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## **Effects of The Attributes of School Management Teams on The Management of Quality Education: Towards School Effectiveness**

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**Abstract:** This study, which was part of a larger study, adopted a convergent parallel research design to ascertain attributes of school management team (SMT) members as determinants of education quality. Participants were 60 SMT members randomly sampled from the 20 participating schools. Questionnaire reliability and validation were respectively determined by Cronbach's alpha coefficient and through a pilot study. Quantitative data were descriptive statistically analysed using SPSS version 22 and qualitative data through content analysis. The study found that SMTs were aware that there were legislation mandates that guide the management of quality education but viewed schools as not utilising such mandates. SMTs also viewed schools as having clear vision and mission statements which they neither displayed nor implement. Most factors that support high-quality education were missing in schools. Participants believed that holding SMTs responsible for subpar school performance and performance measurement and monitoring were necessary prerequisites for the provision and administration of high-quality education. Recommendations included mandating SMTs to effectively manage each school's physical and human resources in accordance with legislative requirements.

**Keywords:** Management, quality of education, school management teams, South African schools

### **Introduction**

The goal of school effectiveness research is to uncover the factors that are positively related to student accomplishment (Schildkamp et al., 2009). According to research, highly effective principals increase a typical student's achievement in their schools by two to seven months of learning in one academic year, whereas ineffective principals reduce triumph by the equal amount (Branch et al., 2013). The critical role of school leaders, a professional group generally ignored by the major educational transformation movements of the past 20 years, has come to light as a result of public demands for more successful schools. Evidence shows that school leadership has a substantial impression on student learning, second only to the effects of classroom instruction. The ability of the principals to create schools that promote dynamic teaching and learning for all students strongly influences this effort (Davis et al., 2005).

The 1996 Constitution of South Africa declares education to be a fundamental right. Enhancing the standard of basic education was named "Outcome 1" among a total of 12 outcomes indicating the government's main priorities in 2010, as part of a significant reform of its planning processes (Department of Basic Education, 2011a). The uniformity of the proportion of pupils who advance from one grade to the next is one technique to gauge the quality management of an institutional education system. The percentage of students that pass the National Senior Certificate (NSC) exams in South African schools is a key indicator of the institution's quality.

According to Jagathesan (1999), heads of departments, deputy principals, and principals are all examples of educational leaders, and their main responsibility is to make sure that teaching and learning take place effectively.

The high failure rate, early school dropout, lack of discipline, poor morale, and anti-academic attitudes among teachers and students in the majority of the schools run by the former education departments in charge of black education, according to Jagathesan (1999), highlights, among other things, the failure of school management teams to assume responsibility for fostering a culture of teaching and learning. The Minister of Basic Education stated during they talk at the International Forum for Teaching Regulatory Authorities (IFTRA, 2011) that given the crucial part that education plays in long-term economic growth and development, it must be given "apex priority". However, the emphasis must be on high-quality teaching and learning that enhance children's capacities to act maturely through the acquiring of pertinent familiarity, practical abilities, and suitable attitudes. The Minister emphasised once more the importance of education in achieving both national and international goals for the development of human resources. This emphasis confirms that the government places a high priority on providing high-quality education (Department of Basic Education, 2011b).

## Literature Review

### 1. Roles and Expectations of School Management Teams

Education stakeholders largely hold school leaders responsible for the performance of their schools. School leaders, in turn, usually view teachers as responsible for the performance of learners. According to Plant, Addysg, and Sgiliau (2008), leaders are present at all levels of schooling and in every industry, and they are essential to society. To improve organisational effectiveness, Chapman (1993, p.212) emphasises that leaders must adopt this broader viewpoint. He writes that "visionary and creative leadership and effective management in education require a deliberate and conscious attempt at integration, enmeshment, and coherence." However, true measure of an ideology, though, is whether it enhances practice. The educational models offer a number of management strategies for education, and the syntheses highlight a few possible connections between them. There shouldn't be any question regarding the possibility of theory informing practice. When considering how to create policies or react to events, school managers frequently use an implicit theorizing approach. You cannot let the evidence speak for itself. To determine their true meaning, we need the theoretical explanatory framework (Bush, 2003). According to Warren (2014, p.8):

*Goals and expectations define what policymakers expect of schools. Goals identify the outcomes the programme is intended to improve. Goals may include increasing academic proficiency, helping more students graduate, or improving success in college and postgraduation employment. The No Child Left Behind (NCLB), for example, sets a goal of academic proficiency in Mathematics, English and Science. Reducing performance gaps among groups of students also represents a key goal. Goals must be translated into specific measurable objectives. All current accountability programmes require schools to meet performance targets for subgroups based on race/ethnicity, education status, and economic status. By clarifying objectives and priority populations, the programme creates a basic matrix of desired outcomes.*

New school-level institutions that assume more responsibility are required in response to expanded opportunities for decision-making and rising expectations for accountability (Brauckmann & Schwarz, 2014). "By enhancing school autonomy, this is meant to raise the quality of [education]" (Mestry, 2016, p.1). A minor amount of a principal's pay in Portland, Oregon, is dependent on a set of professional standards that are purportedly related to student achievement (Jaquiss, 1999). SMTs and Circuit Managers attested that SMTs needed capacity-building to manage their schools effectively as the major challenges in schools were instructional leadership, school management and leadership in general, as well as the implementation of academic improvement plans (Van Der Voort & Wood, 2016). These patterns show a growing consensus that principals should be held responsible for student progress and that they have a big impact on it.

In the meantime, the principal's role has expanded to include a bewildering array of professional responsibilities and abilities. Principals are projected to be educational innovators, instructional and curriculum leaders, assessment experts, disciplinarians, community builders, public relations and communications experts, budget analysts, facility managers, and special-program administrators, in addition to being stewards of various legal, obligations, and policy regulations and initiatives. The needs and interests of several stakeholders, such as kids, parents, teachers, district office officials, unions, and state and federal agencies, are frequently in conflict, and administrators are supposed to serve them. Many academics and professionals contend that the job demands far beyond any one person's reasonable capabilities as a result. Traditional methods of training administrators are no longer sufficient to handle the leadership demands posed by public schools due to changes in the job's requirements (Elmore, 2000; Peterson, 2002; Levine, 2005).

According to several reports in recent years, principalship is in a state of catastrophe, mainly due to two alarming factors: (1) School districts are finding it difficult to find and keep enough highly qualified people in leadership positions; and (2) Both prospective principals and current principals frequently lack the training and support they need to organize their schools to enhance the quality of education while juggling all of the other demands of the job (Young, 2002; Levine, 2005). Growing agreement on the qualities of good school leaders demonstrates that these leaders have an impact on student achievement through two crucial channels: by fostering the growth of competent educators and putting in place effective organizational procedures. This consensus is increasingly reflected in the preparation and licensing standards, which typically adhere to a set of common criteria for the skills, talents, and attitudes of school leaders. Despite the expanding of body of evidence, it is still necessary to examine the influence and relative significance of leadership in such critical areas as curriculum, assessment, and adaptability to local contexts (Davis et al., 2005).

Reviews of the studies indicate that effective school leaders have a significant impact on student triumph through both their influence over other people or aspects of their organisations and their impact over educational procedures. Three categories of fundamental leadership practices are outlined by Leithwood, Seashore-Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004). Allowing educators and other employees to perform their duties successfully, offering knowledgeable support and motivation to better the work, and supplying models of practice and support are all examples of developing people; Developing common objectives, keeping an eye on the organization's performance, encouraging efficient communication, and Redesigning the organization include fostering a positive school climate, changing problematic organizational structures, and establishing collaborative workflows.

There is widespread agreement that education leaders need to be more than building managers as the pressure to ensure that all students in every school achieve academic success grows. If principals are to successfully turn around underperforming schools and advance student learning, they must have the training, expertise, and skill to concentrate on instructional leadership and capitalize on both the effectiveness of distinct teachers and the potency of the school as a whole (Krasnoff, 2015). According to Davies et al. (2005), research has recently converged on the significance of three facets of the principal's role: establishing a thorough understanding of how to support teachers; managing the curriculum in ways that enhance student learning; and developing the capacity to improve schools into further effective organizations that nurture powerful teaching and learning for all students.

“Direction establishing, converting strategy into action, empowering the staff to create and implement the strategy, identifying effective intervention points, and emerging strategic competencies are the five key activities that strategic leaders engage in”, according to Davies and Davies (2006, p.123). Eacott (2007) emphasises the need of monitoring and assessment and contends that this is a crucial component of strategic management required to keep the community on course and concentrated on the institution's strategic objective. Creating a methodical approach to gathering data on the execution of the school's strategic direction is one of the influential behaviors and actions related to monitoring and assessment. Further to that, there is need for evaluating "how are we doing with the school's strategic direction?" on an ongoing basis; increasing efficacy during the implementation phase by making adjustments (both little and major); establishing a regular, thorough, careful, and intelligent

examination of the success of strategic actions; establishing a venue where the school's community can assess the strategic direction of the institution's performance; reflecting on how to apply value judgments to the success of strategic actions; Considering changes and how they affect how well the schools are doing.

## 2. The Concept of Total Quality Management

Total quality management (TQM) is the practice of merging all operations, functions, and processes inside a company to accomplish continual improvement in cost, quality, efficiency, and the delivery of products and services for customer satisfaction (Deming, 1986 in Oduwaiye et al., 2012). A number of businesses, including hospitals, government agencies, schools, banks, libraries, and transportation facilities, have successfully implemented Total Quality Management (TQM). It is quite difficult for these organizations to survive due to the constant demand from many stakeholders, especially educational institutions (Singh et al., 2008). TQM stands for the application of quality concepts to all management tasks and overall business operations to guarantee complete client satisfaction. It suggests using quality standards from determining consumer needs to providing post-purchase services (Oduwaiye et al., 2012).

The setting, working methods, and eventually customer satisfaction all play a role in how well educational institutions grow. Institutes are aware of the significance of Total Quality Management (TQM) concepts in serving the interests of stakeholders. These TQM principles emphasize the importance of dedication and satisfaction at all levels. The broad culture of an institute can be developed with the assistance of top management commitment. The current situation necessitates comprehending and meeting the needs of stakeholders (Singh et al., 2008). When teachers, students, parents, and other school personnel have questions or complaints, a successful principal responds to them and hears them out. When customers are listened to and their needs are met, this is a quality management organization attribute that will improve relationships with the student body (Farah, 2013).

A quality strategy puts an emphasis on assessing customer needs, training and utilizing people to the fullest extent possible, and streamlining procedures (Liston, 1999). Product, customer, customer satisfaction, and efficiency all fall under quality management (Steyn, 2001). When evaluating the educational process, it is crucial to consider the concepts of comprehensive quality management, as well as the input, process, and output analysis, as well as the reorganization of the educational system. In order to develop customer-oriented services and the fundamentals of overall quality management, the self-renewing of school organizations is a predominantly crucial subject (Taşar & Çelik, 2011).

On average, nations with superior educational institutions are more prosperous and performing better than their counterparts. According to literature, improving educational standards is essential for fostering economic progress. "There is strong evidence that the cognitive skills of the population, rather than mere school enrollment, are powerfully related to individual earnings, to the distribution of income, and to economic growth" (Hanushek & Wößmann 2007, p.1). With this in mind, South Africa has been working since the country's transition to democracy in 1994 to raise the standard of her basic education. No matter how much money has been spent on enhancing the nation's educational system or how many regulations have been introduced to that end, they all seem to have a negligible impact on long-term responsibilities. Although it is a necessary condition, managing it only requires that education quality be improved. The capability to bring about the eminence of education at the stakeholder level stands out as being essential given the numerous stakeholders involved in this process. Or, to put it another way, managing the current education system is a necessary first step in order to increase its quality. The administration of educational quality, however, ultimately affects how well students do. Consequently, this study was undertaken to ascertain how the characteristics of school management teams (SMTs) affected the management of quality of education in schools. Thus, the study's objectives were to ascertain the extent to which SMTs were aware of the policy papers guiding the administration of educational quality in schools, and to determine the possible strategies that could be put in place for the management of quality of education in schools.

## Theoretical Framework

Deming's Total Quality Management (TQM) Model was one of the influences on the study. According to Deming (1988), maintaining quality involves making continual improvements to the product or service in order to meet changing consumer demands. The premise of the theory is that everyone is capable of learning, wants to do a good job, and is deserving of respect. Though it is possible, they are not naturally cruel. The Deming approach places a high priority on the self-esteem of both teachers and students. Deming highlights the importance of managers having a basic understanding of psychology and the scientific basis for these concepts because it is vital to the success of quality management to consider how people will react to managerial activities. Deming's 14 principles are based on the idea that people desire to perform to the best of their abilities and that management's role is to provide them with the means to do so by continuously enhancing the environment in which they work. The most notable is Deming's eighth principle, "Drive away fear," which says: *TQM's fundamental premise is that everyone wants to perform their best. Therefore, rather than attempting to assign blame for failures to specific people, improvement initiatives must concentrate on the outcomes and the processes. If quality is lacking, the system is at fault. It is the responsibility of management to foster employee performance by continuously enhancing the workplace environment.* In recognition of management's principal job, the above theoretical framework was adopted.

## Methodology

### 1. Research Design

The researcher used a convergent research design for this study. To better comprehend the study challenge, convergent designs are used to collect various but complementary data on the same subject (Morse, 1991, p.122). In concurrent processes, the researcher, in accordance with Creswell (2003), converges quantitative and qualitative data in order to present a thorough understanding of the research problem. In this strategy, the researcher gathers both types of data concurrently during the investigation and incorporates the data into the analysis of the overall findings. This was accomplished in this study.

### 2. The Sample

Quantitative data was gathered from 60 randomly selected school management team (SMT) members from the 20 randomly selected participating schools out of a population of 60 high schools in Mthatha education district. Before choosing participants, the SMT members were separated from the other teachers in each school using the staff records. Qualitative data was obtained from 10 SMT members where one member emerged from each of the 10 conveniently selected schools among the 20 participating schools. Purposive or convenience sampling, as opposed to random sampling, is preferred for all qualitative studies, according to Creswell (2004), as it deepens and broadens the researcher's understanding and ensures the veracity of the data gathered.

### 3. Instruments

For quantitative data collection, the study used a semi-structured questionnaire that had open ended sections for qualitative data collection. For triangulation, in-depth qualitative data was gathered through face-to-face interviews. The instruments were original and researcher-designed based on the researcher's original idea. They were developed based on the objectives of the study after the researcher's engagement with the literature.

### 4. Reliability and Validity

A pilot study was undertaken to ensure the validity of the questionnaire and the interview schedule. Respondents reviewed all the items for readability, clarity and comprehensiveness. Feedback from the pilot testing helped to refine the final questionnaire and structure the interview schedule. Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.79 was the primary statistical metric utilised to assess the questionnaire's reliability. As prescribed by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994), the general convention in research is that one should strive for reliability values of .70 or higher.

After making the necessary amendments on the research instruments and their administration strategies, the main field investigation was then conducted.

## 5. Data Analysis

With the help of SPSS version 22, quantitative data were analysed and presented using a combination of descriptive and inferential statistics. Using the content analysis method, qualitative data were analysed and presented through direct and verbatim quotes from the respondents.

## 6. Ethical Considerations

Both the Province of the Eastern Cape Education office and the Mthatha Education District office gave their approval for the study to be carried out in classrooms. Permission was requested from the appropriate schools' directors and/or principals. Only after receiving formal consent from all pertinent parties, including participants, did the researcher move on with data collection. The respondents were made informed of confidentiality and privacy. A written promise of participants' right to confidentiality and anonymity was also provided.

## Results

This section presents mixed method findings of the study. In the quantitative phase participants were to respond on a seven-point Likert scale where 1 meant strongly disagree, 2 – mostly disagree, 3 – disagree, 4 – neutral, 5 – agree, 6 – mostly agree and 7 – strongly agree. Qualitative findings were thematically presented. SMT perspectives were categorised into three groups: schools with high performance (HP), medium performance (MP), and low performance (LP).

### 1. SMTs Awareness of Policy Documents Informing the Management of Education Quality

Table 1. SMTs' awareness of policy documents informing quality of education and learner performance (N=60)

Statement	N	Mean	Responses			
			Standard deviation	Mode	Median	Range
There are national legislation mandates to guide the management of learners, staff, financial and physical resources, e.g. South African Schools Act	30	6.3	1.1	7	7	3
Schools <b>have</b> relevant national legislation mandates used to guide the provision and management of education quality	30	6.6	0.9	7	7	2
Schools <b>have</b> relevant provincial policy documents and school-based policies and procedures that govern the provision of quality education	30	5.3	0.9	6	6	3
Schools <b>use</b> relevant national legislation to guide the provision and management of quality education	30	5.9	1.2	6	6	2
Schools <b>use</b> both provincial and school-based policies and procedures to govern the provision of quality education	30	5.3	0.9	5	5	5
Umalusi is the Council assuring the quality of formal education and training system from Grades R–12 in both public and private schools	30	4.0	1.8	6	6	3
SMTs and educators <b>have</b> access to, and <b>perform</b> their duties as required by the relevant Policy documents	30	4.0	1.8	5	4	5
Learners are aware that it is their <b>right to have access</b> to quality education	30	3.1	0.8	3	3	2
Learners conduct and behave themselves in a manner that promotes the provision of quality education	30	4.1	1.7	4	5	4
	30	3.1	0.8	3	3	2
	30	5.4	2.1	7	6	6
	30	6.5	0.9	7	7	2
	30	3.7	1.6	4	4	4
	30	3.4	0.7	3	3	2
	30	6.5	0.9	7	7	2
	30	6.6	0.7	7	7	2
	30	3.1	1.2	4	3	3
	30	2.3	0.7	3	3	2

Key:  Public schools  independent schools

Table 1 presents the findings of the study in relation to SMT awareness of policy documents. Table 1 shows that participants were extremely knowledgeable about policy documents' existence and purpose in schools. However, SMTs from MP and LP schools expressed significant concerns about how these publications were used in schools. More students attended independent schools than public ones. SMTs concurred that there were laws at the federal level that governed the delivery of high-quality education and that these laws were present in schools; more SMTs working in public schools, however, concurred that provincial laws that governed education quality were more common. The majority of SMTs agreed that independent schools were less likely than public schools to fully implement either national or provincial legislation demands. Both learners' and educators' awareness of Umalusi as the organisation responsible for ensuring the quality of education were scored highly. On the other hand, SMTs concurred that neither they nor educators had full access to the pertinent policy papers and that learners' normal, everyday behavior did not always support their entitlement to receive high-quality instruction. In the qualitative phase, the following themes emerged.

## 2. Underutilisation of Available Documents

Respondents revealed that they were relatively mindful of the existence of such documents in their schools and the tenacity of such documents, however, there were uncertainties about the extent to which the documents were utilised in schools. For example, a principal from an independent low-performing (ILP) school acknowledged that,

*“Most of the schools have these documents but they are not using them. This is because, since the management (SMT) is formed by different people there is usually one who knows more than the policy document then the policy document will be undermined.”* Another independent, high-performing school leader expressed the same viewpoint, stating that *strong SMT members are intended to run schools. Additionally, if private [independent] schools could provide incentives to appointed HoDs to encourage them; if HoDs could properly carry out their responsibilities of checking the plan or preparation books on a weekly basis to ensure that the teacher has prepared something, as if the teacher is not prepared, the teacher won't do anything; checking that the teacher is always using the right textbooks; and going to classes to observe how the teachers are teaching. Being a good manager means keeping your visitations a secret so the teacher can plan. Once this is completed, there is a greater chance that we will raise the standard of education because if you check the student files, the teacher files, the teachers' daily attendance, and everything else required, you will raise the standard of education.*

## 3. Ineffective Monitoring of Teachers

According to an HoD from an independent school with low test scores, Umalusi seminars urged SMTs to observe teachers while they taught and to carefully review students' work because it was one of the most important ways to understand how instructors were instructing. The other HoD from a public medium-performing school expressed the view that,

*“As a manager you are supposed to manage your teachers; how they are working. Teachers are supposed to have preparation books which are to be signed every Monday morning. During the weekend they are supposed to prepare for five days, and as an HoD you are supposed to sign, checking whether the topic is in line with the syllabus and also checking the learners' files. Also what I have discovered is that they have got formal tasks and most teachers tend to only give these tasks to the learners when they know that files are going for moderation. Usually they even give them the answers for them to get better marks; but if you use a proper management tool you can check whether the learners have been given the task(s) and whether they have been marked/ revised because as you request for the files and the prep books you are also supposed to request for the learners' files.”*

## 4. Possible Measures That Could Be Put in Place for the Management of Quality of Education in Schools

Data in Table 2 show comparative perceptions of the respondents per each process variable. The coefficient of variation (CoV) is inversely proportional to the consistency in responses, thus the lower the coefficient of variation,

the higher SMTs were more consistently agreeable. The overall trend was that the levels of uniformity in responses were uppermost for those with a CoV of 12 and below, with 13 and above indicating inconsistent responses. Responses were positively skewed as respondents agreed to effecting all measures in order to improve the quality of education. SMTs agreed that copies of pertinent Acts and Policies should be available to educators and kept with principals, and that teachers ought to be trained in the use of diagnostic tests.

However, respondents generally agreed that maintaining an efficient system for tracking teachers and students' attendance, selecting qualified HoDs, offering opportunities for professional development, and mentoring new teachers were essential for enhancing the fundamental educational system. The majority of respondents agreed that SMTs should measure performance and that schools should use reliable accounting and auditing systems. Unanimously, respondents agreed that both learners and educators needed reward systems that were open and equitable, subjected educators to pre-employment tests, and provided essential teaching and learning resources on time.

## 5. Active Teacher Management

Table 2. Aggregate perceptions of SMTs on possible approaches to manage factors that affect the quality of education and learner performance in schools (N=60)

Process Variable	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Responses			
				Mode	Median	Range	CoV
Principals must ensure that there is a copy of the relevant Acts and Policies in the school which must be accessible to all educators	60	6.7	0.6	7	7	2	9
Educators should be equipped with knowledge of conducting diagnostic assessments to identify learners with barriers to learning	60	6.6	0.6	7	7	2	9
Keeping an effective system for monitoring the attendance, absence and lateness of educators and learners	60	6.6	0.7	7	7	2	10
Appointing qualified HODs to productively lead subject/phase educators	60	6.4	0.7	7	7	2	10
Prioritise the provision of opportunities for educators' professional development	60	6.4	0.8	7	7	2	12
Attending to and/or conducting professional development workshops for SMTs	60	6.4	0.7	7	7	2	11
Experienced and well-qualified educators should offer mentorship to new and inexperienced educators	60	6.1	0.8	7	6	2	13
SMTs should carry performance measurement and management of self and educators	60	6.1	0.8	6	6	2	14
SMTs must encourage and exemplify effective management of all school resources	60	6.2	0.8	7	7	2	12
Employing a sound accounting and auditing system to manage school finances	60	6.2	0.8	7	6	3	13
Holding SMTs and educators accountable for poor school performance	60	6.0	0.9	6	6	4	16
Motivating educators and learners through a transparent and a fair reward system	60	6.1	0.8	7	6	2	13
Compulsorily subject educators to pre-employment exams that measure both basic skills and teaching knowledge	60	6.1	0.8	7	6	3	14
Timeous provision of classroom support resources and equipment	60	6.2	0.8	7	7	2	13

Key: CoV-Coefficient of Variation

SMTs, according to the respondents, are essential for transforming the educational system at the school level. The respondents said that SMT management approaches should reflect the results they were hoping to achieve. One principal from a medium performing independent school said,

*“What I ended up doing as a manager was I came up with something designed for every class. On my timetable we had 10 lessons so I divided that ‘time-table like’ paper for every class rep so that by the end of the lesson every teacher was supposed to sign. So it also helped as it improved the attendance of the teachers and the structure of the lessons. That timetable helped to assess whether the teachers were attending classes or not and it was signed daily by the teacher and returned to the class rep. According to my view, it was a good thing and urges SMTs to come up with plans to manage teachers and learners as the class rep has to be attentive. That paper works like a CCTV. It is more important even in public schools where teachers arrive and leave as they please. You have to keep the records as they help you when making management reports. It also helps, for instance, the HoDs to track syllabus coverage, therefore, one may cross check and tally what is in that document with the learners books if they correspond, then map the way forward”.*

Another public low-performing school manager indicated that:

*“SMTs should be serious on lesson observations and book inspection of learners; employing qualified teachers, [and] encourage learners to study. [It is also necessary to] involve parents in school activities; assess learners every now and then; offer weekend and holiday lessons, [and] when you observe that learners are having difficulties with a certain concept, [then] create time for them and assist them; give homework and encourage learners to do it. However, the best of all is to get in touch with the parents and communicate with each other on how best to assist the learners.”*

## 6. Effective Management of Learner Attendance

Respondents highlighted as imperative the need by schools to seriously focus on ensuring that learners attend all the activities as they ought to. One SMT respondent highlighted that:

*Since there are policies regarding absenteeism in South Africa, I believe that managing student attendance is also important. However, these policies have little impact. What I have observed, noted, and learned is that students occasionally only attend classes when exams are scheduled; they don't read or study at all because they simply show up to write the papers without any preparation, which leads to failure. In certain cases, they may even assert that they did not do it, but when you check the register, it is clear that the learner has not been attending class, which has an impact on the standards. However, students may be discouraged if we have a tool that can clearly define the negative effects of any sort of indiscipline.*

## Discussion

According to the study, the majority of school management team (SMT) members were aware that national and provincial laws mandated how to manage students, staff, and financial and physical resources in schools, but they believed that schools did not follow the pertinent national laws to ensure that quality education was provided and managed. The use of province and school-based policies and procedures to control the delivery of high-quality education was also validated by SMTs. This finding affirms Jagathesan's (1999) assertion that, among other things, the failure of school management teams to assume responsibility for promoting a culture of teaching and learning is highlighted by the high failure rate, early school dropout rate, lack of discipline, low morale, and anti-academic attitude among teachers and students in most of the schools of the former education departments responsible for black education. This contradicts the assertion made by Brauckmann and Schwarz (2014) that new school-level institutions that assume greater responsibility are necessary in light of improved decision-making opportunities and rising expectations for accountability.

All respondents agreed that SMTs did not have full access to the pertinent policy documents, which prevented them from carrying out their responsibilities in accordance with these documents. This supports a research conducted by the Province of the Eastern Cape Department of Education in 2009 which found that the Department's inability to use the difficulties of the past as a catapult to enable it to inevitably turn the corner and sustain good performance practices throughout the Basic Education Schooling System was largely due to poor management by principals and School Management Teams (SMTs), as well as ineffective Circuit Management that lacked accountability.

Further information revealed that SMTs agreed with the principals' position that all teachers must have access to copies of all applicable Acts and Policies in the school. This supports the finding that the principal can collaborate with other educational leaders to share responsibility for instructional leadership by providing teachers with resources and advice, communicating goals and prospects, fostering a supportive organizational culture and professional learning communities, and being a visible presence in the school (Leithwood, 2005; Waters et al., 2003). There is widespread agreement that education administrators need to be more than building managers as pressure grows for all students in every school to achieve as learners (Krasnoff, 2015).

The study also revealed that maintaining an efficient system for tracking teachers and students' attendance, as well as selecting qualified HoDs and Phase Heads, were seen as essential. This supports Anderson and Wahlstrom's (2004) claim that the three sets of basic leadership behaviors are fostering individual growth, establishing organizational direction, and reorganizing the organization. According to Krasnoff (2015), principals must have the knowledge, abilities, and experience to concentrate on instructional leadership and enhance both teachers' individual and collective competence to be successful in improving low-performing schools and advancing student learning.

The study also found that respondents believed that new and inexperienced educators should get mentoring from experienced and certified educators. Respondents also concurred that a transparent and equitable compensation system may motivate educators and students, hence enhancing the quality of education. The study also showed that timely supply of classroom support materials and equipment was essential for raising educational quality. Developing a methodical approach to gathering data about the execution of the school's strategic direction; providing a forum for the school community to assess the effectiveness of the school's strategic direction; using value judgments on the efficacy of strategic activities through reflection; and taking into account changes and their effects are some of the influential behaviors and actions related to monitoring and evaluation, according to Eacott (2007). Eacott (2007) contends that this is a crucial component of strategic leadership required to keep the neighborhood on course and concentrated on the institution's strategic purpose.

## **Conclusion**

Awareness of the availability in schools of the relevant Acts and Policies that guide the management of the quality of education was widespread among respondents. The legislation mandating the management of the quality of education were largely inaccessible to educators hence were not fully utilised in schools. SMTs acceded on significant measures that would improve the management of the quality of education if they would be implemented in schools. Finally, there were other major, non-biographic elements that distinguished schools in terms of their performance since biographic data did not demonstrate a significant difference between independent and public schools in the characteristics of SMTs.

## **Recommendations**

The analysis of study results offers a wide range of recommendations for best practices in managing student performance and educational quality in schools (Shumba, 2011). According to best practice, there is a certain methodology, approach, or method that, when applied to a specific aim, is more efficient, achieves the desired result, and is more effective than other techniques, approaches, or methods (Altmaier, 2011).

Given these results, a model for managing educational quality may best capture and idealise the situation for stakeholders in the education sector. Figure 1 depicts the suggested model. There should not be any question regarding the possibility of theory informing practice. When considering how to create policies or react to events, school managers frequently use an implicit theorizing approach. You cannot let the evidence speak for itself. To determine their true meaning, we need the theoretical explanatory framework (Bush, 2003).

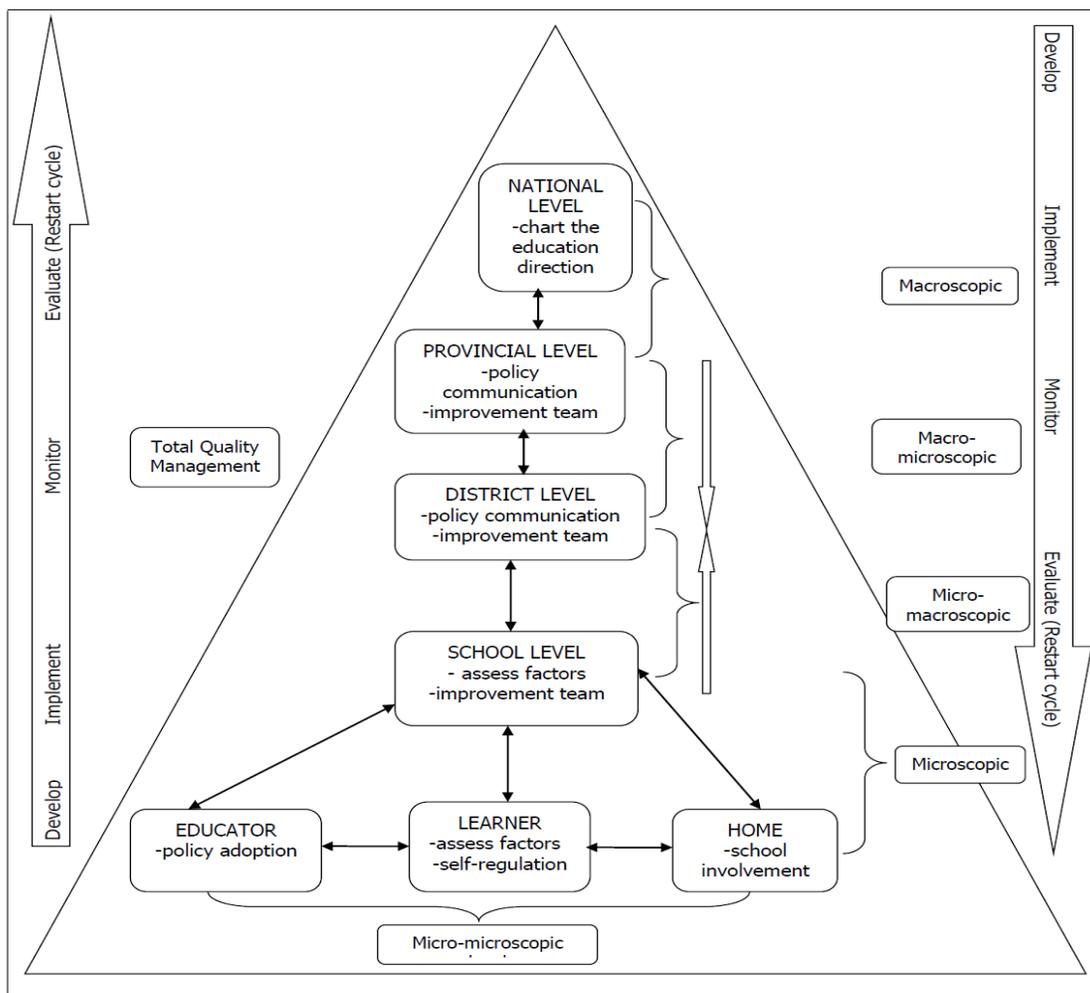


Figure 1. Kariyana (2015) Model of the Management of Education Quality

This model, which is submitted as the "comprehensive flexi-multivariate approach" (CFMA), supports the implementation of TQM principles across all stakeholders and is a reform mechanism that may be started at any level and in any direction; nevertheless, the SMT responsibilities were the focus of this study. Initially, there is a need to advocate for the establishment and incorporation of an efficient national education improvement committee (NEIC), provincial education improvement committees (PEICs), district education improvement committees (DEICs), and school improvement committees (SICs) on one platform to discuss how to improve education quality in an effort to provide better chances of gathering practical views from various stakeholders, while enabling collective action. Each committee ought to come up with practical improvement plans that are SMART.

The school level in this approach where school management teams (SMTs) have the most effect is called the Microscopic level. A school improvement committee (SIC) should be formed by the school management team (SMT), which is headed by the principal, and it should develop an annual school improvement plan (SIP). To achieve complete internal stakeholder representation for effective stakeholder-to-stakeholder evaluation, the SIC should be made up of SMT members, educators, and learners' representatives. The first responsibility of newly appointed SMTs and educators should be to present an effective, inclusive learning and teaching vision. They should be well qualified and trained. The SIC analyses aspects that affect educational quality across the entire school and keeps track of their presence; positive factors should be strengthened, while negative factors should be targets for improvement. The availability of all statutory requirements and the establishment of school policies in line with international objectives as well as the school's vision and mission statements (VMS) should be the primary tasks of the SIP. Prior to execution, the SIP must then be authorised by all employees and students. Following approval, the SIC assists everyone in putting the SIP, which is based on TQM concepts, into practice. The SIC should perform rigorous strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) review of the SIP after a fair amount of time, say at least quarterly, to find areas for improvement while excellent practices are enhanced.

In wrapping up, the study recommends the establishment of a coordination team which devolves its obligations in line with the CFMA principles. School management teams (SMTs) ought to ensure that relevant mandates are carried out by making the national, provincial, and school-based curriculum and assessment guidelines available to educators and learners. The study also advises SMTs to effectively manage all the schools' physical and human resources in accordance with legislative requirements. These leaders must understand that fostering brilliance depends on having a high regard for objectivity and professionalism. The study further recommends schools to appoint qualified heads of departments (HoDs) and Phase Heads for mentorship programmes to novice educators.

Additionally, the Eastern Cape Department of Education (ECDoE) needs to keep an eye on schools to make sure they abide by the DoE Prescripts for Financial Management in Public Schools. This adherence will compel schools to implement reliable accounting and auditing systems, ensuring their ability to distribute resources effectively and be held accountable for subpar academic results. To facilitate communication among the stakeholders and give a means of intervention if one is out of balance, it should be part of SMTs' remit to anticipate that educators and learners are familiar with the applicable education legislation regulations.

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