants answered that goals are set in schools.

- **Perceptions of Clear Communication of Academic Goals**

Majority of the respondents indicated that academic goals are clearly communicated within their schools. This group consisted of - six principals, four deputy principals, four departmental heads and four senior teachers.

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These participants highlighted that their schools have structured processes for setting and sharing academic goals. They mentioned strategies such as regular staff meetings, providing policy documents, and strategic planning sessions, which ensured that all stakeholders understand and work towards common educational objectives. The deputy principal 2 from school 2 said:

> *"As the head of curriculum, together with the SMT, we look at previous year's performance. If 100% we will keep it at that. After we have set the target, we ask subject teachers to set their own. If theirs is lower than of the SMT, we engage with them on the contextual factors leading to the low target. Learners also sign pledge forms setting own targets".*

In support of the setting of goals, departmental head four from school four said:

> *"Educators and learners set targets at the beginning of every year. The performance is tracked on a quarterly basis. The adopted goals are even communicated to the SGB."*

- **Perceptions of Lack of Clear Communication of Academic Goals**

On the other hand, a smaller but significant number of respondents indicated that academic goals are not clearly communicated. This group included two deputy principals, 2 departmental heads and two senior teachers. From school 6, senior teacher 6 had a different opinion:

> *"At our school here, the principal announces our school's targets and goals at the assembly. Most of the things we hear them with our learners as if we are not the SMT members.*"

These participants pointed out challenges such as inconsistent messaging from school leadership, lack of involvement in decision-making processes, and insufficient mechanisms to ensure alignment across different levels of school management. Their responses suggest that while some schools have effective goal-setting frameworks,

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others struggle with ensuring that all stakeholders fully comprehend and implement the set academic objectives.

These findings indicate that while the majority of participants believe that academic goals are well communicated, a notable proportion experiences challenges in this regard. The following key observations emerge from the data:

- **Leadership Perspective:** Principals, who are at the top of the school hierarchy, overwhelmingly believe that academic goals are clear. This may indicate that goal-setting processes exist at the leadership level but may not always trickle down effectively to other stakeholders.

- **Middle Management and Senior Teachers' Concerns**: Deputy Principals, departmental heads, and senior teachers are more likely to perceive a lack of clarity, suggesting a potential communication gap between school leadership and mid-level management.

- **Implications for Extended School Hours**: Given that extended school hours demand greater coordination and alignment, unclear academic goals could lead to inefficiencies, role strain, and increased workload stress among teachers and school managers.

In summary, the above section examined the perceptions of selected secondary school stakeholders regarding the clarity of academic goal communication. While most respondents indicated that academic goals are effectively conveyed, some deputy principals, departmental heads, and senior teachers reported inconsistencies in communication. These findings highlight the need for improved communication strategies to ensure alignment across all levels of school management, particularly in the context of goal setting.

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- **Discussion on Setting of Academic Goals**

The responses indicated that most SMTs set goals with teachers and learners, including parents. Participants agreed that goals are clearly communicated, although there were some SMT members who answered that goals were set rarely. Literature has clearly outlined that where there are no set goals, there will be no performance (Tabar, 2014). Participants have also highlighted challenges they face in setting of goals in some of the underperforming schools. Goal setting is not only for the SMTs but should be shared with all stakeholders in the school as unclear goals can cause conflicts unnecessarily and derail the attention of teachers and learners. Transformational leaders in schools are there to strive and generate new ideas to present a new direction - from underperforming schools to performing schools. Through setting goals, instructional leaders transform their schools by committing to the shared goals of the organization (Hallinger, 2003; Bush, 2014). Amtu et al. (2020) identified having a shared vision in a school as one of the strongest and successful leadership traits. Instructional leadership theory proposes that SMTs should establish the school's vision and mission for enhanced academic performance, hence, these leaders are to define and communicate the goals of the school, after setting clear, measurable ones (Bellibas, Gumus & Liu, 2021). According to Hallinger (2005), schools with clearly set goals are likely to observe increased learner outcomes. This means that where there is no clear setting and communication of school goals, a decrease in outcomes, clearly will occur, leading to underperformance. Instructional leaders should ensure that all decisions made are in line with set goals, demonstrating that setting of goals is one of the leadership practices effective in improving academic performance.

5.3.1.2 Curriculum management

Curriculum management plays a crucial role in ensuring effective teaching and learning. Respondents were asked whether curriculum management in their schools is well monitored. The responses varied among School Management Team (SMT) members, as outlined below.

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- **Positive Responses: Curriculum is Well Monitored**

A significant number of participants indicated that curriculum management in their schools is well monitored. The breakdown of responses is as follows: 5 principals, 4 deputy principals, 5 departmental heads and four senior teachers.

Principal 2 from school 5 pointed out the significance of managing curriculum in schools by saying:

> *"Curriculum is a thorny issue. It needs to be thoroughly managed by the SMT. When managing we draft curriculum management plan with activities, time frame, responsible person and indicators. It must indicate the assessments and class visits to check if educators are on par with the ATP's and to check if remedial work is given."*

Supporting the above, departmental head 4 from school 6 answered by saying:

> *"We have tools we are using to check and report on things like preparations, audit of written work and the usage of ATPs. That is what we do".*

These responses suggest that most principals, departmental heads, and senior teachers perceive curriculum monitoring as being effectively implemented in their schools. This may indicate strong leadership and oversight in ensuring that teaching and learning processes align with academic expectations. Based on how the SMTs answered, it gives an indication that they know exactly what they should do as school leaders to manage curriculum. The relevant question at this point, however, might be - Are *they implementing those practices they outlined?* There is a response given by senior teacher 2 from school 1 that raised a concern:

> *"Curriculum management is done in our school but not efficient. We evaluate if content coverage is adequately covered. Sometimes done twice or twice in a term".*

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From the above sentiment, one can infer that the SMTs monitor curriculum implementation by teachers at times - twice or thrice in three months (term). Curriculum coverage refers to the amount of work or content learners were taught. So, the period taken by the SMTs to monitor, if indeed teaching and learning takes place with learners, is very relevant. This brings to mind the question - *How will the SMT and the teacher do catch up should they find out that expected content is not covered?*

- **Negative Responses: Curriculum is Not Well Monitored**

Some respondents, however, expressed concerns that curriculum management is not well monitored in their schools. The responses were from, 2 deputy principals, 1 departmental head and 2 senior teachers.

The presence of negative responses, especially from some deputy principals and senior teachers, suggests that there may be inconsistencies in curriculum oversight across schools. These concerns may point to challenges such as, lack of proper supervision, inadequate support, or limited resources affecting effective curriculum management.

The findings above indicate that while a majority of the respondents believe curriculum management is well monitored, there is still a notable number of participants who disagree. This discrepancy may imply variations in characterizing leadership effectiveness among different schools or even within the same school. Factors contributing to these differences may include:

- The level of involvement of school leadership in curriculum monitoring.
- The effectiveness of instructional leadership practices employed by school management teams.
- The availability of resources and support for teachers to implement the curriculum effectively.
- Communication and collaboration between different levels of leadership within the schools.

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In summary, the section has presented findings on the monitoring of curriculum management in underperforming schools in Mopani West Education District. While there is a general consensus that curriculum monitoring is well implemented, the presence of dissenting voices highlights areas that require further investigation and improvement.

- **Discussion on Curriculum Management**

The presented data gives us mixed opinions on schools monitoring as some schools are not managed effectively by some of the leaders. Instructional leaders strive to set measurable goals aligning with the vision and learner achievement through curriculum management, and this is essential, especially in underperforming schools (Leithwood et al., 2006). Transformational leaders inspire learners and teachers to strive for excellence while instructional leaders supervise curriculum to improve academic performance. Managing curriculum, instruction and supervision, and assessment procedures are essential components of instructional leadership. Arar et al. (2017) contend that Instructional leaders should ensure that academic standards are upheld, for, according to Robinson et al. (2008), there is a strong correlation between instructional leaders and learner performance; Webster and Litcha (2020) affirm that effective leadership improves learner performance. Instructional leadership theory assists underperforming schools to raise learner performance, hence, such leaders will close gaps, monitor lessons, give feedback and ensure that performance improves. For SMTs to indicate that the curriculum is not effectively monitored is concerning for this opens opportunities for underperformance (Makgato & Mudzanani, 2019). The authors explain that teachers look to their managers for direction, support and assistance as both instructional effectiveness and learner academic attainment are significantly impacted by such leadership (Sattari, Khadabandelou & Lashkari, 2021). Instructional leadership is essential for underperforming schools to close gaps, regularly monitor lessons, give teachers feedback and encourage data-driven decision-making.

5.3.1.3 Provision of support to teachers and learners

Effective instructional leadership involves providing adequate support to both teachers and learners to enhance academic performance. Respondents were asked whether they

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face any challenges in this regard. Their responses varied, reflecting different perspectives on the types and level of difficulty experienced by school management teams (SMTs).

- **No Challenges Reported**

Majority of the respondents indicated that they do not face challenges when supporting teachers and learners. The breakdown of responses is as follows: 6 principals, deputy principals, 5 departmental heads and 4 senior teachers.

DP3 from school 4: *"We normally work as a team and discuss issues together, hence I say the SMT support teachers on a daily basis."*

These findings suggest that most SMT members believe they have the necessary structures, resources, and strategies in place to support teachers and learners effectively. The responses from the principals, in particular, indicate confidence in their leadership and the measures they have implemented to ensure a conducive teaching and learning environment.

- **Challenges Reported**

Some respondents however, acknowledged facing difficulties in supporting teachers and learners, despite the majority reporting no challenges. The responses were as follows: 2 deputy principals, 1 departmental head and 2 senior teachers.

The SMTs were asked what challenges they were facing in curriculum management at their schools. Common challenges were outlined as the ones that impede them from performing in their schools.

- **Lack of Cooperation from Teachers**

In responding to the challenges faced, senior teacher 5 responded by saying:
ST 2 from school 2*:*

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"On my side, teachers do not bring their preparations as requested. I do not know if they are undermining us from their side or want to see what we will do."

Another senior teacher supported the sentiment shared above by saying:
ST 1 from school 1:

"It depends on the attitude of the teacher. Some of the teachers are undermining us. I don't know how to put it. The teachers at times will not do what was said".

The senior teachers are not the only ones that mostly complained about lack of cooperation from teachers but also deputy principals and departmental heads.

- **Unqualified subject teachers**

SMTs identified a challenge of teachers offering subjects which they are not qualified to teach. Five respondents identified this as a challenge they face as they monitor implementation of curriculum. Departmental head 3 responded like:
DH 3 from school 3:

"We have a mismatch of subjects. You find a teacher teaching a subject not qualified in. For example, I'm presently teaching Mathematics in Grade 8 while I'm not qualified in it. In Natural Sciences you find a teacher knowledgeable in one part but not in the other part. Again, when two teachers share one subject it also comes with its own problems. The same thing happens in teaching Social Sciences. You find a teacher more knowledgeable in Geography than in History. At the end, the History part suffers".

Drawing from the statement above we can deduce that there is a shortage of teachers in some of the streams like the Sciences maybe because they are rare skills to find.

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- **Inadequate Content Coverage**

The SMTs made mention of inadequate content coverage by teachers as a challenge that impedes learners from performing. Two respondents (DP 1 & DH 3) alluded to it by saying:

"Some of the challenges are poor content coverage and insufficient learner activities given".

Principal 4 answered like:

P4:

> *"Teachers are behind because of many meetings they attend outside the school called by the circuits and the district. Covering curriculum becomes difficult."*

From the two sentiments shared by most of the respondents, one can say that learners enter to the examination rooms not fully equipped for their grade. They are not on par or ready for the examinations they are taking, hence, underperformance.

- **Absenteeism and Ill-discipline of Learners**

All of the respondents mentioned absenteeism of learners as a deterring factor to performance in their schools. DP 1 responded by saying:

DP1:

> *"Sometimes we are challenged by absenteeism and ill- ill-discipline of learners. We call parents and they do not come. I report to the principal and he will see what to do. At times as a school we report to the Circuit Manager. We know we should not apply corporal punishment. As a school we will not allow the learner to attend after reporting to the Circuit Manager and it will be then that the parent will show up.*

The sentiment above reflects that the SMTs are not working as a team., as in the case of a SMT member reporting to the principal discipline issues which can be addressed by the code of conduct of the learners. It also raises a concern that the Circuit Manager is roped

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in to address absenteeism and ill- discipline of learners while there is a team of leaders in the school. Passing the challenge to the Circuit Manager might be a sign of lack of leadership and governance by the Instructional leaders in the school and by not allowing learners to attend classes until their parents show up is depriving learners of their right to education, thereby, jeopardising the goals of the school. At times, parents might have migrated to cities for job opportunities and are not able to come as requested. During this time the learners will be missing teaching and learning time, ending in missing topics addressed during their absence.

- **Inadequate Training by Senior Teachers**

Senior teachers are co–opted into the School Management teams to assist in monitoring and supporting teaching and learning. Mostly, senior teachers are utilised in small schools where you find that management comprises of a principal only or principal and one departmental head. The response of two (ST2 & ST4) senior teachers indicated that:
ST 2 & ST 4: *“*

> *Invitations from the Circuit or the District always leave us out. Repeatedly they workshop and train the appointed managers while we are also managing. At times we don’t know what to do. Worse coming back we are not given the reports.”*

The sentiment shared above indicates that co–opted management team members are not attending management and leadership trainings like the appointed. Adding to that, the appointed ones attending the workshops and training do not take senior teachers on board with information gained. Expectation is that these senior teachers should lead their departments effectively and efficiently - without orientation, workshops and training, goals might not be achieved.

- **Discussion on support for teachers and learners**

School leaders play a crucial role in supporting teachers and learners in schools for without school leadership support, the schools’ academic performance will decline. The majority of data collected indicated that teachers and learners receive support from the

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school leaders but also that some are moderately supported. Qadach et al. (2020) stated that instructional practices play a critical role in the school, fostering a culture that places a premium on supporting teaching and learning. Inadequate support by the SMTs to teachers causes poor performance in schools (Macann, 2020). Teacher support and development is imperative where a teacher lacks attributes of performance (Lazcano et al, 2023). This theme is aligned with the research question about how the school management team supports teachers and learners in improving academic performance. Functional competence of instructional leadership may be improved by the role of leaders (Ishmael et al., 2020). Unfortunately, instructional leadership in low-performing schools is frequently hampered by a lack of support, insufficient teaching and learning, and high rates of teacher turnover (Militello et al., 2020). According to Martinez and Mc Bee (2020), Instructional leadership should support teachers very strongly to improve learner performance.

5.3.1.4 Professional development

Research demonstrates that professional development can improve academic performance of teachers and learners in a school, therefore, we explored how the school management teams professionally develop teachers. These are the two responses given by (P3 & DH1) supporting that:

P 3:

> *"SMT shares information with teachers pertaining to teacher development in terms of workshops organised by the Department and Further Learning Institutions."*

Another one:

DH 3:

> *"We encourage educators to attend workshops and they register with other institutions of higher learning and we end up noticing changes as far as our learners are concerned in performance. We had a Mathematics Grade 12 teacher in the previous year who did not perform in his subject. Last*

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year we invited a teacher from another school and our results moved from 34% to 72% in Mathematics."

From the above responses one can deduce that SMTs rely most on professional development from external places like Circuits, District and Further Learning Institutions workshops and training than internal professional development. That means SMTs do not develop their educators but rely on external ones. One can also deduce that SMTs consider outsourcing as a professional development strategy. It leaves much to be desired because the outsourced teacher is the one who was teaching learners not the one who was challenged. The subject teacher might need the same assistance every year if the challenge is not directly addressed. There is one SMT member, DH2 who responded differently from others by saying:
*"*DH 2:" *Nothing is done in our school. We only emphasize that we try to improve.*"

In the sentiment above, there is no professional development offered by the SMT to teachers, hence, employees' development is left in their own hands or to chance.

The presence of some negative responses suggests that while support structures may be in place, certain schools or specific SMT members encounter obstacles that hinder their efforts. These challenges may stem from factors such as:

- **Limited Resources**: Some schools may lack sufficient teaching materials, infrastructure, or funding to provide adequate support.
- **Workload and Administrative Burdens**: SMT members may struggle to balance administrative duties with instructional leadership responsibilities.
- **Resistance to Change**: Some teachers or learners may resist interventions or new teaching strategies, making it difficult for SMTs to implement improvements.

A significant portion of SMT members believe they do not face challenges in supporting teachers and learners, however, there were a few participants who reported difficulties. This suggests that instructional leadership effectiveness varies across different schools, with some institutions encountering more obstacles than others.

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The differences in responses among deputy principals, departmental heads, and senior teachers may also indicate varying perceptions of what constitutes a challenge; while some may view existing difficulties as manageable, others may perceive them as significant barriers to effective instructional leadership. The section above has presented findings on the challenges faced by SMTs in supporting teachers and learners and, although, most respondents believe they do not face significant difficulties, a few have identified challenges that could impact instructional leadership effectiveness. These findings highlight the need for targeted interventions to address specific concerns and ensure consistent support across all schools.

Curriculum management is a key responsibility of School Management Teams (SMTs) to ensure effective teaching and learning. Respondents were asked whether they face any challenges in implementing curriculum management in their schools. The responses varied, reflecting differing experiences and perspectives on the effectiveness of curriculum implementation.

5.3.1.4 Challenges in the implementation of curriculum management

- **No Challenges Reported**

Majority of the respondents indicated that they do not face challenges in the implementation of curriculum management. The breakdown of responses is as follows: 5 principals, 5 deputy principals, 4 departmental heads and 4 senior teachers.

These findings suggest that most SMT members believe that curriculum implementation in their schools is well-structured and effectively managed. The strong agreement among principals and deputy principals indicates confidence in their leadership and oversight in ensuring that the curriculum is delivered as planned.

- **Challenges Reported**

Despite the majority indicating no challenges, some respondents acknowledged experiencing difficulties in curriculum management. The responses were as follows: 1 principal, 1 deputy principals, 2 departmental heads and 2 senior teachers.

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The presence of these responses suggests that while curriculum management may be effective in most schools, certain SMT members face obstacles. These challenges may arise from various factors, including:

- **Inconsistent Monitoring and Support**: Some schools may struggle with ensuring that teachers adhere to curriculum requirements due to limited oversight or ineffective support systems.
- **Teacher Preparedness and Commitment**: If some teachers are not adequately prepared or motivated, it can affect the smooth implementation of curriculum plans.
- **Resource Constraints:** a lack of adequate learning materials, textbooks, and infrastructure can hinder the effective execution of the curriculum.
- **Time Management Issues**: Schools with overloaded timetables or frequent disruptions may struggle to complete the curriculum within the allocated timeframe.
- **Policy and Administrative Challenges**: Changes in educational policies or administrative delays in approving necessary curriculum-related initiatives may create barriers to smooth implementation.

The responses suggest that while curriculum implementation is generally perceived as successful, some SMT members experience challenges that may impact teaching and learning. The differences in responses among SMT members indicate that some schools or individuals may require additional support and resources to effectively implement the curriculum.

The fact that some principals and deputy principals reported facing challenges suggests that even at the leadership level, certain difficulties persist. These challenges could stem from external factors, such as, Departmental regulations, teacher shortages, or socio-economic conditions affecting the learning environment.

The section above has presented findings on the challenges faced in the implementation of curriculum management. Most respondents believe they do not face major obstacles, nevertheless, a few have highlighted difficulties that could impact the overall effectiveness of instructional leadership. Addressing these concerns will be crucial in ensuring that all

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underperforming schools in Mopani West Education District can implement the curriculum effectively.

5.2.1.5 Opportunities for professional development

Professional development is essential for School Management Teams (SMTs) to enhance their instructional leadership skills and improve academic performance. Respondents were asked whether they are provided with opportunities for professional development. The responses varied, as outlined below.

- **Professional Development Opportunities Provided**

Majority of respondents indicated that they are given opportunities for professional development. The responses were from: 5 principals, 5 deputy principals, 5 departmental heads: and 3 senior teachers. Professional development can improve academic performance of teachers and learners in a school; thus, we explored how the school management teams professionally develop teachers. These are the two responses given by the respondents (DP 6 & DH 4):

DP 6:

> *"SMT share information with teachers pertaining to teacher development in terms of workshops organised by the Department and Further Learning Institutions."*

Another response:

DH 4:

> *"We encourage educators to attend workshops and they register with other institutions of higher learning and we end up noticing changes as far as our learners are concerned in performance. We had a Mathematics Grade 12 teacher in the previous year who did not perform in his subject. Last year we invited a teacher from another school and our results moved from 34% to 72% in Mathematics.*

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These findings suggest that professional development opportunities are available in most schools, particularly for principals, deputy principals, and departmental heads. The second response from a senior teacher, however, indicates that educators may have fewer opportunities for professional growth compared to school leaders. This could impact educators' ability to adapt to new teaching methodologies and instructional strategies.

- **Lack of Professional Development Opportunities**

A few respondents indicated that they do not have access to professional development opportunities. Their responses were from: 1 principal, 1 deputy principal, 1 departmental head and 3 senior teachers.

These responses highlight a gap in professional development access, particularly among senior teachers. The fact that some principals and SMT members report a lack of opportunities suggests inconsistencies in how training and development initiatives are implemented across schools. This may be due to resource limitations, inadequate planning, or differences in school leadership priorities.

- **Perceived Impact of Professional Development**

Respondents were also asked whether they noticed any impact from the professional development opportunities provided. Their responses were divided into three categories: those who noted an impact, those who saw no impact, and those who were unsure.

- **Professional Development on Instructional Leadership Practices**

The following respondents indicated that they observed a positive impact from professional development initiatives: 2 principals, 3 deputy principals, 3 departmental heads and 1 senior teacher.

DP3 emphasized the impact of Instructional leadership by saying:

> "*We arrange internal workshops to remedy the needs of our teachers. We had a chronic underperforming Mathematics Grade 12 teacher in the*

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previous years and last year we invited a teacher from another school to assist him. Our results moved from 34% to 72%."

These responses suggest that professional development has contributed to improving leadership and instructional practices of some SMT members. The fact that most deputy principals and departmental heads acknowledged its impact indicates that training programs may be equipping them with relevant skills to enhance curriculum management, teacher support, and overall school performance.

- **No Notable Impact from Professional Development**

A significant number of respondents, however, indicated that they did not observe any impact from professional development opportunities. Their responses were from: 3 principals, 2 deputy principals, 2 departmental heads and 1 senior teacher. DH 2 indicated not to have noted any impact of professional development:

"*Teachers are attending training and workshops every year but look at performance of Mathematics and Physical Sciences. No, man. They are killing us."*

P5 shared the same sentiment with DH5 by saying:

"Every January teachers leave the school to attend the so-called content workshops, but I account for results up to the HOD's office. Some teachers do not change."

These responses suggest that while professional development opportunities exist, they may not always translate into visible improvements in teaching and leadership effectiveness. Possible reasons for this could include:

- A lack of follow-up or implementation of training recommendations.
- Inadequate alignment between professional development content and real school challenges.
- Insufficient practical application of learned skills due to structural or resource limitations in schools.

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- **Uncertainty about the Impact of Professional Development**

One respondent was unsure about whether professional development had any impact. This indicates that some SMT members may not have clear ways to measure the effectiveness of training programs or may not be fully engaged in them.

ST responded to the question by saying:
"*I don't want to lie. I'm not sure.*"

These findings indicate that while professional development opportunities are generally available, there are disparities in access, particularly for senior teachers. Additionally, the perceived impact of these opportunities is mixed - with some respondents noting benefits while others see no significant improvements. The variation in responses suggests that the effectiveness of professional development depends on factors such as:

- The relevance and quality of the training provided.
- The extent to which training translates into improved instructional leadership and teaching practices.
- The level of support and follow-up provided after training sessions.

Most respondents acknowledge having access to training, however, concerns remain about its effectiveness in driving meaningful change in schools.

- **Discussion on Professional Development**

Ongoing professional development is a top priority for leaders in organizations like schools. SMTs should provide opportunities to develop teachers, who in turn will develop learners. The findings indicated that the professional development for teachers mostly come from outside, rather than internally. Some school leaders acknowledged the impact from professional development while some did not, causing one SMT member to question whether professional development positively impacts school outcomes. Transformational leaders commit to developing followers' capacity through mentoring, coaching and provision of support (Baas & Riggio, 2006); these leaders serve as mentors and counselors focusing on learning, employee needs, and personal growth (Khorshid &

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Pashazadeh, 2014). SMTs should inspire their staff and empower them, which in turn could improve the academic performance of the school. S MTs should foster a culture of continuous improvement and give teachers focused assistance to increase learner accomplishment (Urkofsky, 2022). Instructional leaders have a managerial role to develop teachers and learners so that their schools can achieve and improve in performance. They also provide freedom for teachers to decide for themselves what type of development they need and to offer suggestions. Transformational leadership theory pays a close attention to the requirements of each staff member and learner, then comes up with functions to support them in improving academic performance.

5.3.1.5 Creation of a positive learning environment

A positive learning environment is essential for fostering academic success and enhancing the overall performance of both teachers and learners. Respondents were asked whether such an environment is created in their schools; their responses are given below:

DP 4*:*

> *"Teachers are provided with relevant resources at the beginning of the year like Annual Teaching Programs (ATPs), Learner Teacher Supporting Materials (LTSM), assessment plans and so on. Previous question papers are provided to learners to assist them. We even outsource the best performing educators to come and share their techniques."*

Another response from the SMT, also in support:

P 3:"

> *We give support to educators by ensuring that there is teacher development, inviting teachers from sister schools to help where there is a need. We make sure that teachers attend to service meetings and trainings by the Department. We provide teachers with laptops, overhead projectors and Google videos to be used in teaching and learning. Every term, teachers come to the SMT to share their challenges, and we assist in coming up with strategies.*

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- **Affirmation of a Positive Learning Environment**

All respondents indicated that a positive learning environment is created in their schools. The responses were from: 6 principals, deputy principals, 6 departmental heads and 6 senior teachers.

These findings suggest a strong consensus among SMT members that their schools provide a supportive and conducive learning environment. This could be attributed to effective leadership, structured classroom management, teacher commitment, and available support systems for learners.

Teachers perform at their best when a positive environment is created in a school. When asked, in what ways does the SMT promote positive and collaborative school climate, all the respondents agreed that they create a positive environment for the staff members to work conductively. To support this the following responses were given:

DP 6:

> *"By creating systems that make everyone to feel safe in the school. Ensuring that there is a good working relationship among educators. We ensure that the school is safe by always preaching safety among learners."*

DH 2:

> "*We create a user-friendly environment in which a sense of trust and openness will be the order of the day. As such, everyone will be an active participant*."

DH 5:

"By ensuring that all learners are treated equally regardless of gender and grade attended. We establish a fair learning environment."

DP 2:

> *"The SMT always liaise positively with educators checking that things are done accordingly. We also ensure that communication is done fairly for*

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them to know things on time and curriculum plan is distributed to them, well on time."

All the respondents agreed on creating a positive environment for the teachers and learners. This is an indication that SMTs know the urgency of creating a conducive teaching and learning environment for an improvement in academic performance to be attained.

- **No Reports of a Negative Learning Environment**

None of the respondents indicated that a positive learning environment was lacking in their schools. This reinforces the perception that SMTs prioritize creating an environment that supports effective teaching and learning.

- **Teacher Incentives for Motivation**

Teacher recognition is a crucial component of instructional leadership, as it reinforces good performance, boosts morale, and encourages teachers to maintain high teaching standards. Furthermore, teacher motivation is a key factor in sustaining high levels of performance and commitment in the classroom. To ascertain this point, respondents were asked whether teachers receive incentives as a form of motivation.

- **Affirmation of Teacher Incentives**

All respondents confirmed that teachers are provided with incentives. The responses were from: 6 principals, 6 deputy principals, 6 departmental heads and 6 senior teachers. Response given by DH 6:

"Teachers and learners are given certificates and trophies. We give learners certificates during the morning assembly, clap hands for them to stimulate their performance. vWe make sure that every term, we recognise top achievers with certificates some vouchers of R50, R100 and R200 for position one to three."

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These findings indicate that schools recognize the importance of motivating teachers through incentives. vIncentives may include financial rewards, professional development opportunities, public recognition, or non-monetary benefits such as additional resources or reduced workloads.

- **No Reports of Lack of Incentives**

None of the respondents indicated that teachers do not receive incentives. This suggests that schools in the Mopani West Education District actively implement motivational strategies to retain teachers and enhance their performance.

P 2:

> *"Every term we celebrate and appreciate our own teachers and learners with doing awards ceremony for the achievement we would have attained as a way of motivating others."*

- **Discussion on Creation of a Positive Learning Environment**

It is well known that a happy worker is a productive worker. The findings of the study indicated that the SMTs agree to be creating a positive climate for the school community and when the staff and learners are encouraged, motivated and inspired, people work harder. Transformational leaders inspire and create an environment where people work harder and foster an atmosphere in which everyone is inspired to make a positive impact to the school's progress. Instructional leaders encourage a healthy learning environment for excellent performance, hence, both theories are relevant for SMTs in schools to change their underperforming results and become performing schools. Creating a positive climate is one of the effective Instructional leadership practices employed to improve performance in schools; a positive climate should be created for both teachers and learners. A learning environment should maximize both the teacher and learner's opportunity to learn and succeed (Kute, 2023). Instructional leadership theory is fostering a school culture to create a conducive environment for effective teaching and learning (Kolken *et al*., 2020).

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5.3.1.6 Parental involvement

Parental involvement is a critical factor in improving learner performance and fostering a collaborative school environment. Respondents were asked whether parents are involved in the teaching and learning of their children, to which all respondents solemnly answered in the positive.

DH 4:

> *"For a while some parents promised to monitor evening studies, after few weeks they stopped because they were influenced outside that they are not paid."*

Another supporting sentiment identifying a challenge was:

ST6:

> *"The main challenge is to meet parents during the week because biological parents do not attend meetings. They send their relatives to attend on their behalf."*

- **Affirmation of Parental Involvement**

All respondents indicated that parents are involved in their children's education. The responses were from: 6 principals, 6 deputy principals, 6 departmental heads and 6 senior teachers.

These responses suggest that schools in the Mopani West Education District actively engage parents in their children's academic journey, although there were challenges, they faced. Parental involvement may take various forms, including:

- **Attending Parent Meetings**: Regular meetings where parents are informed about learner progress and school expectations.
- **Monitoring Homework and Assignments:** Parents assisting learners with schoolwork at home.
- **Communication with Teachers:** Parents maintaining regular contact with teachers to track learner performance and behaviour.

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- **Participation in School Activities:** Parents contributing to fundraising, school events, or governance structures such as School Governing Bodies (SGBs).

- **No Reports of Lack of Parental Involvement**

None of the respondents indicated that parents are not involved, reinforcing the notion that schools recognize the role of parents in supporting learner achievement. There is a challenge with other parents who are not involved in the learning of their children.

- **Strategies for Parental Involvement**

All respondents agreed that parents are involved in teaching and learning, therefore, they were also asked whether specific strategies are in place to encourage and strengthen this involvement.

- **Affirmation of Parental Involvement Strategies**

The majority of respondents confirmed that schools have strategies to involve parents; the responses were from: 6 principals, 4 deputy principals, 4 departmental heads and 4 senior teachers.

This suggests that most schools have structured approaches to parental engagement, which may include:

- **Workshops and Information Sessions:** Schools organizing events to educate parents on how they can support their children academically.
- **Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs)**: Formal groups that foster collaboration between parents and educators.
- **Communication Platforms:** Use of newsletters, WhatsApp groups, and other digital tools to keep parents informed.
- **Home-School Partnerships**: Encouraging parents to reinforce classroom learning through home-based activities.

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- **Lack of Parental Involvement Strategies**

A few respondents indicated that their schools do not have strategies in place to involve parents. Their responses were from: 2 deputy principals, 2 departmental heads and 2 senior teachers.

DP 6:

> "*Parents are invited whenever there is a need or a problem we want to resolve about the learner. We usually send learners back home to come with their parents."*

These responses suggest that while parental involvement is generally present, some schools may lack formalized strategies to enhance and sustain it. Possible reasons for this challenge could include:

- **Limited Resources**: Schools may not have the means to implement structured parent engagement programs.
- **Low Parental Engagement:** Some parents may be unwilling or unable to participate in school activities.
- **Communication Barriers:** Challenges in effectively reaching all parents, particularly those in rural or disadvantaged areas.

The findings indicate that parental involvement was widely recognized and practiced in schools, however, the fact that some SMT members reported a lack of structured strategies suggests inconsistencies in how parental engagement is managed. Schools that do not have clear strategies may face challenges in maintaining consistent and meaningful parental involvement.

Parental involvement was acknowledged; however, some schools lack structured approaches to ensure sustained engagement. Addressing these barriers through formalized parental involvement programs could further enhance learner performance.

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- **Discussion of Parental Involvement**

SMTs have a role to involve parents in the education of their children. Parental involvement gives teachers, and learners support during their teaching and learning engagements. Data collected supported the point that schools engage parents although there are various challenges faced by different schools. Data indicated that parents are engaged in problem-solving cases of learners, showing that it is that underperforming schools should involve parents in curriculum matters to improve the performance of learners. Instructional leaders should be able to persuade people to work and accept responsibility and parents have the responsibility to support their children in their schooling journey. Transformational leaders should collaborate with organizational stakeholders like parents for a quick growth of the school (Moradi & Shahbazi, 2016). Both leaders' styles should inspire people, including parents to take part in the education of their children with the goal of improving performance

5.3.1.7 Monitoring and evaluation

- **Use of Assessment to Monitor Learner Progress**

The study found that the majority of school management team members utilize assessment to monitor learner progress, although there is some variation in roles. A total of 5 principals confirmed that they use assessments to monitor learner progress; four deputy principals reported using assessments to monitor learner progress; four departmental heads also indicated that they use assessments to monitor learner progress while only two senior teachers confirmed using assessments to monitor learner progress, indicating a notable gap in this practice at the senior teacher level. Responding to the question asked:

P2 said:

> *"Every term we formally assess learners and give their parents progress reports. As SMT we meet and analyse learner performance according to levels and from there we come up with strategies to help them".*

DH3 said:

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"SMT conduct and use assessments to monitor learner progress through creating formal and informal assessment to check learner's cognitive level based on the content taught."

One respondent, ST 6, a senior teacher, was unsure of the use of assessments in monitoring learner progress by saying:

"Learners are given more written work in the form of classwork and homework. Those who do not write are reported to parents. I'm not sure if I have answered you."

In contrast, those who did not use assessments to monitor learner progress were: two deputy principals, two departmental heads and four senior teachers.

- **Provision of Feedback to Teachers**

Feedback to teachers is an essential part of instructional leadership. The findings suggested that there is variability in the provision of feedback across different roles within the school management teams. Four principals confirmed that they provide feedback to teachers, while two principals did not. Three deputy principals reported that they provide feedback to teachers, while three deputy principals indicated that they do not provide feedback. Four departmental heads confirmed that they provide feedback to teachers, while two departmental heads did not. Two senior teachers indicated that they provide feedback to their peers, while four senior teachers reported that they do not provide feedback.

ST 6:

"The SMT holds meetings with teachers every month so that we can discuss matters that are of importance to the school and at the same time giving them feedback on the progress of our school activities. When we have attended circuit meetings, coming back we report back to all the staff members".

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The lack of feedback provision, particularly among senior teachers, highlights an area for potential development in the schools studied. ST3 responded by saying:

> *"Most of the time we are busy with many things that we end up not giving feedback to teachers. There is not enough time to hold meetings. We are chasing results."*

- **Use of Assessment Data to Improve Performance**

The use of assessment data to improve performance is another critical aspect of instructional leadership. Assessment data for this purpose was less widespread across the school management teams although, only half of the principals reported using assessment data to improve performance, while the other half did not. Most of deputy principals indicated that they use assessment data to improve performance, while half of the deputy principals did not. Only two departmental heads confirmed using assessment data to improve performance.

- **Discussion on Monitoring and Evaluation**

Most of the participants agreed that their SMTs implement mentoring and evaluation in their schools. The concern is that most SMTs monitor and evaluate management processes after a long period, as a term, from document analysis reports. The senior teachers raised a lack of training and workshops to capacitate them to the level of the roles given - that constrains them from being able to monitor and evaluate those under their leadership. Instructional leaders must monitor teachers' work through supervision of their work schedules, lesson preparations, and learner portfolios, assess learner performance through school-based tests and formal tests, arrange class visits, and ultimately provide feedback to teachers (Mestry, 2019). As SMT monitors, feedback should be given to both teachers and learners for growth purposes and performance improvement. Mwakatjitu and Lekule (2022) alluded that SMTs need to assume responsibilities as quality officials and provide sufficient departmental oversight. SMTs need to present staff evaluation to raise standards and carry out classroom observations to ensure that quality teaching and learning take place. Findings that content coverage, audit of written work, and class visits are not efficiently monitored, raise serious concerns.

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Accountability structures are not clear in the documents analyzed, but in the qualitative and quantitative data collected, there are claims that these structures are in existence. This contradiction raises a concern, although, there was no means of verification of these facts. This might imply that the SMTs know what is expected of them, hence their responses, but are not doing it. Monitoring and evaluation are some of the effective Instructional leadership practices that school leaders need for improvement in performance and for quality assurance. Through curriculum monitoring, instructional leaders can ensure that learners are taught, according to their grade and curriculum set.

5.3.1.8 Leadership and governance

Providing leadership and governance is another role that SMTs should execute for the smooth running of the school.

Involvement of Teachers in Decision-making

The study explored whether teachers are involved in decision-making processes within the school. The responses showed a high level of involvement across all leadership roles as all participants reported that they involve teachers in decision-making processes.

DH 4:

> "*Through staff meetings, all staff members are given the opportunity to express themselves and other teachers represent us in the SGB committee."*

ST 4:

> "*The SMT involves teacher and other staff members in the decision-making processes by delegating them responsibilities so that they can own them."*

These findings suggest that there is a unanimous agreement among all members of the school management teams on the urgency of involving teachers in decision-making processes.

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- **Contribution of Accountability Structures to Academic Improvement**

The study further examined whether accountability structures are perceived to contribute to academic improvement. The responses showed a mixed perspective across different leadership roles - three principals agreed that accountability structures contribute to academic improvement, while the other three disagreed; four deputy principals believed that accountability structures contribute to academic improvement, while two disagreed; four departmental heads indicated that accountability structures play a role in improving academic performance, while two disagreed; four senior teachers felt that accountability structures contribute to academic improvement, while disagreed. Overall, there was a positive view regarding the role of accountability structures, although there those who had a contrary view.

5.3.1.9 Challenges in implementing effective leadership practices

The study also sought to understand whether school leaders experience challenges in implementing effective leadership practices. The results highlighted that leadership challenges were commonly experienced across all management roles . Five principals reported experiencing challenges in implementing effective leadership practices, while one principal did not face such challenges. Five deputy principals indicated that they face challenges in leadership implementation, while one deputy principal did not. All six departmental heads reported facing challenges in implementing effective leadership practices. Five senior teachers stated that they experienced challenges, while one senior teacher did not.

ST2:

> *"On my side, teachers do not bring their preparations as requested. I do not know if they are undermining us from their side or want to see what we will do."*

Supporting the above sentiment, DH 4 said:

DP 4:

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"It depends on the attitude of the teacher. Some of the teachers are undermining us. I don't know how to put it. The teachers at times will not do what was said".

These findings suggest that leadership challenges are a widespread concern within the schools, with departmental heads and senior teachers reporting the very high levels of difficulty in implementing leadership practices.

These findings highlight the collaborative nature of decision-making within schools and the mixed perceptions towards it. Responses also demonstrated the urgency of addressing the challenges faced by school leaders in implementing effective leadership practices.

- **Discussion on Leadership and Governance**

School leaders have a pivotal role to engage staff members in decision-making to develop a collaborative and conducive school climate where everyone will be productive. The collected data on leadership and governance portrayed mixed emotions since majority claim to get support while others claimed they are not. It is the responsibility of the SMTs to provide Instructional leadership practices to alleviate difficulties experienced in underperforming schools. Research have continuously demonstrated that academic performance is higher in schools led by effective instructional leaders, therefore, providing leadership and governance is essential for academic performance improvement. The research aligns instructional leadership theory with leadership and governance since the theory focuses on the necessity of accountability, in enhancing school performance. Strong SMTs set high standards for staff and learners to encourage accountability, all of which are critical to counteract underperformance.

5.3.1.10 Community engagement in the improvement of results

The study also sought to determine whether school management teams engage community stakeholders in the teaching and learning processes. All participants, reported that they engaged community stakeholders in the teaching and learning process,

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thereby illustrating a collaborative approach to education across all levels of school management. Education is a societal business that needs all stakeholders to assist for the schools to perform. The SMT was asked how they engage the community and local stakeholders to support academic Improvement. The SMT members interviewed overwhelmingly agreed that they engage the community to support their schools, although they, at times, encounter challenges.

There are also benefits the SMTs gain from engaging the community like:

DH 1*:*

> *"We do have extra classes and camps whereby the community donated food parcels and offered to cook and clean for learners in order to achieve good results."*

In support of the above statement, another respondent answered like:

P 5:

> *"Members of the community have decided to pay R300 per household to help learners to spend enough time at school. Again showing their seriousness, they accompany them to come and study during the night."*

An indication of the support is shown from the quotation below:

DP6:

> *"An outreach program was initiated by the Quality of Learning and Teaching Campaign (QLTC) wherein the South African Police Services (SAPS) came in and did unannounced random searches to stop the selling of drugs and gangsterism. The local clinic also did Pregnancy awareness campaign."*

community stakeholders in the education of their learners. SMTs do involve them, and some do assist even though some expect payments after offering their services and if the schools are unable to do this, they terminate their services.

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These finding underscores the necessity of community involvement in schools and highlights a shared commitment from all roles to integrate community stakeholders into the teaching and learning process.

- **Challenges in Engaging Community Stakeholders in the Improvement of Results**

The study explored whether school leaders experience challenges when trying to engage community stakeholders in improving academic results. The responses indicate that all participants face difficulties in engaging community stakeholders to improve academic results:

DP 6:

> *"For a while parents promised to monitor evening studies, after few weeks they stopped because they were influenced outside that they are not paid".*

Another supporting statement identifying a challenge was:

DH 2:

> *"The main challenge is to meet parents during the week whereby biological parents do not attend to meetings. They send their relatives to attend on their behalf".*

These responses suggest that engaging community stakeholders in improving academic performance is an ongoing challenge for school leadership, across all levels.

- **Discussion on Community engagement**

Participants assert that they involve various stakeholders in the teaching and learning of the learners. Stakeholder support to schools enables teachers to focus on the business of teaching and learning while they concentrate on areas of their specialties. For example, the Health Department taking care of health issues and bringing campaigns to schools will be beneficial to the school; instructional leaders should be able to persuade everyone to work with the school, however, document analysis data offer contradicting evidence (Moradi & Shahbazi, 2016). There was no means of verification that other

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stakeholders played roles in various schools where documents were presented. Underperforming schools may improve by fostering the participation of external stakeholders. SMTs should be flexible to be recipients of new ideas and approaches, implying that leaders are to come up with stakeholder management systems for all interested parties (Qadach et al., 2020). Different stakeholders need to be involved in the decision-making process with the goal of improving performance. Instructional leadership theory is aligned with community engagement since it fosters constructive bonds between parties involved in the educational system, including parents, learners, teachers, and the communities to overcome underperformance. Transformational leaders are compelled to collaborate with one another to get the intended outcomes (Moradi & Shabazi, 2016).

5.3.1.10 Integration of ICT in teaching and learning, and their impact on learning

The study examined whether schools integrate Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the teaching and learning process. All participants revealed that ICT integration is a priority across all leadership roles.

ST 2:

> *"We are living in the 4th Industrial Revolution era. Learners can learn through the use of technology. The SMTs were asked how they integrate ICT into teaching and learning."*

Twenty-four respondents agreed that there is a positive correlation between the usage of technology and improvement of results.

DP5:

> "*WhatsApp groups for various subjects are created. Learners are given homework, assignments, and so on. In the gadgets, previous question papers are loaded in their gadgets and other study guides".*

Another respondent agreeing to the integration of ICT said:

DH5:

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"Overhead projectors are used in the presentation of lessons as well as in the presentation of results to parents and other stakeholders. We get lessons from links and we teach. Learners in Grade 12 have tablets to use. Lower grades do not have. We do not allow them to bring cell phones because they steal from each other."

These responses indicate that ICT integration is consistently prioritized across all roles in the school management teams.

Provision of ICT Resources to Teachers

The study further explored whether ICT resources are provided to teachers for their use in teaching and learning; all participants reported the provision of these resources:

This suggests that schools are committed to ensuring that teachers have the necessary ICT tools to support teaching and learning.

- **Impact of ICT Integration on Learning Outcomes**

The study also sought to determine whether the integration of ICT in teaching and learning has an impact on learning outcomes. The findings show unanimous agreement across all roles that the integration of ICT has a positive impact on learning outcomes. DP 6 indicated that by saying:

"*SMT members have laptops and Wi-fi installed for both teachers and learners. They download resources like videos and our learners get excited when watching them while at the same time they learn. When a teacher is absent, videos keep learners learning on their own."*

DH5;

"*As SMT we have undergone short training on ICT, we are able to teach through use of technology. Learners and teachers show interest in this regard. So, now teaching and learning is effective."*

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These findings highlight the importance of ICT in teaching and learning and the challenges in engaging community stakeholders. The unanimous belief in the positive impact of ICT on learning outcomes suggests that schools are on the right path in integrating technology into education.

- **Discussion on Integration of ICT**

We live in a technological world where our learners should be taught to use technology from the school level. It is noted that SMTs provide laptops and overhead projectors to teachers. Grade 12 learners are provided with tablets to enhance their teaching and learning. By the time Grade 12 are provided with tablets, however, they might encounter challenges of using them since they might not have had access to such gadgets, and they are expected to utilize them efficiently without the necessary skill. Teachers who were born before technology are also expected to fruitfully assist learners in using their tablets while the former have inadequate skills in the technology - this is a challenge on its own. Using overhead projectors in schools might also be used by a few who can maneuver around technology, however, most teachers have noted the positive impact that ICT integration has had in their schools. Challenges faced due to the usage of technology were also outlined; for instance, learners might engage in using their tablets for the wrong things, like watching videos during teaching and learning times. The SMTs should come up with a code of conduct for the regulation of ICT usage.

Transformational leadership strives to generate fresh ideas and viewpoints to present the organization with a new direction for growth and profitability. To survive, organizations today must broaden their organizations, change and secure their knowledge and awareness of the environment. SMTs must help teachers to easily integrate ICT into teaching and learning for the benefit of learners' performance. Transformational theory encourages leaders who can transform the world; they promote innovation. Teaching and learning should move away from the traditional way of doing things to a modern and technological way of doing things. Instructional leadership theory encourages the provision of professional development to its people. It is, therefore, the role of SMTs to offer training and workshops to teachers so they can acquaint themselves with ICT

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integration. According to Bellibas et al. (2022), educators who are reluctant to change may be less likely to properly integrate new teaching practices, however, teaching methods change from time to time, so SMTs should be abreast with change and take their teachers on board.

5.3.2 Document Analysis

This section will discuss documents that the researcher analysed from the - 6 interviewed principals, 6 deputy principals, 6 departmental heads and 6 senior teachers. The reasons for analysing these documents were for evidence of SMTs' management documents, their purpose and how the comments assist in improving academic performance in schools.

5.3.2.1 Evidence of management documents

The researcher requested for documents from the SMTs from the 6 interviewed schools as evidence that SMTs are implementing instructional leadership practices in their schools to improve academic performance. The researcher randomly sampled documents from 6 schools after the interview process. The requested documents were - SMT minutes, staff minutes, departmental minutes, audit of written work tools, content coverage tools, and curriculum journals.

5.3.2.2 List of documents for improvement of academic performance

The documents that the researcher requested for analysis were - SMT minutes, staff and departmental minutes, audit of written work tools, content coverage tools, and curriculum journals. After the interviews, the researcher went through the documents requested. All listed documents are kept in the schools as evidence of activities done by the SMTs in the implementation of instructional leadership practices, however, not all documents were available in all the schools. The researcher discovered that - content coverage tools and departmental minutes books were available in schools but not administered; SMTs from all 6 schools did not administer content coverage tools; the schedule of meeting plans was not followed and planning for meetings were done but not followed. For instance,

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minutes of meetings were requested from the Department of Languages from School 1, the DH1 answered:

> *"We held meetings but did not record minutes. Our departmental secretary was redeployed in the previous rationalization process and was never replaced, my apologies. We shall attend it."*

Table 5.2: List of Documents Analysed

List of Documents Analysed
SMTs' minutes
Staff minutes
Departmental minutes
Audit of written work tools
Content coverage tools
Curriculum Journals

5.3.2.3 Rationale for the analysed documents

The listed documents in Table 5.2 were analysed to get evidence that the SMTs at the school level practice their instructional roles and responsibilities to improve academic performance**.** The documents chosen were to serve the following purposes**:**

- SMT minutes – to get evidence of meetings held by SMTs to coordinate management activities in terms of planning, organizing, and coordinating management activities to improve academic performance.
- Staff minutes - to get evidence that SMTs hold meetings with the staff to share the vision of the school with them.
- Departmental minutes – to serve as evidence that various departments meet regularly to plan for their subjects' committees to be functional.
- Audit of written work tools – to serve as evidence that teaching and learning is taking place by engaging learners in writing.
- Content coverage tools – to serve as evidence that Annual Teaching Plans are completed and monitored by the SMTs.

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- Curriculum Journal – to get entries made by different subject advisors as they visit to monitor the subjects of their specialties.

5.3.2.4 Usefulness of documents analysed

The analysed documents are essential for every school to keep safe, as they provide evidence of activities that take place in the school. Any official of the department can get an idea of what was happening in the school and be able to advise accordingly. SMTs need to keep all records at school, all the time.

P2 commented that:

"*This record speaks for us to anyone who can lay eyes on us. We are really doing our best".*

5.3.2.4 Findings of documents analysed

In this section, the researcher analysed documents used by the SMTs as they perform their leadership practices to improve the academic performance of the schools. Documents were analysed using the following themes: curriculum management, setting goals, monitoring and evaluation, leadership and governance and Integrated Communication and Technology (ICT).

Table 5.3: Themes for the Document Analysis

Themes	Documents	Characterisation	Categories
Curriculum Management	SMTs, Staff, and Departmental minutes. Curriculum journal	Principals, Deputy Principals, Departmental heads and Senior Teachers	Meetings Support given Audit of written work Content coverage
2. Leadership and Governance	SMTs, Staff, and Departmental minutes.	Principals, Deputy Principals,	Goals communicated Collaboration with structures

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		Departmental heads and Senior Teachers	Decision making
ICT integration	SMTs, Staff and Departmental minutes	Principals, Deputy Principals, Departmental heads and Senior Teachers	Integration of ICT Provision of resources
Monitoring and Evaluation	SMTs, Staff and Departmental minutes	Principals, Deputy Principals, Departmental heads and Senior Teachers	Curriculum Audit of written work Content coverage Class visits Accountability
Community engagements	SMTs, Staff and Departmental minutes	Principals, Deputy Principals, Departmental heads and Senior Teachers	Involvement in Decision-making
Setting of goals	SMTs, Staff and Departmental minutes	Principals, Deputy Principals, Departmental heads and Senior Teachers	Setting of goals Communication of goals
Support provided to teachers and learners	SMTs, Staff and Departmental minutes	Principals, Deputy Principals, Departmental heads, and Senior Teachers	Curriculum matters

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8. Professional Development	SMTs, Staff and Departmental minutes	Principals, Deputy Principals, Departmental heads and Senior Teachers	Opportunities provided
Accountability structures	SMTs, Staff and Departmental minutes	Principals, Deputy Principals, Departmental heads and Senior Teachers	Availability of structures Implementation
. Parental involvement	SMTs, Staff and Departmental minutes	Principals, Deputy Principals, Departmental heads and Senior Teachers	Availability Involvement

The following are details on presentation, interpretation, and findings from documents used by instructional leaders to improve academic performance in schools, based on the documents analysed.

5.3.2.5.1 *Curriculum management*

For schools to attain academic performance, the SMT has a role in managing the curriculum. SMT, staff and departmental meetings are held in all the schools, although, the only challenge observed was that the schedule of meetings was not followed. The expectation is that the staff meetings are to be held after the SMT meeting. In school 2, staff meetings are more than SMT minutes, implying that SMT meets the staff without holding any meetings. DH2 from School 2 commented on this:

DH 2: "*We are a small school, there is no need to meet as SMT and staff later while we can save time and meet only once and deal with issues once.*"

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Departmental meetings are held after long intervals - 5 months. One can deduce that departments are not functional, for instance, in a year, in school 2, the Science Department held a meeting twice in a year. Audit of written work was conducted in all the schools, although it is done after long intervals, a month and even more; schools 1 and 4 are examples of that practice. Content coverage tools were produced without being administered. When Instructional leaders inadequately manage teaching and learning in schools, adverse outcomes may ensue, such as:

- Drop in school performance: when there is inadequate management, the standard of education may decline resulting in underperformance.
- Absence of explicit guidance: without adequate curriculum management, both teachers and learners may lack direction, leading to a chaotic educational atmosphere of underperformance.
- Reduced teacher morale: educators depend on supportive leadership of curriculum management. Inadequate management may result in diminished morale, less motivation and increased teacher turnover.
- Inadequate learner discipline: absence of instructional leadership to enforce the standard and discipline, learner conduct may deteriorate, disturbing the educational atmosphere of others.
- Insufficient resource allocation: instructional leaders are tasked with the effective distribution of resources. Insufficient management of curriculum matters may cause mismanagement, resulting in shortages of critical resources and assistance for teachers and learners.

Lack of curriculum management may impede a school's capacity to provide excellent results, leading to underperformance.

5.3.2.5.2 Monitoring and evaluation

Analysis of documents indicated concern in terms of monitoring and evaluation by the SMTs. There was no evidence of tracking learners' progress in all of the documents analyzed, from departmental to SMT minutes. Content coverage tools were not administered in the 6 schools in which documents were analyzed. All 6 schools had

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scheduled plans for class visits, but none of the schools did class visits since there was no evidence in the minute books and the departmental minute records. Monitoring and auditing of written work in most of the schools is done after long intervals, which is not safe for catch-up programs to be affected timeously. From all the challenges mentioned, one can say that there is no effective monitoring and evaluation by the SMTs.

Without proper monitoring and evaluation by instructional leaders, teaching and learning are left to chance; when school leaders do not monitor and evaluate educational processes, adverse outcomes may occur, such as:

- Restricted understanding of teaching methods: without frequent class visits by the SMTs, leaders lack direct insight into teaching methodologists used by teachers and learner engagement.
- Missed opportunities for teacher development: classroom observations enable SMTs to provide constructive comments, hence, missed opportunities might lead to stagnation in teaching and learning.
- Monitoring learner success is critical for the SMTs because of the significance of monitoring and evaluation, which are:
- Informed decision-making: by systematically evaluating learner achievements may make SMTs improve quality and address areas of need to improve performance.
- Early identification of gaps: continuous monitoring and evaluation facilitate prompt identification of learners facing difficulties allowing opportune interventions to avert further academic decline.
- Accountability and continuous improvement: regular monitoring and evaluation assist in tracking the progress of teachers and learners, fostering a culture of continuous improvement and addressing underperformance.

5.3.2.5.3 Leadership and governance

Instructional leaders have a role to provide leadership and governance for the smooth running of the school. Findings from the documents confirmed that the SMTs involved teachers in decision-making for staff minutes from the 6 schools attested to this. Evidence

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of partnership with stakeholders could not be found although, SMT members said the contrary:

DP 2:"

> *SAPS usually come to our school to do unannounced body searches. Is just that we did not think of keeping records and when we were informing the staff minutes were not taken because it was announced in our morning briefing."*

Providing leadership and governance is a crucial responsibility of the SMTs to make informed decisions; timely intervention is a culture of continuous improvement and learner achievements. Based on the items noted in the SMT and staff minutes, one can say that the SMTs consult with their teachers.

5.3.2.5.4 ICT Integration in teaching and learning

Encouraging and integrating the usage of ICT can improve learner performance in schools. Findings in the documents analyzed indicated that schools do have ICT champions leading in technological matters. Schools do have laptops for SMT members and minutes of SMTs do have discussions, shared on overhead projectors, when available.

In school 4, ST 2 said: "*During term meetings with parents, we present results using an overhead projector."*

There were records of where Grade 12 tablets were discussed for collection and submission to the district, therefore, it can be said that SMTs manage the usage of ICT in the schools. Encouraging the use of ICT in schools is essential because of its influence on contemporary education. ICT renders learning more interesting for learners and accommodates diverse learning styles and enhances learner motivation for the learner is able to leave from anywhere not the classroom only. The absence of a teacher does not stop the learner from discovering knowledge on his/her own using technology. ICT facilitates seamless interaction among teachers and learners, communication and

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collaboration among parents and the school. The challenge that is put forth is that learners from lower grades do not have access to tablets until they reach Grade 12, and they might be challenged by how to utilize them at that stage.

5.3.2.5.5 Community engagements

Education is a societal issue and all stakeholders with an interest in education should be given the opportunity to contribute. Findings from the documents analyzed did not indicate the involvement of external stakeholders in the schools, although, parents' meetings were recorded in SMT and Staff minutes. Based on that one can say parental involvement is encouraged in schools. All the schools have evidence of parent meetings mostly discussing Grade 12 learners and strategies to be used to improve academic performance.

Involving stakeholders in decision-making is important for several reasons:

- Enhance accountability: when stakeholders engage in the decision-making process, they ensure responsibility for outcomes, and this increases accountability and ownership.
- Augment trust and collaboration: engaging stakeholders activates a cooperative atmosphere that advances educational objectives.
- Enhance educational outcomes: stakeholder participation fosters better educational outcomes by ensuring that the needs of the school are addressed.

5.3.2.5.6 Setting school goals

The 6 schools have clearly set targets for their overall performance in various subjects. From the SMT, staff and departmental minutes, there were evidence that schools' targets were set and these were communicated with teachers. Subject teachers were directed to set targets with learners in their various subjects and overall targets for the schools were clearly set.

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5.3.2.5.7 Support provided to teachers and learners

It is the responsibility of the SMT to provide support to teachers and learners for the smooth running of the schools. Evidence from the documents analysed showed that there was a moderate support that the SMTs provide to the teachers. The types of support given and noted from most of the schools were that of training teachers towards running final examination; control of late comers and absenteeism and of managing extra and Saturday classes. There was no evidence on support given to curriculum, specifically.

5.3.2.5.8 Professional development

In closing the gaps and strengthening the staff, SMTs should provide professional development according to the needs of individual teachers or groups of teachers in the school. From the documents analysed, circuit and district-based workshops and trainings were captured in their minutes, although, there was no evidence that confirmed that any of the schools had organized a workshop or training to address need/s from their school/s.

5.3.2.5.9 Accountability structures

The SMTs have a responsibility to ensure that everyone accounts in the school - from learners to the SMT. Accountability structures are to be developed by the SMTs, but from the documents analysed, there was no evidence that an accountability session was held in any form. There were no traces of such activities from SMT, staff and departmental minutes; this implies that accountability sessions were not held at schools' level even after underperformance by the schools, no one was held responsible.

5.3.2.5.10 Parental involvement

SMTs have a responsibility to involve parents in the education of their children. By so doing, parents will be providing support to teachers and learners themselves. It was evident in most of the minutes by the SMTs that parents were involved. At the beginning of the term, parents are called to the school to get progress reports of their children. Grade 12 parents are mostly involved, and strategies like camps were discussed in two schools.

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When learners are involved in misconduct, parents are invited to solve the problems. The SMTs involve parents in improving the academic performance of their learners, although a remark by some participants indicated that most parents do not attend meetings when invited.

5.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented, interpreted, and discussed data collected through questionnaires, interviews, and document analysis. The study comprised 9 principals, nine deputy principals, 18 departmental heads, and 9 senior teachers in a quantitative study and six principals, six deputy principals, six departmental heads, and six senior teachers in qualitative study and document analysis in Mopani West District. The collected data was analyzed following interrelated themes - curriculum management, monitoring and evaluation, leadership and governance, ICT integration, community engagements, setting of goals, support provided to teachers and learners, professional development, accountability structures as well as parental involvement. The next chapter focused on the summary, conclusions and recommendations of the study.

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CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 5, the data analysis process, interpretation and discussion are presented. Chapter 6 summarises Chapters 1 to 5, a conclusion, and recommendations based on the study. It also provides strategies to improve instructional leadership by School Management Teams and senior teachers. Lastly, the chapter introduces an Instructional Leadership Model to improve academic performance in the schools selected for this study.

6.2 SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS

Chapter One introduced the topic under study - *Instructional leadership practices by the School Management Teams, in pursuit of improving academic performance in Underperforming Schools in Mopani West District of Limpopo, South Africa*. Mopani District has nine underperforming schools. The main aim of the study was to explore and analyse the instructional leadership practices adopted by the schools' management teams in pursuit of improving academic performance. This study aimed to address the following objectives:

- To investigate how the school management teams support teachers and learners in implementing evidence-based instructional leadership practices.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of instructional practices in improving academic performance in underperforming secondary schools.
- To identify the key challenges the school management teams face, in improving academic outcomes of underperforming schools.
- To explore instructional leadership practices the school management teams employ to improve academic outcomes in underperforming schools.

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- To develop strategies to improve the performance of school management teams of underperforming schools.

Chapter 2, the researcher discussed the theoretical framework and theoretical framework of instructional leadership practices by the SMTs in pursuit of improving academic performance in underperforming schools. Transformational and instructional leadership theories were adopted as the theoretical framework for the study; the relevance of both theories to this study was outlined.

In **Chapter 3,** the researcher reviewed and critically discussed the literature on the topic under study. Several studies have highlighted how instructional leadership practices impact learner performance. An overview of school-based Instructional leadership practices was outlined based on previous literature. Instructional leadership is crucial to school development, especially in underperforming schools as there is a relationship between leadership and learner performance. SMTs have a role to play in their schools to develop teachers and learners to improve performance. Factors leading to schools becoming consistently low-performing, including leadership, instructors, learners, support staff, and the socio-economic environment of the community, were reviewed. Instructional leaders encounter various challenges to improve academic performance, such as - the level of engagement between teachers and learners, finances, congestion in the classroom, families and home environment, as well as insufficient competent educators. Characteristics of underperforming schools were categorized into inadequate school infrastructure, inadequate teaching and learning, inefficient leadership and administration, and socio-economic variables. Strategies employed to improve academic performance in schools were reviewed, showing that there is no single strategy to improve performance in underperforming schools. Instructional leaders, hence, need to assess their contextual factors and come up with a suitable strategy. A review of instructional leadership support for teachers and learners was conducted, bringing out the fact that instructional leaders provide support with resources, monitor curriculum, and conduct continual professional teacher development and class visits. Lastly, literature on the

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effect of Transformational and Instructional leadership Theories on learner performance, was reviewed.

Chapter 4 addressed the research design and methodology of this study. This study was underpinned by pragmatism paradigm adapted to a mixed-research design. The pragmatic paradigm approach embraces both the Positivist or anti-positivist paradigms of qualitative design and the constructivist or interpretive paradigm of qualitative design. An explanatory sequential mixed design was adopted to analyze instructional leadership practices adopted by the SMTs to improve the academic performance of underperforming schools. Quantitative data was first collected using structured questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews were then conducted to collect qualitative data. The population for this study was SMTs from the nine underperforming schools in Mopani West District comprising principals, deputy principals, departmental heads, and senior teachers who are been roped into management in schools. A purposive sampling technique was used to get 45 participants from underperforming secondary schools in Mopani West District. Questionnaires were administered through SAS/STATS 13.1 software to - 9 principals, 9 deputy principals, 18 departmental heads, and 9 senior teachers. Qualitative data was collected through semi-structured interviews with six principals, six deputy principals, six departmental heads, and six senior teachers. Random sampling was applied to arrive at the participants. Document analysis was also used to collect data. Data collected from questionnaires were analyzed using SAS/STATS 13.1 software. Data collected from Interviews were transcribed thematically and in verbatim. Documents were analyzed, combining content analysis and themes. The researcher adhered to the tenets of research ethics throughout the whole process. The trustworthiness of this study conforms to both quantitative and qualitative studies, hence, validity and reliability were used to test quantitative trustworthiness, while credibility, trustworthiness, dependability, and conformability were used to test qualitative trustworthiness. This study was limited to the Mopani West Education District.

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Chapter 5 presented, interpreted and discussed the findings collected from quantitative, qualitative, and analyzed documents. The conclusions of the three methods of data collection were as follows as per the themes:

- Clarity in the setting of academic goals - goals are set and communicated to all stakeholders by the SMTs.
- Curriculum Management - inadequate curriculum management by the SMTs.
- Provision of support to teachers and learners – SMTs claim to support teachers and learners but there were no means of verifying this from the documents analyzed. Senior teachers mostly report that they are not supported by the SMTs appointed in their co-opted roles.
- Professional Development - schools depend on training and workshops from the circuit, district, and universities. No school-based professional development opportunities were offered in the schools.
- Challenges in implementing Instructional leadership practices- The following challenges were raised - lack of cooperation by teachers, no respect for due dates to submit tasks, lack of management skills by senior teachers, absenteeism and ill-discipline from learners, lack of parental involvement, and teachers teaching subjects for which they are not qualified.
- Creating a positive school climate – a positive learning school climate had been created.
- Parental involvement - most parents are not active participants in the education processes of their children.
- Monitoring and evaluation – inadequate monitoring and evaluation of curriculum matters by the SMTs.
- Leadership and Governance – teachers and parents are involved in the schools' decision-making.
- Community engagement – all SMTs agree to community engagements in their schools, although there was no evidence of this in the documents analyzed.
- ICT Integration - ICT resources are provided to teachers and Grade 12 learners and integrated into teaching and learning.

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Chapter 6 presents the summary, conclusion, and recommendations from the study. A new body of knowledge, a model to assist SMTs in improving learners' academic performance, was developed. Limitations of the research and how the researcher overcame them are outlined and further related areas of study are identified.

6.3 CONCLUSIONS

This study aimed to explore and analyse the instructional leadership practices adopted by the school management teams in improving the academic performance of underperforming secondary schools in the Mopani West District. This study was noteworthy because its findings would benefit the SMTs of underperforming schools on strategies that can be employed to improve learners' performance in schools. This study also highlights the Instructional leadership practices employed in underperforming schools to improve their performance. Based on the findings above, the researcher concludes that school management teams in underperforming schools do not give evidence-based support to teachers and learners to improve academic performance. The instructional leadership practices employed by the school management teams are not effective, hence resulting in underperformance. SMTs in underperforming schools face challenges, such as - lack of cooperation from teachers, no respect for submission times, lack of management skills by the senior teachers, absenteeism and ill-discipline from learners, lack of parental involvement, and teachers teaching subjects they are not qualified for. The challenges faced by the SMTs when implementing instructional leadership practices contribute to the underperformance of the schools. The school management teams employed the following instructional leadership practices – setting academic goals, involving stakeholders, creating a positive learning environment, involving parents, providing leadership and governance, engaging the community, integrating ICT, and providing opportunities for professional development to improve academic performance. The following strategies could be adopted by the school management teams to improve performance in underperforming schools - effective and efficient evidence-based curriculum management, school-based professional development, strengthening code of conduct for teachers and learners, planning and

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implementing curriculum matters, intensive monitoring and evaluation of curriculum matters, as well as tracking of learner performance progress. Recommendations by the researcher are outlined below, to assist stakeholders in coming up with solutions to the challenges of underperformance in the schools. A model developed by the researcher is meant to improve academic performance if followed by school management teams.

6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS BASED ON THEMES

The following recommendations are made based on themes:

- **Setting of academic goals**

Goals should be set and communicated to all stakeholders in the school. Not only should they be set, but the school management teams should monitor and evaluate the implementation of goals set, to be able to come up with interventions whenever a deviation occurs.

- **Curriculum management**

School management teams should have evidence-based management plans to manage curriculum; without evidence that can be produced to support points, everything amounts to nothing. Management tools should be administered every time to serve as evidence and be kept as records and points of reference when doing follow-ups.

- **Provision of support to teachers and learners**

Support given to teachers and learners should be curriculum-related to improve academic performance in the school. Some senior teachers are roped into becoming part of school management, hence, SMTs should regularly support them so they can lead in their assigned areas. Outsourcing of teachers should be managed so that they should share good practices with the teacher in the school to develop him/her and not teach learners on his /her behalf.

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- **Professionald**

SMTs should provide teachers with professional development opportunities that cater to the needs identified. Schools should organise school-based professional development workshops and training and not only rely on externally-based workshops and training. Teachers should be encouraged to register and further their studies to develop themselves.

- **Challenges in the implementation of instructional leadership practices**

On the following challenges faced by the SMTs, the researcher recommends:

- ✓ Inconsistent monitoring and support to teachers – SMTs should regularly monitor and support teachers on curriculum matters and give reports to each other. Departmental heads and senior teachers should, on a monthly basis, report to the deputy principal, who in turn will report to the principal. Findings, as the SMTs are reporting, should be given to teachers as feedback and follow-up be made where there are gaps.
- ✓ Lack of cooperation by teachers – a code of conduct for teachers should be developed with teachers for them to have ownership of it. Accountability structures should be created for those who continue not to cooperate. Disciplinary measures should be taken against those not adhering to teaching instructions since it is a non–negotiable issue.
- ✓ Lack of management skills by senior teachers - SMTs should orientate and organize management workshops and training sessions for senior teachers to equip them on management. They should also give senior teachers feedback after attending circuit and district management trainings and workshops that senior teachers did not attend.
- ✓ Absenteeism and ill-discipline by learners – develop and strengthen learners' code of conduct to regulate their conduct. Learners' code of conduct should be shared and explained to parents to support schools in managing their children.
- ✓ Lack of parental involvement - SMTs should come up with flexible programs to accommodate parents who are working. Parent meetings held during the day and working hours affect working parents negatively as they treasure that work and

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cannot risk losing it. Parent meetings should be scheduled to accommodate the fact that parents are working and there should not be many meetings in a short period of time.

- Positive learning environment – the creating of a positive learning environments for everyone in the school, is necessary.
- Parental involvement – SMTs should come up with flexible times to accommodate parents who are working. Meetings should be planned and schedules should be shared with parents. SMTs should avoid calling many meetings close to each other.
- Monitoring Evaluation – SMTs should intensify monitoring and evaluation for quality assurance. Schedules for monitoring and evaluation need to be drawn and followed. Feedback on monitored areas should be given and followed up to monitor progress.
- Leadership and Governance - SMTs should involve parents, teachers, and learners in the decision-making process of their school.
- Community Engagement - SMTs should engage the school community to get support from all interested parties in education.
- ICT integration – the integration of ICT should be prioritized since learners are energized and active wherever there is technology involved. Integration should start at lower grades up to Grade 12, not only in Grade 12. By so doing learners will continue to work even when teachers are away from them and they can learn from each other and even from learners who are in different schools.

6.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

A number of limitations were encountered when conducting this study. A mixed-method design was adopted to collect data. For quantitative data collection, a Google link was shared with participants. The pace of submitting of the completed questionnaires was slow, therefore, the researcher had to make constant follow-ups with participants until all responded. Conducting of the interviews, involved interacting with nine secondary

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schools which were spread in different Circuits of Mopani West. The researcher overcame the geographical location obstacle by attending to participants from each circuit in one day. Lack of funding for this study was another limitation but it did not impede the researcher from conducting this study. The results of the study cannot represent all underperforming schools in South Africa due to the sample size, however, results may be used in similar cases.

6.6 AREAS OF FUTURE RESEARCH

The following areas are recommended for future studies since they were not included in this study:

- Implementation of instructional leadership practices in improving academic performance in underperforming schools.
- This study was looking into instructional leadership practices in improving performance of underperforming schools. There is a need for a study to look into whether instructional leaders can really implement what they have identified as their practices.
- Perspective of teachers and learners on learner support.
- A further area of study might be researching from the teachers' and learners' perspectives of the support they are provided by their school leaders.
- School-Based- Professional Development for Teachers.
- In this area, research might be conducted on Professional development opportunities provided by the schools for the teachers.
- Lastly, this study was limited to improving academic performance in secondary schools, further study could be done on instructional leadership practices in pursuit of improving academic performance in primary schools.

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6.7 INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP MODEL TO IMPROVE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Figure 6.1 is the designed Instructional Leadership Model to improve academic performance. It is accompanied by paragraphs below illustrating how the model should function to improve learner performance.

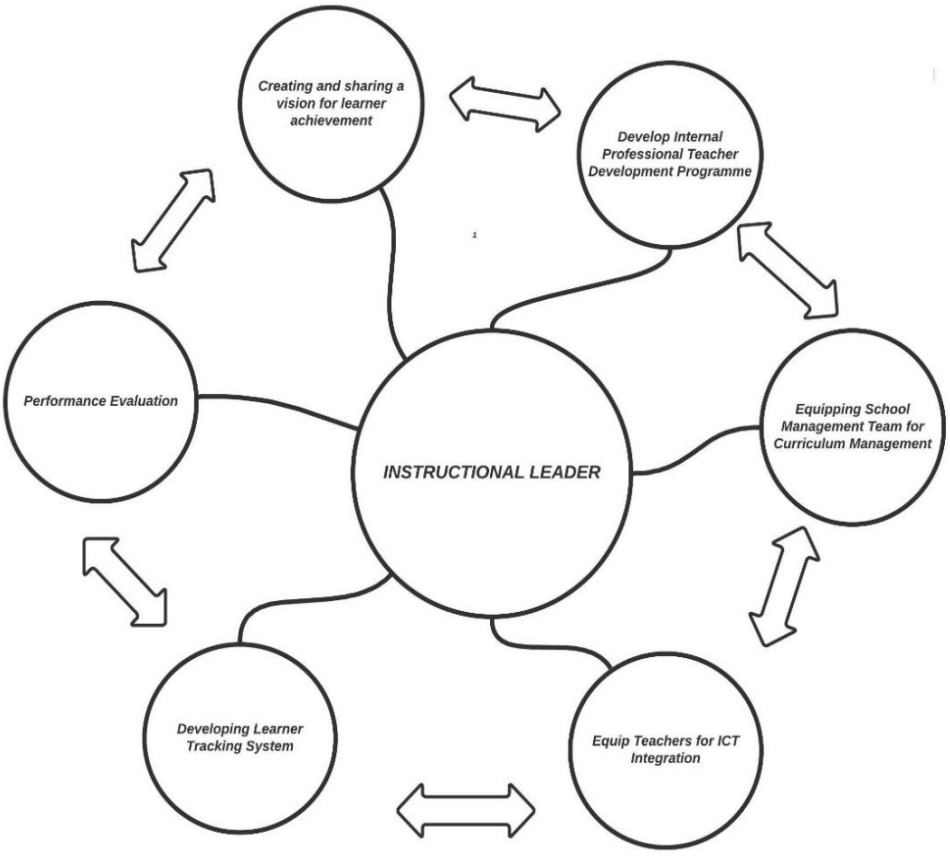


Figure 6.1: Instructional Leadership Model to Improve Academic Performance, Mangena (2025)

6.7.1 Creating and Sharing a Vision for Learner Attainment

SMTs should involve teachers, learners, parents, and every interested stakeholder in the community to create the school vision so that it is shared and owned by everyone. The

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vision developed should put learners first; should be simple, possible to implement, and attainable with measurable targets. The vision should be shared and re-iterated in all the meetings held at school so that learners should also be active participants in attaining the vision set. Regularly, the SMTs should measure learners' performance against the vision, and feedback should be given to teachers and learners.

6.7.2 Develop Internal Professional Teacher Development Program

SMTs should develop school-tailored professional development activities to cater to the needs of their teachers and learners**.** External workshops and training might not address school-based challenges at all times as professional development should be aligned with the school vision and performance of teachers' and learners' needs. Experienced teachers can be utilised to develop teachers with challenges in areas in which the former are skilled. Co-teaching methods can be used to empower teachers with gaps to assist their. SMTs should provide ongoing training for teachers on effective curriculum planning, implementation, and evaluation.

6.7.3 Equip school Management Teams for Curriculum Management

SMTs should regularly plan how to manage curriculum for improvement of learner performance. The SMT should develop and implement clear guidelines for curriculum management that outline expectations, processes and responsibilities of teachers and administrators. SMTs should provide adequate support to teachers and learners to teach and learn effectively and create a positive learning environment for a conducive environment. Curriculum management tools should be developed and utilised as a means of verification for implementation. Subject departments should give reports of curriculum management to the head of the curriculum, the deputy principals, and the accounting officers, who are principals, about activities, progress, and challenges experienced.

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6.7.4 Equip Teachers for ICT Integration

SMTs should organize trainings and workshops in the school to offer teachers and learners training in the use of ICT. Some teachers, including SMTs, lack technological skills, hence, they need to be empowered and strengthened in using ICT. Resources must be provided to teachers and learners to learn these skills easily and quickly. ICT should be integrated into lesson planning, assessment, and progress evaluation, thereby utilising technology to enhance the educational experience and support learner performance.

6.7.5 Develop Learner Tracking of Performance

TERM 1					
Learner details	Task 1	Task 2	Variance	Average(%)	SMT Comment
L1	60	55	-5	57.5	Needs Support
L2	70	75	5	72.5	Progressing
L3	35	35	0	35	Consistent performance

Figure 6.2: Learner Performance Tracking Tool

Excellence results can be obtained by following the learner's performance and offering the learner support to improve where necessary. School leaders should adopt a system that aligns with the school's needs. SMTs should have a system of recording and keeping data on learner performance and follow-ups; tracking will indicate either an improvement or a decline. By tracking learners, SMTs will be able to detect learners at risk and assist them. Differentiated types of teaching should be offered to cater for individual needs and consistent review of learner progress will yield positive results.

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6.7.6 Performance Evaluation

Performance evaluation enables school leaders to assess their progress in terms of academic performance. If progress is not achieved, school leaders should come up with strategies to intervene. Regular evaluation of performance, therefore, is essential for learners, teachers and the school. Performance evaluation is critical to track the progress of teachers and learners, enhance learning, encourage accountability and boost the motivation of both teachers and learners.

6.8 LEARNER TRACKING OF PERFORMANCE TOOL

After baseline assessment, learner tasks are to be recorded after every assessment. The next task to be written also to be recorded. The variance is to be calculated to check if the learner's performance is increasing, declining or consistent. The SMTs are to remark if the learner need support, progressing or consistent in performance. Declining learners are to be supported for them to progress. The intervention strategies are to be developed to assist learners who are not progressing. Based on learner average performances, groups will be formed according to levels. Differentiated teaching is to be employed to accommodate different learners. Even learners who are performing excellently are to be categorised and taught high-level questions or content. Low achievers to be taught easy to get or low-to-moderate questions or content. By following this model, SMT's will be able to improve the performance of their learners. Knowing learners who are declining and not performing and give them support will add up performance learners and underperformance will be put to an end. The next section focused on the conclusion of the study.

6.9 CONCLUSION

The aim of the study was to explore and analyze instructional leadership practices by the SMT's in pursuit of improving academic performance. A mixed research design was adopted and the participants for administering of the structured questionnaires were 9 -

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principals, deputy principals, departmental heads and senior teachers. On the qualitative data collection, semi-structured questions were used for interviews with 6 - principals, deputy principals, departmental heads and senior teachers. SMTs' staff and departmental meetings minutes and curriculum journal used by subject advisors when visiting schools to monitor and support schools, were documents used to analyze data on improving academic performance from underperforming schools. Data was analyzed thematically and patterns were established using research questions and literature reviewed. The study revealed that SMTs do not effectively support teachers and learners in improving the academic performance of their schools. The instructional leadership practices of the SMTs are ineffective in improving learners' academic performance, hence, the underperformance experienced. Key challenges that the SMTs face when practicing instructional leadership were identified. Based on the study's findings, the researcher devised strategies that the SMTs could employ to improve academic performance. A model that could improve academic performance by the SMTs was developed for implementation in the identified underperforming schools and elsewhere with similar environment. The recommendations made are intended to influence stakeholders interested in educational matters to improve school academic performance. Areas of further study have been suggested, looking into the gaps identified as the study was undertaken.

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LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: INFORMATION SHEET AND INFORMATION CONSENT FORM FOR SMTs (PRINCIPALS, DEPUTY PRINCIPALS, DEPARTMENTAL HEADS AND SENIOR TEACHERS)

Information sheet and Information consent form for SMTs

I am Mangena Esther Dikeledi, a Doctoral student at University of Venda. I would like to request you to be part of my research study, which is based on the **Instructional Leadership Practices which is based on Instructional Leadership Practices by the School Management Teams in Pursuit of Improving Academic Performance in Underperforming Schools in Mopani West District, Limpopo; South Africa.**

What is the purpose of the study?

- Investigate how the school management teams support teachers and Learners are implementing evidence-based instructional leadership Practices.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of instructional practices in improving academic performance in underperforming secondary schools.
- To identify the key challenges faced by the school management teams in improving academic outcomes of underperforming schools.
- To explore instructional leadership practices employed by the school management teams to improve academic outcomes in underperforming schools.
- To develop strategies that will improve the performance of SMTs of underperforming schools.

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What are the rights of voluntary participation in the study?

The decision to take part in the study is totally voluntary that is to say you are free to accept or refuse to take part in the study, if you have doubts or think that participation will leave you emotional and psychological disturbed, furthermore should you agree to participate but change your mind later, you will be allowed to withdraw at any time and stage in the study without being asked any question. I will explain in details the purpose of the study, the procedures, and other related things during our first meeting so that you can decide to voluntarily participate in this study. You have a right to voluntary participation and non-participation, withdrawal and re-joining the project at any stage if you wish so. You are free to choose to take part or not in the research and you must know that there is no exposure to risk undertaken.

What is informed Consent in the study?

I present to you this letter of consent before I start with interviews so that you can consent. I will explain in details the research process and roles of participants:

- I will allow using your vernacular during our first meeting if you agree to participate.
- I will allow you to ask questions so you can gain clarity before I give you consent form.
- I will allow to give you enough time (three days) to study the consent letter, to think about your participation
- You will sign the consent form before participating in the interviews
- I remind you that you can withdraw at any time during the process if you wish to do so.

How will Safety in participation be ensured?

Since you will only answer the questions on the topic being studied, there are no foreseeable physical injuries that could result from the study. Although I anticipate emotional harm during the interview process, if you think you have anything important on this study, that you cannot say it out, you can write it and put it in school suggestion box, without indicating your name.

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Also be informed that the study is not about your private life, but views on the Instructional Leadership practices by the School Management Teams in Pursuit of Improving Academic Performance in Underperforming Schools of Mopani West District. However if there are some questions that you do not want to answer during the interview, you have the right not to answer them.

How will Privacy and Trust be ensured?

As expressed above, you will not be interviewed about your private life but will only express your views on the topic under study.

All information gathered in the study will be handled in a strictly confidential manner Firstly, you will not mention your name and your school during interview and no information gathered will be related to any name in the study. You will be given numbers and letters will be used for your school. For example, you will be identified as Deputy Principal 1School (…….) I will use descriptions which did not lead readers of the study to know exactly who you are.

Secondly, information gathered will only be used to the study or not be disclosed to any unauthorized people. Lastly, you will be allowed to cross-check information before and after it is put into the report. This will be done into another meeting, which will be between the researcher and participants.

I will strive to be honest and respectful to you. All your names and that of your school will remain anonymous. I will only reveal the name of the district and the name of your circuit. If you require debriefing after an interview, I will that to satisfy you. I will conduct the interviews in the office and I will be alone with the participant. I will schedule enough time for the interviewing process so that you can express yourself freely.

How will the interview process be conducted?

If you accept to take part in the research study, I will request your permission to interview you and if I need the assistance of the second person in a form of a transcriber, however,

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transcriber is also not allowed to share the information he/she listened to, to anymore. The transcripts will be kept in a safe place. The final report shall be available to the participants before the public and be accessed through the University of Venda.

Has the Study got Permission from Authority?

The written permission to conduct the study was granted by the University Higher Degrees Committee (University of Venda) and the relevant documents from the Education ministry.

If you have any queries about the information sheet, please feel free to contact me or supervisor

Mangena Esther Dikeledi
Cell: 0795097681
Email: dikesther.nkele@gmail.com
Prof Mashau Takalani Samuel
Cell: 060 674 8860 / Tell : 082 899 9477
Email: Takalani.mashau@univen.ac.za
Dr M Sikwari (co-supervisor)
Cell:
Email:matodzi.sikhwari@univen.ac.za

Kind regards,
Mangena Esther Dikeledi

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APPENDIX 2: CONSENT FORM

P.O BOX 317
TZANEEN
0857

RE: CONSENT FORM TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH INTERVIEW

Sir/ Madam

I would like to thank you for meeting with me today.

My name is Esther Dikeledi Mangena and I would like to interview you about your perspective on:

Instructional leadership practices by the School Management teams in pursuit of improving academic performance of underperforming schools.in Mopani West District off Education

The interview will take 45 minutes to an hour, and all responses will be kept confidential. I will ensure that any information included in the report does not identify you as the respondent. Remember, you do not have to talk about anything you are not comfortable with, and you are free to end the interview at any time.

Please indicate whether you are comfortable with the recording of the interview.

Are you willing to participate in this interview?

YES _____ NO _____

Interviewee :_____

Date: _____

Interviewer: _____

Date:_____

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APPENDIX 3: QUESTIONNAIRE GOOGLE FORM WITH SMTs (PRINCIPALS, DEPUTY PRINCIPALS, DEPARTMENTAL HEADS AND SENIOR TEACHERS)

Questionnaire:

Instructional Leadership Practices by School Management Teams in Improving Academic Performance in Underperforming Schools of Mopani West District

This questionnaire is designed to gather information on the instructional leadership practices employed by school management teams (SMTs) in underperforming schools within Mopani West District. The responses will help in understanding the effectiveness of these practices in improving academic performance.

Section A: Demographic Information

1. Gender

☐ Male

☐ Female

☐ Other (please specify): _____

2. Age

☐ 20-30 years

☐ 31-40 years

☐ 41-50 years

☐ 51 years and above

3. Position in School

☐ Principal

☐ Deputy Principal

☐ Departmental Head (DH)

☐ Teacher

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☐ Other (please specify): _____

4. Years of Experience in Current Position:

☐ 0-5 years

☐ 6-10 years

☐ 11-15 years

☐ 16 years and above

5. Highest Level of Education:

☐ Diploma

☐ Bachelor's Degree

☐ Master's Degree

☐ Doctorate

☐ Other (please specify): _____

Section B: Instructional Leadership Practices

1. Setting Clear Academic Goals

(a) How often does your SMT set specific academic goals for the school?

☐ Always ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Rarely ☐ Never

(b) Are these academic goals communicated effectively to all teachers?

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

(c) To what extent do you believe the academic goals are aligned with the needs of your students?

☐ Very High ☐ High ☐ Moderate ☐ Low ☐ Very Low

2. Curriculum Management

(a) How regularly does the SMT monitor the implementation of the curriculum?

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☐ Weekly ☐ Monthly ☐ Quarterly ☐ Annually ☐ Never

(b) How well do you feel supported by the SMT in delivering the curriculum?

☐ Very Well Supported ☐ Well Supported ☐ Moderately Supported ☐ Poorly Supported ☐ Not Supported at All

(c) How often are instructional resources provided by the SMT to assist with curriculum delivery?

☐ Always ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Rarely ☐ Never

3. Professional Development

(a) How frequently does the SMT organize professional development opportunities for teachers?

☐ Monthly ☐ Quarterly ☐ Annually ☐ Rarely ☐ Never

(b) To what extent do these professional development activities meet your Instructional needs?

☐ To a Great Extent ☐ To Some Extent ☐ Neutral ☐ To a Little Extent ☐ Not at All

(c) How effective are the mentorship programs provided by the SMT?

☐ Very Effective ☐ Effective ☐ Moderately Effective ☐ Ineffective ☐ Very Ineffective

4. Creating a Positive School Climate

(a) How would you rate the SMT ' effectiveness in promoting collaboration among teachers?

☐ Very High ☐ High ☐ Moderate ☐ Low ☐ Very Low

(b) How often are teachers and students recognized for their achievements?

☐ Always ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Rarely ☐ Never

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(c) To what degree are parents involved in the school's academic activities?

☐ Very High ☐ High ☐ Moderate ☐ Low ☐ Very Low

(5). Monitoring and Evaluation

(a) How often does the SMT conduct assessments to monitor student progress?

☐ Weekly ☐ Monthly ☐ Quarterly ☐ Annually ☐ Never

(b) How effective is the feedback provided by the SMT based on classroom observations?

☐ Very Effective ☐ Effective ☐ Moderately Effective ☐ Ineffective ☐ Very Ineffective

(c) How often does the SMT use assessment data to improve instructional practices?

☐ Always ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Rarely ☐ Never

6. Leadership and Governance

(a) How involved are teachers in the decision-making processes within the school?

☐ Very Involved ☐ Involved ☐ Moderately Involved ☐ Seldom Involved ☐ Not Involved

(b) How clear are the accountability structures within your school?

☐ Very Clear ☐ Clear ☐ Moderately Clear ☐ Unclear ☐ Very Unclear

7. Community Engagement

(a) How effective is the SMT in building partnerships with local stakeholders?

☐ Very Effective ☐ Effective ☐ Moderately Effective ☐ Ineffective ☐ Very Ineffective

(b) How frequently does the school engage with the community through outreach programs?

☐ Very Frequently ☐ Frequently ☐ Occasionally ☐ Rarely ☐ Never

8. Use of Technology

(a) How often does the SMT encourage the use of ICT in teaching and learning?

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☐ Always ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Rarely ☐ Never

(b) How effective are the e-resources provided by the SMT in enhancing teaching practices?

☐ Very Effective ☐ Effective ☐ Moderately Effective ☐ Ineffective ☐ Very Ineffective

Section C: Open-Ended Questions

1. What are the most effective instructional leadership practices employed by your SMT in improving academic performance?

   _____

2. What challenges do you face in implementing the instructional leadership practices promoted by the SMT?

   _____

3. How could the SMT further support you in improving academic performance in your school?

   _____

4. Do you have any additional comments or suggestions regarding the instructional leadership practices in your school?

   _____

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. Your responses are valuable in improving academic performance in underperforming schools within Mopani West District.

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APPENDIX 4: FACE TO FACE INTERVIEW SCHEDULE WITH SMTs (PRINCIPALS, DEPUTY PRINCIPALS, DEPARTMENTAL HEADS AND SENIOR TEACHERS

Interview Guide: Instructional Leadership Practices by School Management Teams in Improving Academic Performance in Underperforming Schools of Mopani West District

This interview guide is designed to facilitate in-depth discussions with school management teams (SMTs) and other key stakeholders on the instructional leadership practices employed in underperforming schools within Mopani West District. The goal is to explore how these practices contribute to improving academic performance and to identify challenges and areas for improvement.

Introduction

Purpose of the Interview:

The purpose of this interview is to understand the instructional leadership practices implemented by the school management team (SMT) in your school, and how these practices are contributing to improving academic performance. Your insights will help in identifying successful strategies and areas needing enhancement.

Confidentiality Assurance:

Please be assured that your responses will remain confidential and will be used solely for the purpose of this study.

Duration:

This interview will take approximately 45 minutes to an hour. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Section A: Background Information

1. Can you please describe your role within the school and how long you have been in this position?

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2. Could you provide a brief overview of the academic performance trends in your school over the past few years?

Section B: Instructional Leadership Practices

1. Setting Clear Academic Goals

✓ How does the SMT set academic goals for the school?

✓ Can you describe the process of communicating these goals to teachers and students?

✓ How do you ensure that these goals are aligned with the students' needs and the school's overall objectives?

2. Curriculum Management

✓ How does the SMT monitor the implementation of the curriculum in your school?

✓ What kind of support is provided to teachers to help them deliver the curriculum effectively?

✓ Can you discuss any challenges you face in curriculum management and how the SMT addresses them?

3. Professional Development

✓ What professional development opportunities does the SMT offer to teachers?

✓ How do you assess the effectiveness of these professional development programs?

✓ Can you share examples of how professional development has directly impacted teaching and learning in your school?

4. Creating a Positive School Climate

✓ In what ways does the SMT promote a positive and collaborative school climate?

✓ How are teachers and students recognized and motivated for their achievements?

✓ What strategies are in place to involve parents in the school's academic activities?

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5. Monitoring and Evaluation

- ✓ How does the SMT conduct and use assessments to monitor student progress?
- ✓ What kind of feedback do you provide to teachers based on these assessments?
- ✓ How do you use assessment data to inform and improve instructional practices?

6. Leadership and Governance

- ✓ How does the SMT involve teachers and other staff members in the decision-making process?
- ✓ Can you describe the accountability structures in your school and how they contribute to academic improvement?
- ✓ What challenges do you face in implementing effective leadership practices, and how do you overcome them?

7. Community Engagement

- ✓ How does the SMT engage with the community and local stakeholders to support
- ✓ academic improvement?
- ✓ Can you provide examples of successful community partnerships or outreach programs that have benefited your school?
- ✓ What challenges do you encounter in engaging the community, and how do you
- ✓ address them?

8. Use of Technology

- ✓ How does the SMT integrate Information and Communication Technology (ICT) into teaching and learning?
- ✓ What resources and support are provided to teachers for using technology in their instruction?
- ✓ How do you evaluate the impact of technology on student learning outcomes?

Section C: Interview Guide

1. What do you believe are the most effective instructional leadership practices

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employed by the SMT in your school?

2. What major challenges do you face in improving academic performance, and how is the SMT addressing these challenges?
3. Are there any instructional leadership practices that you think should be introduced or improved upon?
4. How does the SMT balance the demands of administrative duties with the focus on instructional leadership?
5. What additional support do you believe the SMT needs to enhance its role in improving academic performance?
6. Is there anything else you would like to add about the instructional leadership practices in your school?

Conclusion

Thank the participant:

Thank you for your time and insights. Your contributions are invaluable to this study.

Next Steps

We will analyze the information gathered from this interview and share our findings with the relevant stakeholders. If you have any questions or think of anything else you like to add later, please feel free to reach out.

Closing

Thank you once again for participating in this interview.

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APPENDIX 5: DOCUMENTS CHECKLIST

DOCUMENTS AVAILABLE				
Schools	**SMT Minutes**	**Staff Minutes**	**Departmental Minutes**	**Curriculum Journal**
1	✓	✓	✓	✓
2	✓	✓	✓	✓
3	✓	✓	✓	✓
4	✓	✓	✓	✓
5	✓	✓	✓	✓
6	✓	✓	✓	✓

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APPENDIX 6: MOPANI WEST DISTRICT REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

P.O.Box 317
TZANEEN
0850

The District Director
Mopani West District
TZANEEN
0850

Madam

Request for a permission to conduct research in the District: Mangena E.D

1. The above matter refers
2. I am a PHD student at University of Venda
3. I am now in the data collection stage
4. My topic is: **Instructional leadership Practices by the School Management Teams in Pursuit of Improving Academic Performance in Underperforming Schools**
5. I therefore humbly request for a Permission to conduct research in the underperforming schools in your District
6. I have already obtained an ethical clearance certificate from the University of Venda(see attached)
7. The findings and the recommendations will be shared with the District at the end of the study.
8. I believe the findings will assist the district in developing tailor made intervention strategies which will improve performance in the District.

Hope my request will be considered

Yours Faithfully

Date: 24/01/2025

Mangena ED



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APPENDIX 7: MOPANI WEST PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Confidential Information - This is for official consumption

LIMPOPO
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

Confidential

Enq: Shikhibana ZB EMAIL: zbshikhibana@gmail.com Cell: 082 954 0325 Date: 27/01/2025

MANGENA ED
P O BOX 317
TZANEEN
0850

SUBJECT: CONSENT TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH STUDY AT MOPANI WEST DISTRICT IN UNDERPERFORMING SCHOOLS: YOURSELF

1. Your letter date 24 January 2025 regarding reference.
2. You are granted permission to conduct your study on **"INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP PRACTICES BY THE SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAMS IN PURSUIT OF IMPROVING ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN UNDERPERFORMING SCHOOLS."**
3. You are requested to make prior arrangement with the Circuit Managers and the Principal of the schools so that they could schedule convenient time for your study.
4. In conducting your study, please adhere to research ethics.
5. We wish you good luck in your studies.

Dikga

DISTRICT DIRECTOR

27/01/2025

DATE

27 Peace Street, Prosperitus Building, Tzaneen, 0850, Private Bag X4032 Tzaneen, 0850
Tel 015306680

The heartland of Southern Africa-development is about people

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APPENDIX 8: REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH: XIHOKO CIRCUIT

P.O.Box 137
TZANEEN
0857

The Circuit Manager
XIHOKO CIRCUIT
Mopani West District

Request for a Permission to conduct research in the Xihoko Circuit: Mangena E.D.

1. The above matter refers
2. I am a PHD student at the University of Venda.
3. I am now in the data collection stage
4. My topic is: Instructional Leadership Practices by the School Management Teams in Pursuit of Improving Academic Performance in Underperforming schools in Mopani West Education District, Limpopo; South Africa.
5. I, therefore humbly request for a Permission to conduct research in the underperforming schools in your circuit.
6. I have already obtained an ethical clearance certificate from the University of Venda (see attached).
7. The Findings of this study as well as the recommendations will be shared with the Circuit at the end of the study.
8. I believe the Findings will assist the Circuit in developing tailor – made Intervention strategies which will improve performance in the Circuit.

Hope my request will be considered

Yours Faithfully Date: 24/01/2025
Mangena ED

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APPENDIX 9: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH: XIHOKO CIRCUIT

P.O.Box 137
TZANEEN
0857

The Circuit Manager
XIHOKO CIRCUIT
Mopani West District

Request for a Permission to conduct research in the Xihoko Circuit: Mangena E.D.

1. The above matter refers
2. I am a PHD student at the University of Venda.
3. I am now in the data collection stage
4. My topic is: **Instructional Leadership Practices by the School Management Teams in Pursuit of Improving Academic Performance in Underperforming schools in Mopani West Education District, Limpopo; South Africa.**
5. I, therefore humbly request for a Permission to conduct research in the underperforming schools in your circuit.
6. I ve already obtained an ethical clearance certificate from the University of Venda (see attached).
7. The Findings of this study as well as the recommendations will be shared with the Circuit at the end of the study.
8. I believe the Findings will assist the Circuit in developing tailor – made intervention strategies which will improve performance in the Circuit.

Hope my request will be considered

Yours Faithfully

Date: 24/01/2025

Mangena ED



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APPENDIX 10: REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH LEPELLE CIRCUIT

P.O. Box 317
TZANEEN
0850

The Circuit Manager
Lepelle Circuit
Mopani West District

Request for permission to conduct research in Lepelle Circuit: Mangena E.D.

1. The above matter refers
2. I am a PHD student at the University of Venda.
3. I am now in the data collection stage
4. My topic is: Instructional Leadership Practices by the School Management Teams in Pursuit to improve academic performance of Underperforming Schools in Mopani West Education District, Limpopo, South Africa.
5. I, therefore, humbly request permission to conduct research in the Underperforming schools in your District.
6. I've already obtained an ethical clearance certificate from the University of Venda (see attached).
7. The findings of this study as well as recommendations will be shared with the circuit at the end of the study.
8. I believe the findings will assist the circuit in developing tailor – made intervention strategies which will improve performance in the circuit

Hope my request will be considered

Yours Faithfully
Mangena ED

Date: 24/01/2025

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APPENDIX 11: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH: LEPELLE CIRCUIT

LIMPOPO
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
LEPELLE 4 CIRCUIT

Enq: Moagi M.R
Cell: 071 679 3182
Email: moagimatema@yahoo.com

Mangena ED
P.O BOX 317
TZANEEN
0850

Dear Sir/Madam

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

1. The above matter refers
2. Permission is hereby granted that you conduct research in Lepelle 4 Circuit underperforming Schools.
3. We hope your study will have a positive impact in improving our schools.

.....
(Circuit Manager)

27/02/2025
.....
27/01/2025

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION,
Lepelle, Governance
Private Bag X 402 TRICHARDSTDAL, 0890
Cell 0829548815 Fax No. 0865804645 email. edwinamametja@webmail.co.za

The heartland of Southern Africa – development is about people

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APPENDIX 12: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

ETHICS APPROVAL CERTIFICATE

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

NAME OF RESEARCHER/INVESTIGATOR:
Ms ED Mangena

STUDENT NO:
18022844

PROJECT TITLE: **Instructional Leadership Practices by the School Management Teams in Pursuit of Improving Academic Performance of Underperforming Schools in Mopani West District of Limpopo; South Africa.**

ETHICAL CLEARANCE NO: **FHSSE/25/CSEM/02/2201**

SUPERVISORS/ CO-RESEARCHERS/ CO-INVESTIGATORS

NAME	INSTITUTION & DEPARTMENT	ROLE
Prof TS Mashau	UNIVEN, Educational Studies	Supervisor
Dr MG Sikhwari	UNIVEN, Educational Studies	Co-Supervisor
Ms ED Mangena	UNIVEN, Educational Studies	Investigator -Student

Type: Doctoral Research
Risk: *Straightforward research without ethical problems (Category 1)*
Approval Period: January 2025 – January 2026

The Research Ethics Social Science Committee (RESSC) hereby approves your project as indicated above.

General Conditions
While this ethics approval is subject to all declarations, undertakings and agreements incorporated and signed in the application form, please note the following.

- The project leader (principal investigator) must report in the prescribed format to the REC:
  - Annually (or as otherwise requested) on the progress of the project, and upon completion of the project.
  - Within 48hrs in case of any adverse event (or any matter that interrupts sound ethical principles) during the course of the project.
  - Annually a number of projects may be randomly selected for an external audit.
- The approval applies strictly to the protocol as stipulated in the application form. Would any changes to the protocol be deemed necessary during the course of the project, the project leader must apply for approval of these changes at the REC. Would there be deviated from the project protocol without the necessary approval of such changes, the ethics approval is immediately and automatically forfeited.
- The date of approval indicates the first date that the project may be started. Would the project have to continue after the expiry date; a new application must be made to the REC and new approval received before or on the expiry date.
- In the interest of ethical responsibility, the REC retains the right to:
  - Request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the project,
  - To ask further questions; Seek additional information; Require further modification or monitor the conduct of your research or the informed consent process.
  - withdraw or postpone approval if:
  - Any unethical principles or practices of the project are revealed or suspected.
  - It becomes apparent that any relevant information was withheld from the REC or that information has been false or misrepresented.
  - The required annual report and reporting of adverse events was not done timely and accurately,
  - New institutional rules, national legislation or international conventions deem it necessary.

ISSUED BY:
UNIVERSITY OF VENDA, RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
Date Considered: January 2025

Name of the RESSC Chairperson of the Committee: Prof M. Mwale-Manjoro

Signature: Mwale

University of Venda
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RESEARCH AND INNOVATION
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Thohoyandou 0950

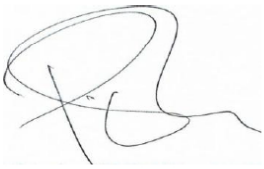
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APPENDIX 13: ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDITING CERTIFICATE

PROOF OF EDITING

23 February, 2025

This is to certify that I, Dr P Kaburise, have proofread the thesis titled - **LEADERSHIP PRACTICES BY SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAMS, IN PURSUIT OF IMPROVING ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN UNDERPERFORMING SCHOOLS OF MOPANI WEST DISTRICT-** by Esther Dikeledi Mangena (student number: 18022844). I have indicated some amendments which the student has undertaken to effect before the final thesis is submitted.



Dr P Kaburise (0794927451/ 0637348805; email: phyllis.kaburise@gmail.com**)**

Dr P Kaburise: BA (Hons) University of Ghana (Legon, Ghana); MEd University of East Anglia (Cambridge/East Anglia, United Kingdom); Cert. Teaching English as a Foreign Language (Cambridge University, United Kingdom); Cert. English Second Language Teaching, (Wellington, New Zealand); PhD University of Pretoria (South Africa).

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APPENDIX 14: TURNITIN REPORT

LEADERSHIP PRACTICES BY THE SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAMS IN PURSUIT OF IMPROVING ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN UNDERPERFORMING SCHOOLS OF MOPANI WEST DISTRICT

ORIGINALITY REPORT

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