

**FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THE SUCCESSFUL TURN-AROUND OF  
SCHOOLS: A CASE STUDY OF A PREVIOUSLY “TRAPPED SCHOOL”**

**BY**

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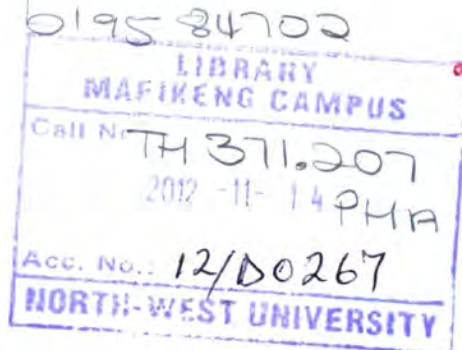
**MINI-DESSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE  
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## DECLARATION

I, Rebone Martha Phalatse, declare that, the mini dissertation titled “Factors that contribute to the successful turn-around of schools: - A case study of a previously “trapped” school”, submitted for the Degree of Masters in Education at the North West University, has not been previously submitted by me at this or any university; that it is my own work in design and execution and that all materials contained herein have been duly acknowledged.

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## **CERTIFICATE OF ACCEPTANCE FOR EXAMINATION**

This mini dissertation, entitled “Factors that contribute to the successful turn- around of schools”: A case study of a previously “trapped school” written by REBONE MARTHA PHALATSE (student No.16229525), is hereby recommended for acceptance for examination.

Supervisor: Prof. C. Zulu

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I wish to express my sincere gratitude, to the Almighty God, for making me aware during this study that “ Tumelo ke Thebe”



## **DEDICATION**

This study is dedicated to my three children – Mando, Tshepo & Boitshoko – and finally to my fiancé.

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine the factors that contribute to the successful turnaround of schools. This research was conducted in the Ngaka Modiri Molema District of the North West Province.

The case study method was used and one school was purposefully selected from a number of schools in the district, because it had just recently managed to turn itself around. The participants in the study were the principal, six teachers (one of whom was Head of department) and fifteen learners.

Data were collected by means of qualitative interviews and a written open - ended questionnaire. The data were analyzed by means of qualitative data analysis methods which involved first, transcribing the interviews verbatim and sorting the data into themes and categories.

On the question, “What factors contribute to the successful turnaround of schools?” the study revealed that an effective leadership style constitutes one of the most important factors contributing to the turnaround of a school. In addition, communication and mutual relationship among learners, staff and parents is important for effective learning to take place.

In order for a school to be successful, it is recommended that the principal demonstrates an appropriate leadership style which will involve all learners, SGB members, parents and teachers in improvement efforts in the school.

Principals, teachers, learners and communities should work together to ensure the successful turnaround of their schools.

## **KEYWORDS**

Trapped school

School turnaround

Successful school

Leadership

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# **CHAPTER 1**

## **ORIENTATION**

### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

People are the most important resource in any organization. They provide the knowledge, skills and energy which are the essential ingredients of success. Even in an era increasingly dominated by technology, what differentiates successful from unsuccessful schools is the quality and commitment of the people who work there (Christie, 2001: 5). Alimo-Metcalfe and Alban-Metcalfe (2001:22) identify leadership and management as the most important factors contributing to the successful turnaround of a school. With an effective leadership style schools can produce good results even thus no hope for such a school. If a school is to meet the goals of providing high- quality teaching and learning for all students in the most equitable way possible, educational leaders and theorists of leadership need to work together creatively to meet the demands and needs of schools (Christie, 2001: 4).

In the year 2006, the Department of Education introduced Whole School Evaluation as an attempt to help low performing school to improve. For any school to perform or improve well, the principal and teachers must put more effort to achieve better results. For teachers and the principal to change there must be appropriate and promising practices and procedures (innovations) that they must develop, adopt, and when necessary adapt. Through that, learner achievement and other desired outcomes can be met through enthusiasm and hard working (Department of Education, NW. 2006).

### **1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

The political landscape of South Africa has changed since the 1994 democratic general elections and this was accompanied by a wave of other changes in the educational and economic arenas. One of the major changes in the Educational system was the introduction of Outcome Based - Education (OBE) through the implementation of the Revised National Curriculum Statement (R N C S) and the National Curriculum Statement (N C S). Following upon this are new rules, regulations and policies that the Department of Education has introduced for schools to follow in order to facilitate change and improvement. Moreover, South Africa has also introduced the process policy of Whole School Evaluation for all (Department of Education, NW, 2007: 32).



All schools registering Grade12 for the first time were expected to perform well at the end of the year or to perform poorly and be labelled “trapped schools” (Department of Education, NW, 2002).

A preliminary investigation revealed that Sejankabo High School, which is the focus of this study has been “trapped” until 2006 but with the new management which was introduced in 2007 the school has started to improve due to the principal’s leadership style and through the efforts of the school management team and the working together of teachers. Since then everything in that school has turned -around for a better education of learners and better results. It was found that Learners Representative Council, (L R C) the School Governing Body (S G B) and parents were involved in school activities for the smooth running of the school (Department of Education, NW, 2006).

Sejankabo High School is a high school in the Mafikeng area of North West Province. Until 2007 the matric results of the school were so low that it became classified as a trapped school. A trapped school, according to the Department of Education (Department of Education, NW, 2003: 14) is a low -performing school, or under-performing school or a school, which does not produce good matric results as required by the National Department of Education in secondary or high schools. The implication is that, Sejankabo High School has had a complete turn- around in its matric performance.

This significant turn-around in learner performance, has made the researcher interested in studying Sejankabo High School as one of the schools in the process of improving and trying to turn the school around to be an improved and effective school. The Department of Education, (NW, 2003: 43) argues that, Sejankabo High School consists of students from economically and educationally disadvantaged backgrounds trying to achieve “great academic success despite their society’s obstacles”.

There are many schools in the North West Province facing serious challenges to produce good results in their matric. The disadvantaged schools are those in the rural areas and in farm schools. Some of these were constructed through the Community Programme in the late nineties, schools which lack communication, infrastructure, and management skills. Some have teachers who are unwilling to accept the new curriculum, and do not do much in their schoolwork. This situation raises very serious concerns in the schools. And these deficiencies have forced the Department of



Education in the North West Province to start identifying “ineffective performing” secondary and high schools (Department of Education, NW, 2006).

No school can succeed without commitment and the effort of its members. Many schools have been developed over time through the leadership style of their school principals who have applied different theories for such development. Van der Westhuizen (1991:189), has emphasised that, in group theory, everyone who complies with the requirements of a particular group can act as a leader. This theory does not make leadership something that a leader has or does not have, but is something, which happens in and with a group. The group function theory emphasises interpersonal relationships in the group. Leadership is thus a group activity and the leader develops out of the group (Van der Westhuizen, 1991:189). This shows that the success of the school and its effectiveness depend on the commitment and the efforts of all its stakeholders especially the leader. According to the Department of Education, in 2006 only seventy percent of the grade 12 learners received school leaving certificate (S.S), the most disadvantaged of such learners being in rural areas and in farm schools. For a school to be successful all those belonging to that school must be involved in its development (Department of Education, NW, 2003).

The purpose of this study to investigate factors that contributed to the successful turn-around of the Sejankabo high school in the Ngaka Modiri Molema District. In doing so, it hopes to focus, and identify and describe the tools, strategies, techniques and new approaches that the school principal used in planning for its success.

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

Since the advent of the new political dispensation in South African schools in 1994, the desirable level of turning schools around in the North West Province has not been achieved as required. Instead, the matric results are dropping year after year. However, some schools are making efforts to improve and such schools prompt the researchers to study their strategies for improvement. Moreover, the Department of Education is engaged in the reconstruction of a culture of teaching and learning in schools and it is vital to establish how this is achieved in those schools that are improving themselves (Department of Education, NW, 2003). If some schools manage to improve their performance, why do others not do the same, as the Department of Education requires. For any school to be successful, a change process that leads to improvement needs to be implemented within that school (Van der Westhuizen, 1995:149).

All stakeholders have to understand what is involved in turning a school around and work it out for themselves in practice. The functioning of such a school will need a mixture of pressure and support.

This study is therefore concerned with how a particular high school in the Mafikeng area Project Office was able to turn itself around from a low-achieving to a high-achieving school.

## **1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

This research is an attempt to determine the factors that contribute to the successful turnaround of Sejankabo High School in order to assist other school principals with ideas on how to turn their own schools around. Reforming a school or turning the school around is a critical challenge for school principals.

This study therefore, is concerned with investigating how a school like Sejankabo High turned itself around from a low-achieving to a high-achieving school. Consequently, the study is guided by the following research questions:

- What factors generally contribute to the improvement of a school?
- What factors contributed to the successful turnaround of the previously “trapped” Sejankabo high school?
- What challenges are generally faced by a school in its efforts to turn itself around?
- What challenges did Sejankabo high school encounter in its efforts to turn itself around?
- What lessons can other principals learn from this?

In order to answer these research questions, the following aims and objectives are specified.

## **1.5 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The main focus of this study is to examine the factors that contribute to the successful turn-around of a “trapped” school. Hence the following aims and objectives are pursued:

1. Exploring by means of a literature review, factors that are viewed as contributing to the improvement of a school.



2. Determining from the study of the literature, the challenges faced by schools in turning themselves around.
3. Determining by means of an empirical study what factors contributed to the successful turn-around of the Sejangabo high school and what challenges the school encountered in its efforts to turn itself around.
4. Making recommendations to help schools in a trapped situation to turn them around.

To achieve the aims and objectives, a review of the literature on school improvement, school effectiveness and school change is undertaken with the view of uncovering factors that contribute to improvement of a school. A preliminary review of the literature revealed that the following factors are important and effective. These and other factors will be the focus of the literature review:

- leadership of the school - particularly the principal's leadership style
- teacher leadership styles
- school culture
- student engagement
- school- community relations

The empirical study was conducted to determine exactly how Sejangabo High School turned around, and what challenges it faced in the process of turning itself around.

## **1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The aim of this study is to make school principals of the North West Province aware of what makes some schools successful in the implementation of the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) and Outcomes - Based Education, and the challenges facing schools with regards to their success. This research is important because for the past years, school principals in the Central Region have struggled in vain to achieve success in their schools. These research is providing strategies required by school principals in bringing success to their schools were possible, to remove these effectively from being trapped to being un-trapped. The reason why it is imperative for school principals to turn their schools around is also addressed. The study will also try to motivate teachers to improve the quality of learning and teaching in the North West Province.



## **1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **1.7.1 Literature review**

The following section discusses the method of research followed in the study. The first is a review of the literature and the second is an empirical investigation.

A research was conducted on the following terms:

- School effectiveness
- School improvement
- School success
- Trapped school
- Leadership role
- Student engagement
- Challenges the school was faced before

### **1.7.2 Empirical investigation**

#### **1.7.2.1 Selection of the research site and sample**

De Vos (2002:380) defines sample as a “small portion of a total set of objects, events or persons that together comprised the subject of the study. One school was selected for in-depth study to determine how it had succeeded in turning itself around to achieve better school results. A purposefully selected sample of fifteen learners, six teachers, one of whom was a member of the (SMT) and the principal participated in the study. McMillan & Schumacher (2001:596) define purposeful sampling as “a strategy to choose small groups or individuals likely to be knowledgeable and informative about the phenomenon of interest.” The teachers were selected from a population of 15 educators and the learners from a population of 34 matric students.

#### **1.7.2.2 Data collection**

Data was collected through semi- structured interview with the principal, focus group interview was conducted with teachers and open-ended questions were also conducted with learners.

#### **1.7.2.3 Data analysis**

The researcher used qualitative data analysis in this study. Data from the interviews was transcribed verbatim, and then sorted into themes and categories. Issues that belong together were

analysed together. These were transformed into categories which subsequent responses were sorted (White, 2003:82).

## **1.8 LIMITATIONS**

Research limitations refer to conditions outside the researcher's control that affect the collection of data. It also refers to short comings in the study or restrictive weaknesses (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001: 45).

The case- study design has a weakness with regards to the generalisability of findings. Whoever to offset this weakness several data sources already mentioned was used.

## **1.9 DELIMITATIONS**

Delimitations are the boundaries purposely put on the study, usually to narrow it down to ensure that the topic can be effectively researched (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001:38).

The study is restricted to the following case, namely the process of turning the school around, in other words the school improvement process. Data sources consist of the Principal of the Sejangabo High School, 6 teachers among six teachers one is head of department (H.O.D) and 15 learners. The central region of the Ngaka Modiri Molema District has 137 secondary and high schools but only few school principals succeeded in turning their schools around (Department of Education, NW, 2002). This study is delimited to one of these successful schools.

## **1.10 DEFINITION OF TERMS**

### **Trapped school**

A trapped school is a school identified by the Department of Education as a low- performing school, or under- performing school or a school, which does not produce good matric results as required by the National Department of Education. In responding to trapped schools, the Department of Education made reference to the following:-

“The National Curriculum Statement Grades 10-12 (general) aims to develop a high level of knowledge and skills in learners”



“It sets up high expectations of what all South African learners can achieve”;

“The National Curriculum Statement specifies the minimum standards of knowledge and skills to be achieved in each grade, and sets high, achievable standards in all subjects (Department of Education, NW, 2003). In the United States of America “trapped schools” are referred to as underperforming/failing schools. These are schools where learners make less progress than expected. And form the focus of the National ministry to intervene and build confidence in the public schools by ensuring that they are properly managed (Department of Education, NW, 2002: 26).

### **Turn-around**

From the school being ineffective to being more effective and improved, the school needs to turn-around for better results. This ‘turn- around’ concept was emphasised by the Department of Education when it designed Whole School Evaluation as a collaborative and transparent process that has to assess the holistic performance of schools against agreed criteria with a view to ensuring continuous improvement in the quality of education in South African schools. These mandated the Minister of Education to direct that the standard of education provision, delivery and performance must be monitored (Department of Education, NW, 2007: 28).

### **School Success**

This refers to studies of successful schools that have prioritised creativity and self- directed learning as tools for producing good matric results as required by the Department of Education. Other schools prioritise problem solving, quality performance of students, community involvement, and social co-operations as their criteria for success (Glickman and Gordon, 2001:69).

### **School improvement**

School improvement is generally associated with what is going on with an individual institution, relying on the professional experience of its teachers to identify a focus for the improvement of that institution (Tumane, 2005:21).

### **School effectiveness**

According to Tumane (2005:16) effectiveness can be described as the extent to which the desired school output is achieved. The effectiveness of the school can be expressed as the output of the school, which, in turn, was measured in terms of the average achievement of the pupils at the end of the period of formal schooling.

### **School culture**

A school culture is a positive learning environment that nurtures the development of the learner to feel comfortable, safe and happy to be part of the school. A school should have the belief and a commitment to be a wonderful place to be by staff, students and parents (Hopkins, 2006:36).

### **Student engagement**

Student engagement is when learners work together to achieve common goals in classroom activities or extra-curricular pursuits by creating a team spirit which fosters a spirit of belonging and acceptance that is very crucial in developing tolerance and acceptance of individuals from diverse cultures, with different abilities and orientations (Hopkins, 2006:27).

### **Leadership**

Leadership may be described as the integrated and dynamic application of the leader's abilities in an authoritative way to realise common ideals. Leadership occurs when two or more persons are present (Van der Westhuizen, 1995:188). And therefore a person who is able to do his best becomes the leader of the group. He is then a natural leader because the group accepts him. Van der Westhuizen further added that, leadership may be the calling and characteristics through which the leader in a creative and dutiful way stimulates, directs and co-ordinates group interaction and activity in a specific situation on the basis of group goals and with a view to their eventual attainment (Van der Westhuizen, 1995:188).

## **1.11 CHAPTER DIVISION**

This research is organised as follows: -

Chapter 1: Discusses the introduction, the background information of the study, statement of the



problem, purpose of the study, research questions, the significance of the study, limitations of the study and definition of terms.

Chapter 2: Provides the literature overview of the factors that contribute to the successful turnaround of schools and challenges faced by schools in turning themselves around.

Chapter 3: Discusses research procedures, that is, research design and methodology, the target population for the study, sample size and sampling procedures, the data gathering instruments, techniques such as open-ended questionnaire and interviews. The description of methodology used in the study is given, and the research design is specified.

Chapter 4: In this chapter data reflection and data gathering are interwoven. Data gathering is the collection of information and recording of the findings. This chapter will analyse data to create a logical understanding of the findings.

Chapter 5: An overview concerned of the research is given and the researcher's recommendations. In other words, a summary of the research is provided, conclusions are made and recommendations are stated.

## **1.12 CONCLUSION**

This chapter has presented a brief orientation to the study, the nature of the problem as well as the aims of the study and objectives of the study. The major focus of the study is to investigate factors that contribute to the successful turn-around of a previously "trapped school", and how the school turned itself around from a low- to a high performance. Chapter two present the literature review and the review of other researchers about the study.



# REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE REGARDING THE NATURE OF FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THE SUCCESSFUL TURN-AROUND OF A SCHOOL

## 2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents an overview of scholars on factors, challenges, and lessons from schools turning themselves around, from trapped state of affairs to successful one. The notion of turning a school around is not new. As long as public education exists, parents, government officials, district officers and researchers have from time to time been interested in certain school practices which help to turn a school around. In the North West Province, it was in 2006 that the results of large-scale studies of turning schools around and of compensatory education programmes first became available. Literature studies have illustrated that, for a number of reasons, the concern for better results and their consequences reached a peak in 2007 (Department of Education, NW, 2007:27). Coleman and Jencks (2003:108) prefer the term effectiveness, as referring to a school that, by its actions, has caused or produced results and the relative quality and effectiveness of these results form one facet of the components of total efficiency.

## 2.2 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter explores some of the major factors that contribute to the successful turnaround of schools, and how a school needs to change to be successful and how an organisation in restructuring, both theory and in practice, requires good leadership skills and broader discipline of organisation development to succeed in turning itself-around (Beer & Nohria, 2001:49). The first part of the chapter is an overview of literature on successful schools, effectiveness and improvement of the schools, goals and claims and facts of how schools can be successful over the years.

### 2.2.1 Definition of the term “Successful School”

In the view of Glickman and Gordon (2001:75), a successful school can be defined as “the extent that there is congruency between its objectives and achievement”. In other words, it is successful to the extent that it has accomplished what it is out to do.

According to Chinsamy (2002:18), successful schools are those schools in which all students

master basic skills, demonstrate achievement and seek high achievement in all subjects. As a result, learners in successful schools have improved their behaviour and attendance. Bless (2001:45) define a successful school as one that brings the children of the poor to those minimal masteries of basic school skills that now describe minimally successful pupil performance for the learners of the middle class. It is observed from the literature that, for the school to turn itself around is not once off issue hence a one-dimensional definition is not sufficient.

According to Bottoms (2003:24), successful schools have a collection of teachers who work together to achieve better goals that transcend their own immediate gain in pursuit of the common goals. Successful school is defined as a good education for itself, through its practices, its goals and then by putting more efforts in achieving better results.

In this study schools that have turn-around or being successful, refers to the following schools:

- the school with transformational leader who mentors and develops the subordinates to do their best and provides them with meaning and purpose to develop a clear school mission;
- the school with principals who monitor student's progress;
- schools in which all learners are engaged in school team work to achieve common goals of academic excellence;
- Schools which involves the community to take responsibilities for a better successful school; and
- The schools with a favourable learning environment.

All schools registering grade 12 for the first time are expected to perform well at the end of the year or they will also be called unsuccessful because of producing outcomes below the expected national average (Department of Education, NW, 2002).

The purpose of this study was to investigate factors that contributed to the successful turn-around of the Sejankabo high school of the Ngaka Modiri Molema District.

The focus was on identifying and describing the tools, strategies, techniques and new approaches that the school principal used to be effective in planning this pivotal role of making the school to be successful.



## 2.2.2 School Effectiveness and school Improvement

### 2.2.3 School effectiveness

School effectiveness refers to all theories and research studies concerning the means –ends relationships between educational process and outcomes, in particular student knowledge and skills aiming at explanations for differences in student achievement between schools and classrooms (Coleman & Jencks, 2003:118).

The processes which characterize effective schools in meeting the needs of their pupils and aligning them with democratic principles and practice include the fact that, pupils in those schools are fully involved in the life of the school. Achievement, for example, is higher where students take responsibility for their own learning (Glickman & Gordon, 2001:45). In terms of student care, Tumane (2005:23) stresses that, students in effective schools need to be treated with dignity and respect and to be encouraged to participate in the organisation of the school, so that they feel valued.

For improvement and success, the school needs to be assisted in both maintaining the work it does, its aspirations, on a day- to- day basis, with the idea of continuing to a higher level of development for all its constituents and its community (Chinsamy, 2002: 44).

Another recent view of the school effectiveness literature by an Australian writer found that, it was increasingly clear that many of the structures and processes which characterize effective schools in meeting the needs of their pupils align with democratic principles and practice, in that pupils in effective schools are fully involved in the life of the school (Harris & Bennet, 2001:38).

Effective schools are those which encourage a mix of teaching and learning methods that include individualized and cooperative learning as well as limited amounts of enthusiastic and motivated whole class teaching (Tumane, 2005:35).

According to Fullan (2007:38), from the beginning of 2005 teachers were confronted with demands for accountability, for productivity, for a return to basic learning for concentration of the curriculum to a core of essential skills and concepts, for better use of personnel. In response to demands, many teachers took a long time to get over the cornucopia mentally, the view that diagnosing a deficiency was strong enough argument for more resources; they simply did not



comprehend the climate in which administrators were being told. It is in this context that teachers began to talk about effective schools. Therefore, the public climate, which encouraged that kind of concentration, implied several axioms. Some school principals and teachers have realised that, being effective as a school does not mean seeking more resources, it assumes achieving better outcomes with the resources you already have. They also realised that being effective assumes a re-concentration on what is basic to schooling: it means getting rid of frills and homing in on what is the school's essential task by teaching children and improving scholastic performances. The schools that are effective usually involve some kind of evaluation and review, especially of management and political imperatives, which could confirm or reinstate the existing forms of domination and power distributions. The school effectiveness could also encourage a return to the prescribed common curriculum for all children as required by the Department of Education for schools to turn- around themselves for better results.

Van der Westhuizen (1991: 657) added that a school is more or less effective depending on the criteria used to measure effectiveness and the criteria are interdependent and cannot be applied in an isolation fashion. The school as an organisation needs to use adaptability and achievement criteria to determine its effectiveness of goals. This means that, professional teachers should be able to identify the forces of change and initiate new policy directions to meet the needs of new requirements and that the success of the school was measured by the public opinion (parents, authorities and pupils) largely by the cognitive skills acquired there.

#### 2.2.4 School improvement

The International School Improvement Project ( I S I P ) defines school improvement as a systematic, sustained effort aimed at change in learning conditions and any other related internal conditions in one or more schools, with the ultimate aim of accomplishing educational goals more effectively (Coleman & Jencks 2003:105). School improvement and school quality work hand in hand and both focus on change and processes rather than directly on outcomes, and evaluation rather than quantitative. They are also concerned with changes to factors that are indirectly related rather than directly to student achievement.

For example, school improvement stresses the professional development of the staff which is expected to directly lead to student success (Coleman & Jencks 2003: 112).



Therefore, there can be no success by the school as a whole unless individual teachers are willing to alter the patterns of their behaviour, adopt new challenges, new attitudes and embrace different beliefs (Department of Education, NW, 2006).

#### 2.2.4.1 Contributing factors in turning the school around

The main characteristics that make the school succeed are the presence of people, secondary goals and a certain regulated structure. Van der Westhuizen (1991:184) believes that the school, unlike industry, is never concerned with production based on the profit motive. He argues that teachers have no control over the quality of children whom they encounter; neither do children come in neat, homogeneity packets, ready to learn and plan. To teach therefore, is to bring stored up experiences to life in such a way that the learner can grasp it. The teacher's task is to unlock the potential of the curriculum whereas the learner's task is to reshape them in the light of the curriculum potential. Teachers not only have to unpack the curriculum storehouse, they also have to translate experience into a form that is accessible to learners. Therefore, learning can be accomplished if learners find ways to link their own prior experience to the experiences offered by their teachers (Palardy, 2008:25).

Fullan (2007:42) believes that making the behaviour of people to change happens mostly by speaking to people's feelings. Therefore, if feeling and emotions are the key factors, one would think that an appeal to moral purpose in situations of terrible failure would be a great motivator. Not so. Even in extremely difficult circumstances, moral purpose by itself is insufficient. Principals and teachers must feel and see that there is a means of moving forward. Fullan (2007:43) says that the most important thing to do in changing someone's mind is to connect to the person's reality as the point of departure for change. He emphasised that, all change solutions, if a situation is loosely focused, as is the case, for example, with schools in need of turn-around, the natural reaction is to tighten things. The school principals need to give teachers more leeway resources and trust to do the right thing. They need also to motivate teachers to establish the right blend of tightness and looseness, or more accurately they should be able to build both into the interactive culture of the organisation.

Fullan (2007:44) suggests that principals can construct more sophisticated strategies that mobilize the forces of change and also the strategies that do not choose between tightness but incorporate both. Fullan (2007:44) has suggested ideas that the school principals could use to put more efforts



to achieve greater success in their schools on a large scale. These are as follows:

- Define closing the gap as the overarching goal.
- Ensure that the best people are working on the problem.
- Recognize that all successful strategies are socially based, and action orientated- change by doing rather than change by elaborate planning.
- Assume that lack of capacity is the initial problem and then work on it continuously.
- To build public confidence.

School principals can use Fullan's (2007:44) strategies to turn around their schools for a better change, as indicated below:

- **Reducing the gap between under and high performers**

Fullan (2007:44) said that raising the bar and closing the gap cannot just be a slogan. It captures a host of issues that go to the very core of how a society functions. The education components can and must be quite precise work, it needs to focus on all categories of students and schools. The first thing is to realize that decreasing the gap between high and low performers – boys, girls, ethnic groups poor, rich, special education is crucial.

To apply Fullan's (2007:45) idea to Ngaka Modiri Molema District Schools, one would ask these questions:

1. Of the Ngaka Modiri Molema District schools in the low income category, how many are achieving 75% (beating the odds)? What are they doing to be successful? What can the other schools learn from them?
2. Of the Ngaka Moridi Molema District schools in the high income category, which schools are not achieving 75% (squandering the odds)?

The question is what is to be done to push these schools upwards? In this case, the researcher is talking about raising the bar for all, not just closing the gap.

To continue with Fullan's (2007:45) idea, "What is the gap, comparing the performance of the low-income group with the high-income group, and other subgroups therein? Is it being reduced over time?" Fullan (2007:45) concludes by saying that, all stakeholders need to remind themselves that, it is not just a matter of being aware of the gap goal, but working on it diligently



day after day, monitoring progress, and taking corrective action.

- **Tap into people's Dignity and Respect**

Fullan (2007:48) reports on a study carried out by Campbell (2005) who interviewed teachers about their relationship with colleagues concerning ethical matters regarding treatment of students. Campbell points out that many teachers in her sample came to "accept that the best way to keep out of trouble in schools is to avoid challenging colleagues on matters of competence and ethical conduct and learn to live with the guilt over their inaction" (Fullan, 2007:49). An interesting assertion made by Fullan (2007:49) is that dignity and respect are sources of motivation. He says students who are not respected are not motivated to learn.

- **Problem Resolution by Co-workers**

Fullan (2007:49) argues that when things go wrong, talented teachers and principals leave the scene with the reason that it is depressing to work in a failing school that has little chance of becoming good. As challenges are greater, more talented teachers and principals are required. So the government and district must foster incentives and other resources for principals and teachers to work in challenging circumstances to overcome some problems. If the right combination of strategies and support is marshalled, problematic situations can become successful, and this could be where the best teachers get their satisfaction. In England for example, the government has just asked its National College of School Leadership to develop a proposal and a programme based on identifying effective school principals who would form a cadre of National School Leaders, to be given incentives and support to work in most challenging circumstances. The idea is to make it prestigious in the profession to help improve the most difficult situations – getting the best people to work on the problem. In other words, incentives systems need to be reversed. What is needed is to turn around momentum in a way that creates a new, continuous winning streak (Fullan, 2007:49).

For example, School A in Soweto provided a good example of how the importance of learning and teaching fills the air of a succeeding school. When asked what made their school different from those around it, students were adamant that 'students here know the purpose of education'. This in itself, motivated students to work hard, together with the success they anticipated. High expectations of, and by, students and staff were evident in most of the schools they visited. In the



words of a teacher at School Q (Eastern Cape), 'Every aspect of the pupil's life was geared towards learning.' At a number of schools, there was a conscious attempt to foster a sense of responsibility in students. The following comment by students at School CC (Northern Province) illustrates that, in their studies so that they can be successful in their lives; they have to learn to do that. The student further said that, they have to be responsible not to wait for teachers to tell them what to do and what not to do (Christie, 2001:47).

Christie et al (2007:48) argue that a number of principals and teachers stressed the importance of orderly teaching in providing motivation and purpose for teachers. It is found that, at almost every Catholic school, teachers complained about their salaries and benefits being less than state schools. In the face of this, the reason they usually gave as to why they chose to stay at these schools was the professional satisfaction of being able to teach. In the words of a teacher at School I (Kwazulu Natal):

Profession –wise, this is a nice place to teach. It is good, it's challenging. It is only the benefits that are a problem. According to the researchers in the study, the schools had well organised programmes of teaching and learning, timetables were in evidence; teachers and students were working inside classrooms, and movement between classes was purposeful. In an understated but highly significant comment, the principal of School H (Free State) expressed her goal as 'sticking to the values of a normal functioning school'. These values included attendance at school by staff and students, discipline and teaching in classrooms 'this was the substance of her claim that, 'something was happening there'. It is important to note that this research supports the findings of other researches into effective schools and school improvement that 'time on task' is an important ingredients of success in school hours and sometimes scheduled study time after hours for teaching and learning (Christie, 2001:50).

- **Building Confidence for Administrators**

One can be successful when public confidence soars. Confidence is not granted by requesting it in advance of performance. We need support to perform better, and better performance garners further support. The leaders need to work with their groups to prove to those in the wider cycle that their investments are warranted. School leaders have to build credibility with elected officials, school boards, parents, neighbourhood groups, and herpes by showing that stakeholders' goals and needs would help shape plans for turning around low-performing schools. To accomplish this, leaders must use these elements of successful change discussed in this literature



to motivate and obtain the individual and collective involvement of everyone in the organisation (Van der Westhuizen, 1991:648).

#### 2.2.4.2 Teachers to understand change

For the school to be effective and successful, teachers must adapt to change. And for teachers to change there must be a renewal of the existing personnel corps through in-service training, personnel development and, by so doing, knowledge, skills, attitudes and outlooks of the existing staff can be renewed (Van der Westhuizen, 1991:657). For leaders to turn the school around to become effective it appears that there are many elements to educational change, for example, curriculum renewal leading to a system of equal opportunities for all.

What emerges strongly is that school change is a complex if not contradictory process, and that it takes time (Christie et al, 2007:25). Change involves structures, but more importantly, it involves school culture, and this is much harder to work with than change. Change depends on size and complexity. However, powerful teaching and learning depend on arrangement of internal relationships in schools that need to be engaged with, and successful change cannot simply be mandated. Therefore, leadership is important. A teacher's capacity to carry out desired changes is a fact to consider, but so, too, is his or her professional judgement that the change will be better than what exists.

Van der Westhuizen (1995:182) once pointed out that, change is a planned, systematic process that takes time to come to fruition, and is affected by individuals and is a highly personal experience. This boils down to the fact that change should be planned. Whether change will succeed or not depends on its type and nature. Change represents the struggle between what, and what desired. Change is an avoidable feature of human experience. Change is a process that affects all aspect of a person's life. Change to be implemented means that people are to be involved. To create change is to deal with diverse challenges of initiating, sustaining and redesigning (Alma & Nigel, 2001:12).

Within school improvement, the school is regarded as the centre of change and teachers are an inherent part of the change process. However, this means that, general efforts need to be applied to make schools better places for pupils and students to learn (Coleman, & Jencks, 2003:112).



(Harris, 2001:28) emphasise that, school improvement is a strategy for educational changes which enhance student outcomes as well as strengthening the school's capacity for managing change.

In the context of educational management, change means that school principals are exposed to new controls and regulations, growth, increasing competitions, technological development and change in the workforce (Goldenberg, 2004:49). As change is never simple, never one-shot, never to be fully understood by the cross-sectional approach for the school to improve, those within the institution need to be involved and take ownership of change and the improvement process.

For an organisation like a school to improve and survive, the school manager is a significant factor. The school manager is the key person in any effort to achieve excellence in the school (Van der Westhuizen, 1995:184). Therefore, for change to take place, school managers must provide leadership for the improvement of the schools. In education, school managers must have a clear notion of what it is that the school is trying to accomplish. That is, students are helped to learn and grow in particular ways, academic, cognitive, affective, dispositional, and so forth. Leaders must work closely with teachers and must have a clear picture of what is going on in classrooms and across schools. They should also understand the characteristics of innovations being implemented and be able to anticipate some of the problems that might crop up (Harris, 2000:34).

#### 2.2.4.3 Building Strong School Teams

For the school to be successful, other stakeholders outside the school need to be involved as they are also part and parcel of the schools progress (Click, 2001:7). Stakeholders as policy makers need to build capacity at school level in whatever ways they can. The department need to do interventions on the principle that each school has sufficient resources within it that can develop to change small if not big things within the school. There is also the need for multiple innovations, on a day- to- day basis, with the idea of continuing to a higher level of development for all its constituents and its community. This coordination is beyond the capacity of individual schools and seems to lie best with the district. The district needs to balance its maintenance work with its development work.

Moreover, for the district to play the role of initiating and sustaining school improvements it



needs to have a certain degree of functionality and effectiveness. A functioning and effective district has certain basic (minimum) policies and procedures in place to support its schools meaningfully, and in a sustainable way. Click (2001:37), thinks that the district office should have a clear plan for supporting its schools, a meaningful system of prioritising and sharing the limited resources to enable its schools to have access facilities and proper follow up mechanisms. The proper follow up mechanism that our district offices in the North West Province are applying in schools is Total Quality Management (TQM) (Department of Education, NW, 2007:58).

However, the Department of Education has currently implemented the policy of Whole School Evaluation for all. In this regard total quality management is an approach, which has the potential for the enhancement of underachieving schools in South Africa. Total Quality Management has factors that teachers can use to cope with the forces of success that are buffeting the education system in South Africa. The major difficulty that teachers face these days is their inability to deal with the system's failure that are preventing them from developing or implementing new educational processes that will improve the quality of in schools (Department of Education, NW, 2007:38).

According to Van der Westhuizen (1991:35), the management team within each school is currently faced with a great deal of pressure to achieve a range performance expectations and competition. Total Quality Management is a framework and set of practical resources for managing organisations in these days. Based on sound principles and a strong body of experience, Total Quality Management, provides a school based management team with the tools they will need to become highly successful in meeting the goals of the stakeholders, and, in creating a place that teachers want to work in. However, there are serious problems in South African schools including Department of Education, NW, 2007:45):

- Insufficient support for schools and teachers;
- Test scores that are declining;
- A drop- out rate that has reached pandemic proportions; and
- South Africa may never be sustaining its quality movement if it fails to practise Total Quality Management in schools.

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that makes people feel great about their work, their institutions, themselves and above all strive towards student satisfaction. TQM is an approach that will assist school organisations to compete globally. It embodies principles that can be applied to improve schools and the provision of education in South Africa.

According to Harris (2000:67), teamwork is an essential component of quality management which is a radical departure from the traditional paradigm. A key act of the contemporary school is to stay ahead of change. Goldenberg (2004:69) stresses that the future is not what it used to be. Education in South Africa is currently undergoing dramatic change and also the management of education, that is, school principals have also changed significantly.

The Department of Education, NW, (2007:73) argues that, TQM is not a fad; it is not a novelty that will disappear with the emergence of the next new management philosophy. TQM is a restatement of the core principles and values in business, government and society. The re-emphasis on core values enables an organisation to withstand difficult times. TQM unites an organisation; it pulls together the collective resources of the organisation to focus on developing creative ideas to solve current problems. TQM is a steadying influence that brings the innate potential within every person to the surface.

Nevertheless, school improvement initiatives that make a positive impact on learner performance, are those supported by the education district office through the necessary capacity building of school level personnel, like, for example Sejangabo High School, regular follow-ups through classroom and school support visits done by the school principal with the support of North West Province Officials of Total Quality Assurance. They however need a systematic monitoring of the implementation of the planned programmes. As learner performance becomes improved, effective and sustainable, the district and school leaders need to conduct themselves as instructional leaders and rule enforcers. The educational leaders should organise all their activities around the primary function that will be supporting schools in the delivery of the curriculum.

Bottoms (2003:5) argue that, for school principals to produce good results they need to use the following strategies:

- Strategy 1: Single out high-performers. Principals need to tap teachers those with a demonstrated knowledge of curriculum and instruction as well as a passion for helping students meet high standards.
- Strategy 2: Link principal licensure to performance.

The school principal has created a two- tier licensure system preparation programme to focus on the core functions of successful schools. They were also being able to demonstrate that they can lead improvements in school and classroom practices and in student's achievement. Let alone the principal licensure, alternative licensing will not be enough. Principals must see that school board and the superintendent are provided with policies, resources and targeted assistance necessary to support a comprehensive school improvement agenda that will help them to turn around the schools. To emphasise more on strategies, one promising strategy to help middle-tier schools is to create state leadership academies that will develop team's capacity to lead and sustain improvement (Gill, 2005:37).

## **2.3 GOOD SCHOOL**

For the school to be admired by learners and for his or her school to be considered as a good school the school principal must set an example of good leadership for and be able to run the school smoothly. Therefore, the following aspects need to be considered: - school governance, school management team, student engagement and parents need to work hand in hand as a team (Department of Education, NW, 2007:28).

### **2.3.1 School governance**

According to Fullan (2007:23) good school governance i.e. School Governing Bodies must be in place to lead the school as good example. To emphasis more on that, the school governing bodies (S G B) must actively be involved in constructive management and do not interfere with and in the professional, academic activities of and at the school, and they are led by a strong, upstanding chair.

The principal's and school governing bodies possess strong leadership qualities, they set and implement functional operational plans, their presence must be visible at all times, they conduct meaningful school visits, their developmental plans are tangible, and their cooperation with the district education officials is beneficial to the school (Gill, 2005:38).



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### 2.3.2 School management team

For the school to be good, the school management need to form a strong team that can function effectively, including responsible heads of department, that is, the heads of department must exercise proper, firm and yet formal and acceptable control on the teachers. The school management teams must ensure that a proper pupil profile, tutor and mentor system is in place, heads of department must conduct class visits, take responsibility for new teachers and holds regular, constructive and productive subject meetings (Department of Education, NW, 2007).

### 2.3.3 Learner Engagement

Sullivan (2004:9) defines student engagement as “student’s commitment to and participation in learning”. In such an environment, the good school firstly, makes sure that all their learners are motivated and committed to learning. Secondly, learners have a sense of belonging and accomplishment. Thirdly in the good school, learners receive quality career guidance centred in a collective partnership in the overall learning and teaching process. Fourthly, learners take pride in their school, their achievements being recognised and rewarded. Fifthly, their holistic development is considered, in order that the learners with learning difficulties are given appropriate individual attention. Lastly all the learners’ progress is followed enthusiastically on a quarterly basis.

### 2.3.4 Parents

Parents must also be involved in their children’s school activities. They must develop love in their children’s school work, by checking whether the child is doing home-works or not. And this interest will improve their children’s achievement and performance. The parents’ achievement and contributions in their school work overall performance is recognised and acknowledged and therefore, they receive regular feedback on and about their children’s progress (Hopkins, 2006:15).

### 2.3.5 School community

Schools are affected by the outside world, especially parents and the community. Thus, a vital open system interacts with the external or internal environment. Parents support and commitment of school goals and students engagement are important spices of a successful school. Parents can

also make education fruitful by making sure that their children do their homework in time, study in advance for examination and not being late at school. Community support is also important for both multicultural and public school. To improve education requires more than one simple care for all. Certain aspects of public schools need to be changed and this could only happen if African learners can understand the importance of education and stand for what is right. School principals, teachers and communities must overcome problems in their respective schools if they want to turn their schools around (Fullan, 2007:51).

The role of the successful school is related to the success of all the learners in the school regardless of their background. Findings from Glickman and Gordon (2001:95), suggest that to turn the school around include all school goals within its boundaries, and may include goals that are pertaining to the development of the local community as well. The study found that people at the school level have a variety of goals for the schools to succeed, some of which are high performance and others which go far beyond performance, all need to be attended to if the school is to be seen as turning itself around. According to Fullan (2007:54) communities need to know that their children's environment is safe for learning and there could be progress, discipline and their children could be able to think for them to be self-motivated and be creative. It is the role of the school principal to create a strong sense of community.

#### 2.3.6 Total involvement

Hopkins (2006:15) argues that turn-around of the schools will only be successful when people across vertical and horizontal levels are involved in making it happen. Learners can no longer sit idly and watch educational process pass them by, but rather should become active participants in the learning process as volunteers in school activities so that their educational performance can be better. Parents involvement can become complex because it requires consensus building, sharing of the control of learners and dividing responsibility. Hopkins states that teachers need to maintain high expectations for all learners. For "Successful schools," research reinforces the fact that a learner who is expected to do well normally meets or exceeds that expectation. As a result of the high expectations by the teachers in the classroom, students are more involved in the work.



### 2.3.7 School culture

School culture is difficult to define, but its best thought of as the procedures, values and expectations that guide people's behaviour within the school as an organisation

(Hopkins, 2006:13). However, according to (Zepeda, 2007:19), school culture is the best set of norms, values and beliefs, rituals and ceremonies, symbols and stories that make up the "persona" of the school. Zepeda (2007:19) considers it as thoughts could be building up over time as teachers, administrators, parents, and students work together, solve problems, deal with challenges and, at times, cope with failures. He emphasises that a healthy school culture is when a school principal works with teachers, shared visions and missions, focusing on student learning and they should work under a common set of assumptions about learning for both students and adults. A positive culture is aligned to the goals and objectives that are consistent with the vision and mission of the school. Zepeda (2007:22) emphasized that, a healthy culture does not magically occur, but strong cultures emerge, in part, by the efforts of the principal, and there is nothing more visible than the work of the principal. For school principals to build a strong healthy school culture they must go along with the following behaviour:

- Principals must be visible to all stakeholders.
- They must not forget that they are role models.
- They must be passionate about their work.
- They must take pride in the physical environment of the school.

Healthy school cultures thrive in environment built through collaboration, trust, and care for the members of the school. School culture can never be built through the sole efforts of the principal rather, it means to describe the principal's efforts to influence or shape the existing values and norms of the culture in a direction that best supports instructional effectiveness.

In South Africa, the democratisation of school governing bodies is a formal recognition of the need for collaboration and participation on the part of staff in decision-making about the school. However, the effect of culture can be conceptualised as trickling down, so to speak, through the architecture-political and micro-political, maintenance and development and service-until they eventually make some impact on what goes on in classrooms (Coleman & Jencks. 2003:129).

A supportive social environment in the school, strong leadership, respect for others regardless of race, and respect for learners serve as a good model for the learners. According to Tumane



(2005:16), administrators and teachers are responsible for ensuring that their peers and school staff treat all teachers and learners with respect. Fullan (2007:28) further emphasises that, the school environment also serves as shelter and safe place for learners, for learners spend most of the day at school. Parents take their children to schools believing that their children will feel secure and that in schools they will find honest teachers and principals who are striving to do what is right. Being safe means learners are able to and may approach their teachers without fear or doubt.

The difficulties of attempting to change the culture of learning of the Sejankabo High School have been considerable. Community discussions on the performance of Sejankabo High School as low performing school took place regularly on radios. Collaboration and the development of teachers had to be applied. That is, the democratic principle is that, teachers are to be given opportunities to express themselves or be able to demonstrate their leadership skills, and teachers need to be encouraged to improve group teaching. Nevertheless, the effective school culture includes many of the core values associated with democracy such as disseminating knowledge, valuing equity and equality and the opportunity for students to make judgements and choices (Glickman & Gordon, 2001:46).

In addition to that, in order to support change for improvement, the culture of the school needs to be a collaborative one with a common understanding of shared aims. A further important fact is the central role of the leader in changing and establishing a culture of staff and student improvement. The principals in the high achieving schools created a culture that empowered and instilled confidence in teachers as they prepared for achievement testing. However, all other roles and responsibilities of a school principal are important, but a positive school culture is imperative. It is the deliberate decision by the principal to focus on creating a positive school culture that enables the other areas (e.g., designing instruction for student success) to achieve noteworthy outcomes. Nevertheless, these principals know school culture as the heart of improvement and growth (Habegger, 2008:42).

The climate and environment of the school must be conducive to learning at all times. There must be harmony among the staff and its learners for the smooth running of the school to allow better education to take place.

In an academic climate, staff and students are aware and they have valuable goals of high achievement. The principal plays a vital role and is intimately tied to an academic climate, by-



raising awareness of and gaining consensus for school improvement and high achievement expectations. He is advised to:

- Take an active role in school improvement strategies.
- Monitor students progress.
- Monitor teachers work towards students.
- Maintain peace, safe orderly and conducive environment (Habegger, 2008:43).

According to Fullan (2007:39) the school improvement policies for schools, need to be restructured and formulated in such a way that they articulate the basis of the school's vision to provide a stable context for teaching and learning in which parents and the community have a role to play. Interventions on school management and leadership could view their primary purpose as building supportive conditions for teaching and learning. He further added that, a campaign for school discipline is crucial to build upon the harassment of levitate and accountable authority relations for teaching and learning, and campaign against sexual harassment and assault in schools be anchored in moral principles of human right and the importance of a safe and peaceful environment for teaching and learning. Van der Westhuizen (1991:657) says that school principal's need to establish innovation as part of a school culture. Because this will ensure that schools do not stagnate by having out dated curricula, methods and teaching technology obviously change will become a continuous innovation process which will be implemented by teachers spontaneously.

## **2.4 THE LEADERSHIP ROLE**

For the school to be considered as good, the principal should be able to overcome challenges facing it. In this case, firstly the good principal introduced order so as to give meaning to the feelings of the group. As a result, the school turned around (Zepeda, 2007:23). Furthermore, Van der Westhuizen (1991:187) describes leadership as the integrated and dynamic application of the leader's abilities in an authoritative manner, which will convince, inspire, bind and direct the followers to realise common ideals. Van der Westhuizen (1995:188) further refers to leadership as a way of interacting, and more specifically of communicating between a leader and his followers. This means that a leader must be creative and have ways to stimulate responsible action on the part of the followers.



According to group theory, everyone who complies with the requirements of a particular group can act as its leader. According to Van der Westhuizen (1991:189) this type of leadership is valuable to education because team effort is important in education and certain staff members have certain leadership roles in relation to certain tasks. As the needs of the group change, the leader also changes. Leadership therefore, is the behaviour of any one to achieve organisational goal.

One may emphasise that, a leader must attempt to change the attitudes and actions of people, as leadership is very much a two- way relationship. Not only does the leader influence the followers, but the followers also exert influence over the leader. The choice of leadership style depends on numerous factors such as the situation the leader finds himself / herself in, the ability the leader displays towards his or her followers, the time decisions have to be taken, the size and the nature of the school (Van der Westhuizen, 1991:188). However, some schools are lucky enough to have excellent principals who have proven records of raising student performance and closing achievement gaps. And there are other schools that are trying their best to raise student achievement. These school principals understand which school and classroom practices improve student achievement, know how to work with teachers to bring about positive change and they support teachers in carrying out instructional practices that help all students succeed( Department of Education, NW, 2007).

Furthermore, to be a true leader, the educational leader should earn his leadership role or position of leader. In addition, the educational leader must remember that, certain leadership techniques need to be from within. Leaders can be born and made, that is, a good leader should have certain talents and skills. Moreover, to be a professional leader, the leader should have a clear view of the needs, possibilities and duties of leadership.

Goldenberg (2004:52) emphasized that leadership is the element most closely associated with efforts to make schools more successful. A principal's leadership has consistently emerged as the potential factor in the school-change equation, by setting goals and being an indicator of assistance. That is, leadership would mix the pot, so to speak, helping stir the other ingredients and keeping the process of change and improvement moving. However, whether by the principal or some other individual, leadership provides the cohesion that makes the other elements and components of the model work together. Finally, successful principals should emphasize achievement, set instructional strategies, provide an orderly atmosphere, frequently evaluate



student progress, coordinate instructional programmes and support teachers effectively.

Principals who accept change and want to turn their schools around to be successful, need to follow transformational leadership style because they will develop positive relationships with their subordinates in order to strengthen employee and organizational performance. Principals who display transformational leadership will encourage employees to see beyond their own needs and focus, instead, on the interests of the overall group. They will be charismatic to their followers and serve as role models (Fullan, 2007:42).

Transformational leaders mentor and develop their subordinates, both on the professional and personal level. They challenge their subordinates to do their best, and provide them with meaning and purpose (Fullan, 2007:45).

To be successful, a school principal must be adept at a number of skills. For example, he or she should be able to develop and coach his or her subordinates, communicate clearly, resolve conflicts, analyse problems, and make sound decisions. A manager must also be able to respond to work challenges in a positive way, use time effectively, and delegate work. They could achieve success within their organisation through developmental opportunities they receive. Finally, they need coaching and guidance from their supervisors, mentors and peers (Burke & Collins, 2001:246-249).

#### 2.4.1 Transformational leadership style

Transformational leadership refers to ensuring and enhancing changes and transformation in an institution. Kavanagh (2002:124), defines the concept 'transform' as to make a thorough or dramatic change in form, appearance, character etcetera.' In its simplistic form, the concept transformation refers to changes instituted to improve the shape and structure of organisation. The noun transformation is drawn from the verb transform and it may denote the changes that instituted in organisations. According to Alma and Nigel (2001:12), change is part-and-parcel of life, and transformational leadership depends on the extent to which school managers may manage to keep their institution up to date with changes in the broader society. For this reason, transformational leadership is appraised by many education- planners as the best approach for taking schools into the twenty first (Fullan,2007:42). For example, with transformational leadership the school manager would work with other stakeholders to obtain transformation of



undesirable aspect of schooling.

Principals must adopt to change for their school to be effective. In response to the changing role of principals, Fullan (2007:34) believes that training and professional development of the principals are significant in contributing to the quality of schooling. It is believed that, principals need to understand the changing contexts and improve their interpersonal and communication skills with the understanding that they are no longer the authority figure but is in a partnership with other stakeholders. Apart from establishing a vision of change, effective principals place high emphasis on achieving high levels of students learning and provide resources towards the efforts to improve the achievement and general well-being of the students. These principals constantly encourage teachers and students to attain higher levels of academic achievement, adopt collaborative planning processes, problem solving and decision- making focus on school improvement while ensuring that all school development programmes are geared to make all students learn.

#### 2.4.2 The principal as transformational leader

Principals of today who are willing to turn their schools around need to follow transformational leadership style as a tool to achieve their goals. With this style, they will be able to stimulate their subordinates to move beyond their own self-interests and work towards the interest of the group or organization as a whole. Transformational principals will also mentor and develop their subordinates, both on a professional and personal level. They will challenge their subordinates to do their best, and provide them with meaning and purpose (Fullan, 2007:42).

Apart from establishing a vision and setting goals, effective principals place high emphasis on achieving high levels of student learning and provide resources towards the efforts to improve the achievement and general well- being of the students by applying transformational leadership style. Therefore, transformational leadership behaviours contribute to increased students achievement and school principals need to practise this leadership style to build teachers professional commitment and beliefs on their collective capacity through raising the values of members, motivating them to go beyond self-interest to embrace organisational goals (Fullan, 2007:35).

According to Alma and Nigel (2001:25), female managers are more likely than male managers to report practising transformational leadership style more than their male colleagues do. To all the

four transformational style components, females are more likely to be found than males to be doing the following:

- Serving as positive role models for subordinates who aspire to be like them (attributed charisma).
- Inspiring employee to believe in and strive for a common purpose ( Inspirational motivation ).
- Encouraging followers to be creative in problem solving and to question assumption (intellectual stimulation) and
- Spending time developing, teaching and coaching their subordinates (Individual consideration).

The school principal, who wants to turn his or her school around, follows these styles actively, by monitoring his or her subordinates, by focusing on errors or deviations from standards (Alma & Nigel, 2001:28).

Van der Westhuizen emphasised (1991:253) that, principals should have the inspirational motivation so that they could be admired and trusted by their followers and be able to instil pride in their subordinates because they will associate themselves with them. The principals who use this style are likely to be optimistic about the future and the attainability of desired goals. They will “talk enthusiastically about what needs to be accomplished”. Van der Westhuizen (1991: 248), goes on to encourage principals that they should also have intellectual stimulation to encourage their followers to be creative in problem solving and to question basic assumptions. These principals will be able to persuade their subordinates to consider a problem from varying angles and to apply innovative problem-solving techniques.

## **2.5 KEY FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH SCHOOL SUCCESS**

### **2.5.1 Strong transformational leadership**

It is noted that transformational leadership involves advocacy, inter-group relations, team building and inspiration without domination. In the context of transformational leadership, the school manager uses his or her power as means of empowerment for all stakeholders (Burke and Collins, 2001: 259). Seemingly, transformational leadership stimulates, direct and co-ordinates group and



individuals to attain school goals.

Strong transformational leadership by the principal is important to maintain the school improvement process. Teachers can work together to turn their school around to be successful, but it is important to realise that for the school to change and to be effective, the principals need to be effective, charismatic, energetic and dedicated to their work to lead their staff, and students towards better school attitude and high performance level of results. Research has revealed that strong leadership was needed to encourage teachers imploring groups to help each other to improve their teaching techniques. Furthermore, transformational leadership will influence teachers' professional commitment to school's vision, professional community, school norms of collegiality, collaboration, joint work and also a commitment to community partnerships.

#### 2.5.2. The principal as instructional leader

Zepeda (2007:2) argues that, instructional leadership is easy to see but difficult to define. The inclusive of defining leadership is caused, in part, by the specific nature of the context of the school, the characteristics of the school, the communication patterns and values that the school holds as its own. Strong leadership promotes excellence and equity in education and entails projecting promoting and holding steadfast to the vision, garnering and allocating resources, commutating progress, and supporting the people, programmes, services, and activities implemented to achieve the school's vision.

According to Zepeda (2007:2), the principal must be instructional so as to be in a position to promote the continuous learning and development of teachers who are challenged to teach students to high standards of accountability. The principals of today's schools must be instructional leaders who possess the requisite skills, capacity, and commitment to lead the accountability parade. For principals to accept these challenges they need to be able to:

- Set the tone for their building;
- Sustain professional development for themselves and their staff members;
- Provide leadership and direction to their school's instruction programmes and policies;
- Facilitate the teaching and learning process, and
- Nurture personalized school environment for all students.



Zepeda (2007:3) again emphasises that, “tomorrow is too late”. Principals must be able to lead in the present because school systems will always look to their principals for direction, guidance, and the commitment to make learning for teachers and students a top priority.

Leadership that focuses on instruction has a strong purpose and an equally strong commitment to students learning.

Furthermore, according to Zepeda (2007:4), for schools to be successful, the principals must be able to:

- Demonstrate flexibility in dealing with change and must also be willing to experiment.
- Make decisions based on attuning the most positive results for students, rather than on adhering to or maintaining an established system.
- Use technology effectively, to lessen the load of routine tasks and to provide more effective communications.
- Recognize individual differences in staff and students and provide opportunities to meet their needs.
- Respond to the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students and their families.
- Cultivate support for the school and its mission among all segments of the community, school board, district personnel, and other concerned individuals and groups.

### 2.5.3 Seven strong claims about successful school leadership

This is a summary of the key findings from the literature undertaken by authors like Hopkins, (2006) and Zepeda, (2007) as a point of departure for a large-scale empirical study organised around what is referred to as ‘strong claims’ about successful school leadership. Hopkins linked his seven claims to the survival of the school. Initially, many school principals attempted to apply Hopkins’ claims of leadership as the essence of success and quality in schools. The following is an adaptation of Hopkins’ claims for success (Hopkins, 2006:3):

**Claim 1:** School leadership is second only to classroom teaching as an influence on pupil learning. This acts as a catalyst, creates a constancy of purpose toward improvement of students and success with the aim to become competitive with world –class schools. He concluded that the effects of transformational school leadership on pupil engagement are significantly positive.

**Claim 2:** Almost all successful leaders draw on the same repertoire of basic leadership practices. The basic assumption underlying the claim is that, the central task for leadership is to build vision



and set directions, understanding and developing learners, redesigning the organisation, and managing teaching and learning.

**Claim 3:** The ways in which leaders apply these leadership practices- not the practices themselves, demonstrate responsiveness to, rather than dictation by, the contexts in which they work. The evidence suggests differences in the application of successful leadership practices as outlined below:

- **Building vision and setting directions.** This category is particularly for turnaround school leadership at the early crisis stabilisation stage, but the context requires enactment of these practices with a sense of urgency, quickly developing clear, short-term priorities. At the late turnaround stage, much more involvement of staff is necessary in revising the school's direction so that ownership of the direction becomes widespread, deeply held and relatively resistant to the vagaries of future leadership succession.
- **Understanding and developing people** This category of practices is essential in all stages of school turnarounds, according to evidence from both US and UK contexts. Although this evidence is not yet sufficiently fine-grained to inform us about how these practices are enacted, it is consistent in highlighting its importance in all contexts.
- **Redesigning the organisation** These practices are quite central to the work of turnaround leaders. For example, transition from early to later turnaround stages depends on organisational 'recapturing'. However, much of what leaders do in the early stage of the turnaround process entails restructuring to improve the quality of communication throughout the organisation and setting the stage for the development of new cultural norms related to performance and more distributed forms of leadership required to achieve and sustain high levels of performance".
- **Managing teaching and learning** In this category the aim is to create productive working conditions for teachers, by fostering organisational stability and strengthening the school's infrastructure. By providing teaching support, monitoring school activity and buffering staff against distraction from their work.

**Claim 4:** School leaders improve teaching and learning indirectly and most powerfully



**through their influences on staff motivation, commitment and working conditions.** - Leaders make direct contributions to staff capacities and motivate staff members positively on their commitments and working conditions.

**Claim 5: School leadership has a greater influence on schools and pupils when it is widely distributed.** Total leadership refers to the combined influence of leadership from all sources. For example, staff performance, teachers working conditions, teacher motivation and commitment, head teachers and teacher's capacity.

**Claim 6: Some patterns of distribution are more effective.**

This claim grows directly from evidence about the superiority, in most but all contexts, of distributed rather than focused (single-person) leadership. Research on sample of 110 school demonstrated that there are relationships between the use of different patterns of leadership distributions and levels of values-added student achievement. Hopkins (2006:6) in his research discovered that:

- Schools with the highest levels of student achievement attributed this to relatively high levels of influence from all sources of leadership.
- Schools with the lowest levels of student achievement attributed this to low levels of influence from all sources of leadership.
- Schools with the highest levels, as compared to those in the lowest levels, of students achievement differed most in their ratings of the influence of school teams, parents and students.
- Head teachers were rated as having the greatest (positive and negative) influence in all schools. The evidence strengthens the case that some leadership distributions patterns are more helpful than others, and sheds little light on the range of patterns that actually exists in schools and, most importantly, the relative effects of these patterns on the quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement.

**Claim 7: A small hand-full of personal traits explain a high proportion of the variation in leadership effectiveness.** To improve under- performing school, the evidence warrants the claim that, at least under challenging circumstances, most successful school leaders are open-minded and ready to learn from others. They are flexible rather than dogmatic in their thinking within a system of core values, persistent (e.g. in pursuit of high expectations of staff motivation, commitment,



learning and achievement for all), resilient and optimistic. Such traits help why successful leaders facing daunting conditions are able to push forward when there is little reason to expect progress.

Hopkins' (2006:18) conclusion from this evidence as a whole is that, leadership has very significant effects on the quality of school organisation and pupil learning. As far as Hopkins is concerned, there is no a single case of a school success turning around its pupil achievement in the absence of talented leadership. Leadership serves as a catalyst for unleashing the potential capacity that already exists in the organisation. School principals of today need to apply Hopkins' seven claims effectively to unleash the lower standard performance of learners to high standard performance of better results for all learners.

## **2.6 CHALLENGES THAT WERE HINDERING SCHOOLS FROM TURNING-AROUND**

Principals often encounter numerous problems in turning the school around and the involvement of all concerned can make the principal's job easier. Christie (2001:69) has identified the following problems that could hamper school progress:

- Drug dealing that occurs at many schools
- Gang warfare threatens the lives of the youth at schools
- Principals who work are chased off school grounds
- Absenteeism of learners

In addition they are equally confronted by:

- Lack of parental involvement
- Bunking classes
- Poor examination results
- Poor relationship between the school and the community
- Lack of discipline and inappropriate leadership style
- Lack of responsibility
- Lack of laboratories
- Insufficient planning
- Funding by the department (Department of Education, NW, 2007).

Palardy (2008:24) argues that both individual student characteristics and mean student body characteristics at schools (i.e. compositional effects) has been shown to be predictive of student achievement and learning. Other predictive factors include a wide variety of individual characteristics such as ethnicity and gender as well as family characteristics such as socio-economic status (SES) and family structures. However, school resources such as text – books and the quality of teachers matter most. Beyond the quality of teachers, there is evidence that teacher density, as measured by the pupil to teacher ratio, has positive association with student outcomes (Palardy, 2008:26).

Student involvement in dealing with gangs, drugs and crime, are unpleasant realities that do influence the general psychological climate of the schools, and they have implications for any reform efforts Hopkins, (2006:27). The result is that, fear and worry make teachers reluctant to stay late for extra classes. Such an environment can also create almost a sense of fatalism among some teachers about the prospects of turning a school around and having students achieve at high academic levels.

Sometimes this fatalism is manifested as well-intentioned explanations and excuses for why achievement levels are so low. Nevertheless, on the one hand, it makes decisive and productive action even more imperative. On the other, it can drain away the energy of teachers to bring the student interest back to learning and achievement, or request for it. The troubling incidents when they happen as a result are disturbing because they directly affect the stakeholders as a whole for teaching, learning and achievement to take place (Hopkins, 2006:28).

The challenges that face principals these days include the degree to which they can change effectively and ensure the continuity that this change will need. Lack of cooperation by some of the teachers by not submitting their report on time was a challenge that the principal was faced. It is important for principals as managers and leaders to view change positively because they are exposed to new controls and regulations, growth, increasing competition, technological development and changes in the workforce and however principal need to motivate her subordinates to adopt change because by so doing development and learners performance will go high.(Hopkins, 2006:29).



## **2.7 LESSONS THAT OTHER PRINCIPALS CAN LEARN**

- The use of democratic leadership style can lead to improvement of the school.
- Proper use of Departmental document can also help the school to recover from the trapped state.
- Monitoring of the whole work in the school can bring improvement to the school.
- Teamwork and positive reinforcement to individual can help improve the school's performance.
- Support from the SGB and Departmental officials is a vital component to school development.
- Teacher leading by example, support from parents and the principal must be firm and strong, and a sense of responsibility must be instilled to learners for their better performance (Zepeda, 2007:6).

## **2.8 THE PRINCIPAL AS A MOTIVATOR**

The school principal plays a vital role in initiating success. The teachers are often inclined to accept change more readily if the school principal actively supports them in implementing the changes through leadership style. The school principals should act in an advisory capacity giving psychological support in implementing change and appreciating the efforts done by teachers towards school improvement. A principal should encourage those involved in the school to implement their conceptual plans, to collaborate and experiment with change. For the school improvement and better learner's performance, parents and learners need to work to have mutual supports towards school results. The principal support will give some prestige to the changes taking place in the school and engender a feeling of dedication among the participants in the process of change (Van der Westhuizen, 1991: 648).

## **2.9 CONCLUSION**

This chapter has presented a brief literature review of studies focusing on the theoretical framework, definition of terms including successful school, school effectiveness and school improvement; Factors that could turn the school around for better change defined as closing the gap, are driven by tapping, ensuring that the best people are working on the problem by building

public confidence and the principal being seen as instructional leader. The seven strong claims about successful school leadership are presented. The discussion also further emphasises how a good school should manage itself with regard to school governance, school management team, student engagement and how parents should be supportive of their children and the principal's role as motivator to teachers enabling them to understand change. Building strong school teams the importance of school culture, the leadership role, and transformational leader to be applied and school community and the total involvement and the challenges that the school faced, the principal as a motivator and lessons that other principals can learn were presented in this chapter. The next chapter which is chapter three presents the research design and methodology.



## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

The aim of the previous chapter was to reflect on factors that contribute to school improvement, effectiveness and success. This chapter outlines the data collection processes followed in this study. It starts with a detailed discussion of the research design and research methodology employed in the study. This includes a discussion of the research paradigm, case study method and data collection procedures as well as ethical issues and measures to ensure trustworthiness. The research design and methodology chapter aims to explain the process followed to address the following research questions:

What factors generally contribute to the improvement of a school?

What challenges are generally faced by a school in its efforts to turn itself around?

What challenges did Sejankabo High School encounter in its efforts to turn itself around?

What factors contribute to the successful turn-around of the previously “trapped” Sejankabo High School?

What lessons can other principals learn from this?

#### **3.2. RESEARCH DESIGN**

Creswell (2005:36) defines research design as a conceptual imagery or an architectural impression of what the product of research is expected to look like. A research design determines and outlines the methods and steps a researcher follows in finding out information about the area he or she is investigating. It also holds the research together, as it shows how the major parts of the research project, the sample groups, treatments and methods of assignment work together to address the central research questions (Creswell, 2005:38) which, in this study relate to the factors that contribute to the successful turn-around of a school.

According to Creswell (2005:41), research designs are the general strategies followed to gather and analyze data to answer the question in hand. They have been developed to obtain knowledge through reliable and valid procedures. The collection of data may be done through measurement techniques, general interviews and collection of documents. Research designs are systematic and

purposeful. They are planned to yield data on a particular research problem and therefore their procedures are not haphazard activities.

Creswell (2003:36) states that research is done when one has a substantial question in mind that has no ready answers. The author states that a researcher should seek out information related to the question and try to make sense out of it so that the question could be answered through a research process that is systematic and follows general rules.

### **3.3 RESEARCH PARADIGM**

This study was conducted within the qualitative research paradigm using the case study method.

#### **3.3.1 Qualitative research**

Qualitative research is directed at the observation of interaction and interviews with participants to discover patterns and their meaning (De Vos, 2002:32). These meanings and patterns form the basis for generalization, which are then tested through further investigations (De Vos, 2002:38). The procedures in the qualitative designs are not as strictly formalized as in quantitative research, while the scope is more likely to be undefined and a more philosophical mode of operation is adopted (De Vos, 2002: 39). The methods of data collection are flexible, that is, open to any changes and not strictly regimented and presentation of data is in a form, which is non-numerical (not mathematical). Data collection and data analysis are seen as a cyclical relationship and one can stop gathering data when new data does not add new information to the research problem. In this study the verbal description portrayed the richness' and complexity of factors that contribute to the successful turn-around of schools.

Qualitative research is naturalistic inquiry, the use of non-interfering data collection strategies to discover the natural flow of events and processes, and how participants interpret them (McMillan & Schumacher 2001:38). Furthermore (White, 2003:38) also emphasizes that qualitative approach is more structured or formalized in nature as well as explicitly controlled, with a more carefully defined scope.

Babbie & Mouton (2001:438) state that the qualitative design has the following advantages:

- The approach does not need a large population sample. Hence the researcher purposefully sampled the principal, six teacher and fifteen learners to interview about how the school



managed to turn itself around.

- The qualitative research also has flexible design features that allow the researcher to adapt and make changes to the study where he/she feels necessary. The researcher found the qualitative approach suitable as the information needed to answer the research question was qualitative in nature.

Babbie & Mouton (2001:432) define qualitative research as a method that deals with approaches that enable researchers to learn from reliable sources about the social world they are investigating and by means of participation in that world and with a focus on the research. Denzin & Lincoln (2006:2) define qualitative research as occurring when qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings. This approach (qualitative) could involve the collection of a variety of materials to describe problems and meanings in individuals' lives. It also has the advantage of drawing both the researcher and the subjects of the research closer together.

According to Denzin & Lincoln (2006:3), in qualitative investigation there is a purposeful attempt to:

- Describe the world in "natural languages" not in terms of number;
- Use open, flexible and non-rigid methods;
- Describe the factors as experienced by the individual;
- Involve the participant who is being studied and so establish a close relationship between the researcher and the participants and
- "Open up things that touch people deeply.

In this study, the qualitative case study method was used to get information in depth from individuals involved in the experience of the process of turning their school around.

Data was collected through face-to-face semi-structured interviews and qualitative open-ended questionnaires. In this study, the interviews and questionnaire was focused on how the school turned itself around; challenges it was faced with and how those challenges were overcome.

### 3.3.2 Case study method

The study used a case study method, meaning that the data analysis is focuses only on one phenomenon, which the researcher selects to understand in-depth regardless of the number of sites, and participants (Hollway & Jefferson, 2004:59).



According to Yin (2009:56), case study methods involve an in-depth, longitudinal examination of a single instance or event: a case. The researcher provides a systematic way of looking at events, collecting data, analyzing information, and reporting the results.

The case study gives the story behind the results by capturing what happened to bring it about, and can be a good opportunity to highlight a project's success, or to bring attention to a particular challenge or difficulty in a project. Yin further emphasizes that cases might be selected because they are highly effective, not effective, representative, and typical or of special interest (Yin, 2009:57).

Case study is defined as a research strategy, an empirical inquiry that investigates a phenomenon within its real-life context. Yin further explains that, case study research means single and multiple case studies that can include qualitative evidence, which relies on multiple sources of evidence and benefits from the prior development of theoretical proportions (Yin, 2009:68). The phenomenon of interest is to study how a trapped school managed to turn itself around to achieve better matric results.

### **3.4 SELECTION OF RESEARCH SITE**

The school to be studied was chosen because, for many years it was regarded as a low performing school. From 137 high schools that are under the district of Ngaka Modiri Molema, Sejangabo High School was identified as a "trapped" school which was regarded as under-performing school with 34 matric students. But since the school received a new principal the school was regarded as a better performing school as it has recently turned itself around. The school was selected for in-depth study to determine how it had succeeded in turning itself around to achieve better school results.

#### **3.4.1 Selection of participants**

Participants for this study were selected by means of purposeful sampling which McMillan & Schumacher (2001:596) define as "a strategy to choose small groups or individuals likely to be knowledgeable and informative about the phenomenon of interest". The data sources used were the principal, six teachers among whom one was head of department (HOD) and fifteen learners. The teachers were selected from a population of 15 and the learners were selected from a population 34 matric learners were selected. In order to gain reliable information about the phenomenon of interest, teachers who had been in the school before and after its turn-around were



selected. In the same manner attempts were made to include matric teachers and matric learners in this sample because they would have been present in the school for a reasonable period of time.

### **3.5 GAINING ACCESS**

Gaining access means receiving permission from the school principal of where the research is to be conducted. It is also important to gain access to have the properties, which make it representative of the whole. One of the major issues in gaining access is to determine access that best represents participants so as to allow for an accurate generalization of results. Such a group is a representative sample. The first means of ensuring a representative sample is the use of a complete correct sample frame which is the list of all participants from which the sample is to be drawn (Denzin & Lincoln:2006:48). Gaining access in depth was done through interview to get information from individuals in the experience of the process of turning their school around.

### **3.6 DEVELOPMENT OF INTERVIEW SCHEDULES**

Interview questions were developed by the researcher to elicit information from the school principal, teachers and learners about how they managed to turn their school around from low performance to high performance.

Questions were derived from the literature on school improvement and effectiveness; an in developing the interview schedules and in open-ended questions the researcher was also guided by the purpose of the study as stated in chapter 1.

### **3.7 PILOTING INSTRUMENTS**

De Vos (2002:25) suggests that there should be a pre-testing of data collection instruments before they are administered. A pilot study can be viewed as a dress rehearsal of the main investigation (De Vos, 2002:26). The main reason for doing so is to detect problems related to the interview. This can also be called piloting because it is done before the major study. The piloting group goes through a few interview questions and answers of those questions. They are also free to ask questions for clarity where there might be ambiguities or other problems related to the study.

In this case, the interview schedule was piloted on a sample of two teachers and five learners not included in the final sample, in order to rectify errors and to check the response times. Errors

detected regarding the formulation of some questions were rectified.

### 3.8 DATA COLLECTION

According to Huberman & Miles (2002:7), the advantage of using mixed- method are to draw together information using a range of tools so that the strength of the argument is more clearly visible and to obtain the synergetic view of the evidence. In this study individual interview, focus group interviews and open-ended interviews were used to collect data.

#### 3.8.1 Semi-structured Interview

A semi structured face-to-face interview was conducted with the principal for 1hr and a structured focus-group interview was conducted with teachers from 1hr to 2hrs. A tape recorder was used to record the interviews and hand –written notes were taken as well.

#### 3.8.2 Focus group interview

The key element here is the consent people where their disclosures are encouraged in a nurturing environment. It taps into human tendencies where attitudes and perceptions are developed through interaction with other people (Denzin & Lincoln, 2006:361).

Denzin & Lincoln (2006:365) further emphasized that, “focus group” is a situation in which the interviewer asks group members very specific questions about a topic after considerable research has already been completed. It is further defined as a “carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions in a defined area of interest in a permissivise, non- threatening environment (Denzin & Lincoln, 2006:362).

Focus groups can be used at any point in a research programme. The importance of using focus group is to obtain general background information about a topic of interest, stimulating new ideas and creative concepts, learning how respondents talk about the phenomenon, and interpreting previously obtained qualitative research results (Melinda,2000:46).



### 3.8.3 Open-ended interview

Open-ended interview questions were used to elicit information from learners. With the assistance of their teachers, students were grouped together in one class to complete an open-ended interview form questions so that they could feel free and express themselves frankly.

The duration of the interview was between, 1 hour to 2 hours. Interviews data were recorded electronically by means of an audio tape, but while the interview was in progress the electricity went off and the researcher allowed the participants to respond to questions by writing answers down while the researcher continued interviewing them verbally so that answers could be reviewed at the end of the interview. The interview schedule consisted of the questions that were be used during the interview.

## 3.9 DATA ANALYSIS

The process of data analysis involves making sense out of text and image data. It involves preparing data for analysis, conducting different analyses, moving deeper and into understanding the data, representing the data and making interpretations of the meaning of the data (Creswell, 2003:190).

The researcher used qualitative data analysis in this study. Data analysis involved the examining qualitative data for converging or contradictory findings (Creswell, 2003:233). Data from the interviews were transcribed verbatim, and then sorted into themes and categories. Issues that belonged together were analyzed together. Then this was transformed into categories with subsequent responses sorted out (White, 2003:82).

The method used to analyze qualitative data is Tech's approach described in De Vos, (2002:384). The steps followed in this method are:

Get the sense of the whole by reading through the transcripts. Jot down the ideas as they come to mind;

- Select one interview (e.g. the best interview) and go through it asking: 'what is this about?' and thinking about underlying meaning of each of piece of information in the merging;
- Do this for several informants. Make the list of all the topics. Cluster similar topics

together. You could identify major topics, unique topics and leftovers;

- Take the list and return to the data. Abbreviate topics by means of codes and write these codes next to each segment of data in the transcribed interview. See if new categories and codes emerge;
- Form categories by grouping topics together. Determine relationship between categories;
- Assemble all the data material from each category in one place; and
- Record existing data if necessary (De Vos, 2002:383).

Data analysis took place after all the interviews were conducted.

The primary steps in qualitative analysis are called “thick” or (information rich) description which includes information about the context of an act- the intentions and meanings that organize action (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:29). Through interviews, “rich descriptions” of the roles of the principal, teachers and learners as influenced by their unique circumstances were generated. In this study, the researcher used the tape recordings and questions during the interview to establish factors that contribute to the successful turn-around of their school. In addition, participants from the open-ended questions were given chance to answer questions freely and frank by writing answers down and categorized for the purpose of qualitative data analysis.

In this research, the mentioned steps were used to simplify data analysis. According to Babbie & Mouton (2001:6), qualitative researchers verbally analyze data which involves examining and organizing notes from interviews and observations and reducing information into smaller segments from which they can see patterns and trends. In this case the researcher reviewed the data after each and every interview to extract important issues that cropped up during the interview. This helped the researcher to make sure that those issues are prioritized in the subsequent interviews.

### **3.10 MEASURES TO ENSURE TRUSTWORTHINESS**

Babbie & Mouton (2001:276-278), propose the following principles to validate the research methodology. These are Credibility (truth value); transferability (applicability); and confirmability (neutrality). These principles are applied in this study to maintain the trustworthiness of the study in the following manner:



### 3.10.1 Credibility

According to Babbie & Mouton (2001:277), credibility refers to establishing confidence in the “truth” of the findings within the context of the study. This can be established by carrying out the research study in such a way that it increases the probability that the findings are credible. An audio-tape was used in recording the interviews and notes were taken to supplement the recorded information. In addition the principal was interviewed twice –the second time to elaborate on the first interview.

### 3.10.2 Dependability

Triangulation of data source, i. e, and information was sought from the principal, teachers and learners using different methods. Babbie & Mouton (2001:278), describe dependability as an inquiry that must provide the viewers with evidence that if it were to be repeated with the same participants in the same context, its findings could be similar.

### 3.10.3 Confirmability

Babbie & Mouton (2001:278), suggest confirmability approach in a research. This entails a measure of the degree to which the findings are the product of the inquiry and not the biasness of the researcher. In this study confirmability was ensured and tested through the involvement of three independent people who are not researchers. They checked the transcripts and written field notes for consistency and results on a continuous basis. Continuous supervision was carried out to ensure confirmability.

## 3.11. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

It is important that participants do not go into the study uninformed about their involvement in the research. The proposed research activities, the nature of the project and the purpose of the research should be discussed with the participants. The ethical principles of research give the essential guidelines of how to protect the participants’ rights (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:279). Therefore, the principles of ethics in this study are explained in the following discussion.

Firstly, the nature and type of data to be collected, the means of collection and the use for which it is intended, were given to the school (Department of Education, NW, 2007: 22).

The researcher obtained permission from the University, from the Ngaka Modiri Molema District, and from the school principal of the school in which the study was conducted. In this study teachers who had been in the school before and after its turn-around were selected. Attempts were made to include matric teachers and matric learners.

Secondly, the participants were asked for their consent and the procedure of the study was explained to them (Refer to appendix C).

Thirdly, participants were not required to provide their names. This insured that their identity remained anonymous. The information they provided would be kept private and confidential. The participants were reassured that no name or any personal particulars would be used. Hence pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of participants. The collected information would not be used for personal gain, as that would be exploitation of participants' innocence.

Lastly, participants were informed that their participation in the study was voluntary and that they were free to withdraw whenever they felt uncomfortable to continue.

### **3.12 CONCLUSION**

This chapter presented a detailed description of the research design, research methods, and data collection. Data analysis techniques were also explained. Measures to ensure trustworthiness were discussed. In conclusion, descriptions of the ethical considerations that protect the dignity of participants were outlined. The next chapter which is chapter four presents the findings and interpretation of the study.



### DATA PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

This research study was undertaken in order to discover conditions that contribute to the successful turn-around of schools and the subsequent improvement of learner performance. This was achieved in the context of a case study of a previously “trapped” school of the Ngaka Modiri Molema District. The Department of Education in the North West Province has identified some schools that had a turn – around in their effectiveness and the successful turn-around of these schools had a positive effect on learners’ academic performance.

#### 4.2 METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

The procedures for data analysis followed in this study were detailed in chapter three. The main focus of this chapter is to present, analyze and interpret the data collected through the interviews and open-ended questionnaires to determine the perceptions of the principal, teachers and learners on how their school managed to turn itself around. The qualitative data collected in this investigation is analyzed and summarized in this chapter, using the following method of data analysis.

Transcripts of data from the interview with the principal were read to get a general sense of the main ideas under each interview question. Then the data was read again and coded. Similar codes were then grouped together under themes that occurred in each interview question. This information was re-examined to determine and note aspects that related to the main research questions. Data from the focus group interview with teachers were read question by question to search for commonalities in the responses of the participants.

These common themes were noted, grouped together and summarized to arrive at an overall representative view on each question. The same procedure was followed to determine key themes from the written responses of the learners and to reduce the data to establish overall common themes and patterns in the responses of the participants. Finally, the three data sets were combined under the common themes that emerged from each data set and related to school improvement and learner achievement, challenges faced in turning a school around and stakeholder involvement and support.

### 4.3 PRESENTATION OF DATA

The data in the tables represent a summary and interpretation of information from the principal, the teachers and the learners on two main themes: Factors related to school improvement and learner achievement, challenges faced in turning a school around and lessons from the experience of the successful school that has come out of the trapped state.

Transcripts of the three data sets are found in the appendix section. The school principal, fifteen learners and six teachers participated in the study. The learners and teachers were selected purposefully, as discussed in chapter three. Sejankabo High School was identified by the Department of Education as one of the “trapped” or underperforming schools under the district of Ngaka Modiri Molema.

#### 4.3.1 Factors related to school improvement

This section present a summary of views of the principal, teachers and learners on factors related to school improvement and learner achievement.

**Table 4.1 Factors related to school improvement: Views of the Principal, teachers and learners**

The Table (4.1) below indicates the views of the Principal, teachers, and learners on factors related to school improvement and learner achievement

Participants	Factors related to school improvement and learner achievement	Other factors
PRINCIPAL	-democratic leadership style -department documents -monitoring of work of teachers and learners -Teamwork and positive reinforcement -Support of SGB and departmental officials -Sense of responsibility -Recognition and appreciation of people’s efforts -Hard work; motivation; -being exemplary; easy-going yet firm	



TEACHERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Discipline, attendance, teamwork.</li> <li>-Extra work for high achievers</li> <li>-Teachers to go the extra mile;</li> <li>-learn from better performing schools;</li> <li>-punctuality to school and classes;</li> <li>-regular learner assessment and feedback;</li> <li>-parent-teacher conference; timely completion of syllabus;</li> <li>-motivating -learners to read independently;</li> <li>-extra classes;</li> <li>-working on previous exam papers</li> <li>-Using good teaching and learning strategies;</li> <li>-relevant study guides;</li> <li>-maintaining discipline;</li> <li>-giving extra classes;</li> <li>-working as a team</li> <li>-Willingness and cooperation</li> </ul>	<p>Inconsistency in matric results</p> <p>-Results still inconsistent but much better.</p> <p>-Reduction of ill-discipline, tardiness and absenteeism</p>
LEARNERS	<p>Commitment of teachers and principal; positive attitude; principal's strict enforcement of code of conduct; motivation of teachers and learners by principal; extra classes and holiday classes.</p> <p>-Curricular and extra-curricular activities such as involvement in sports, debate and nature conservation stimulates the mind, relieves stress, and improves literacy skills.</p> <p>-Management skills; extra classes (good educational management skills are necessary to turn a school around)</p> <p>-Sense of belonging and acceptance (if learners take pride in their school and feel they are part of it they may be more engaged and less prone to misbehave)</p>	

	-Parental involvement- attending meetings; being active in all aspects of their children's school life  -Parental support: paying fees and purchasing food and clothing  -Emotional support: learners need parents to be available for them  -Learner achievement affected by lack of time at home to study and do homework	
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From the data presented in the Table (4.1) above, one can deduce the following factors that can contribute to the success of the school classified as trapped:

- Using a democratic leadership style is important because the principal it is consultative and everyone is taken on board.
- Proper use of departmental documents is important for the improvement and effectiveness of the school was effectively used.
- Monitoring the work of learners by having regular unannounced class visits which support from the departmental officials, teamwork, SGB members and positive reinforcement form part of the factors that have contributed to the successful turnaround of the school since the appointment of the current principal.
- Discipline and attendance are some of the factors that contributed to the results. The morale was low but now there is teamwork between the learners, teachers, parents and the principal.
- Going the extra mile by teachers during vacation holidays plays an important role in contributing to the improvement of matric results.
- Punctual attendance to school and lessons, regular assessment and feed back to the learners are also important.
- Completion of the syllabus on time also plays an important part in turning the school around as it allowed teachers enough time for revision to help the learner's performance.
- Motivating learners to read independently, giving them previous papers and asking them to attend extra classes helps in the school's performance.
- Strict enforcement of code of conduct can improve commitment in teachers and learners.
- Learners' involvement in extra-curricular activities such as sports, debate and nature conservation may also contribute to the improvement of learner achievement.



#### 4.3.2 Challenges faced in improving trapped school

**Table 4.2 Challenges that were faced by the school on its improvement: Views of the Principal, teachers, & learners**

The Table (4.2) below indicates the views of the Principal, teachers, and learners

Respondents	Challenges faced in turning a school around
PRINCIPAL	lack of cooperation from some teachers Poor parental involvement
TEACHERS	-Lack of motivation and lack of responsibility on the part of learners; lack of appreciation of importance of education -Lack of education of some parents renders them incapable of participating in their children's education -Inadequate parental involvement in children's learning and performance, difficulty in adjusting to change which involved changing old habits such as teaching approaches and patterns of attendance. -Lack of parental support (such as not attending meetings or helping with their child's school work) and -Insufficient planning and funding by the department
LEARNERS	-Lack of laboratories; achieving 100% pass rate; learner behavior towards teachers -Subject choice; lack of sense of responsibility; bunking classes; lack of motivation to learn due to rate of unemployment (this implies that there's fear of the unknown; a sense of hopelessness in the future) -Lack of responsibility for own learning; bunking classes; lack of dedication to school work; absenteeism

From the data presented in the Table (4.2) above, one can deduce that the hurdles that might be encountered by a school in an attempt to turn-around may be the following:

- Lack of cooperation from some of the teachers, lack of parental involvement in their children's learning, lack of responsibility for own learning.
- Bunking of classes and absenteeism of learner's showed lack of dedication towards their school work, because most learners are staying with grandparents.
- The school was inconsistency in performance. This means that the results were varying yearly because you will find that in a particular year the results were low and the following year they changed to being better. Though the results are still inconsistency in nature, the difference is that the results are somehow better than they were during the time of the previous principal.

#### 4.3.3 Lessons from the experience of the successful school that has come out of the trapped state

**Table 4.3 Views of the Principal: Lessons from a previously trapped school**

Table (4.3) below indicates the views of the Principal

Principal	Lessons from a principal of a school that was trapped previously
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- be firm</li><li>- lead by example</li><li>- instill a competitive spirit</li><li>- arrange prize giving</li><li>- no the vision and mission</li><li>- bring the collaboration together</li><li>- a transformational style</li><li>- SGB, parents, teachers and learners must be involved</li><li>- competition among all stakeholders pertaining in the school</li></ul>

From the data presented in the Table (4.3) above, one can conclude that there are lessons to be learned from the transitional movement of a school that was previously trapped, among which are the following:

- As a leader, the principal need to be firm and strong.
- The principals need to lead by example in whatever they do.
- Principals need to instill a competitive spirit to both teachers and learners by awarding a prize to both teachers and learners.
- The school principals need to know what the vision and mission of the school is and set that vision for the staff.
- Principals need to talk with the staff respectfully and bring the collaboration together of the whole school from the custodial staff, and supporting staff, teachers, learners and parents, bringing the whole community together as one.
- Principals need to encourage teamwork at the school whereby SGB members, teachers, parents and learners will play pivotal role for the school to be successful and
- This team needs to work together and compete with one another to enhance the school to



reach its goals.

#### **4.4 CONCLUSION**

This chapter presented data and provided an analysis of the data collected from the principal, teachers and learners regarding factors that contributed to the successful turn-around of their school as well as challenges that the school faced in the process and lessons learned from the experiences of the school.

Furthermore, the interviews as well as the literature review shown that schools lack discipline, lack parental involvement in their learners' schooling. Insufficient planning and funding by the department are dysfunctional and this has a great impact on the performance of learners.

The following chapter (5) reflects the summary, discussion of findings, recommendations based on this study and conclusion.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **SUMMARY, DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents a summary of the study, including the major findings of the literature review and the empirical study and provides recommendations and suggestions through which high school principals in the district of Ngaka Modiri Molema can be empowered to turn their schools around for improved learner achievement.

#### **5.2 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY**

Chapter 1: Outlined the rationale for the research study and a statement of the problem and research questions which sought answers to how schools in general can improve themselves, and how one school in particular turned itself around. The background to the study was given and a definition of key terms was provided.

Chapter 2: Provided a brief overview of the literature on school effectiveness, school improvement and successful schools. This was discussed with the view to coming up with a common understanding of the factors that turn schools around. The literature study provided an overview of theory and practice of school effectiveness and school improvement in other countries. It has also emerged from the literature that was surveyed that efforts of turning a school around revolve around several characteristics.

Chapter 3: Discussed the case study research design, research paradigm, method of gathering data and selection of research site and research participants. The rationale for the choice of qualitative research approach was discussed in detail. The data analysis method employed was presented, and measures to ensure trustworthiness and ethical considerations also received attention.

Chapter 4: Presented a summary of the views of the principal, teachers and learners regarding key issues that were raised around certain themes such as factors that are responsible for school improvement and learner achievement, challenges faced in turning a school around and stakeholder involvement and support. These views were presented in Tables 4.1, 4.2 & 4.3.



The current chapter (5) presents a synthesis of the research findings from the literature review and the empirical study, and makes recommendations for the practice of turning schools around.

### **5.3 RESEARCH FINDINGS AND SYNTHESIS**

#### **5.3.1 Findings from the literature study**

The following are the main findings emanating from the literature study:

The relationship and interaction between the principal, teachers, learners and parents is very crucial. A number of issues are raised in the literature in this regard. For example, if teachers and learners have strong teamwork, that can improve the standard of performance in their school (Goldenberg, 2004:49).

The study revealed that a collaborative culture is important. It is crucial for the school to work in groups and teams as School Management Team (SMT) to accomplish good quality education as directed by the school's mission and vision.

It also emerged from the study that the involvement of School Governing Bodies (SGBs), learners and parents plays a vital role in turning the school around for high education standards (Fullan,2007:23). Fullan also emphasized the fact that teachers, parents and learners can work together in areas such as the introduction of change in the school curriculum as well as contributing towards the general performance level of the school results.

The role of the leadership is also important. As revealed by the literature, leadership style, team work, the team of Whole School Evaluation (WSE), Total Quality Management (TQM) and acceptance of change play a vital key role in the success of turning the schools around (Department of Education, NW, 2007).

#### **5.3.2 Findings from the empirical study**

The following is a list of key findings that emerged from the study.

Regarding the factors that contribute to turning the school around, the findings are that the principal's democratic leadership style, collaboration and teamwork between teachers and learners is instrumental in enhancing effective teaching performance, the SGB members and school management team (SMT) are important in the effort of turning a school around for better matric performance as required by the Department of Education (Department of Education, NW, 2007).

#### 5.3.4 Synthesis of findings

From the findings in the literature and empirical study, it appears that teamwork and collaboration between the principal, teachers, learners and parents is a key factor in efforts to turn a school around. The leadership style of the principal also plays a vital role in enhancing the improvement of a school.

### 5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the findings listed above, the following recommendations are made.

In order for a school to be successful, it is recommended that the principal demonstrates an appropriate leadership style which will involve all learners, SGB members, parents and teachers in improvement efforts in the school. A democratic and transformational leadership style and principles of Total Quality Management (TQM) may be more appropriate as it enhances teamwork for turning the school around.

It is also recommended that professional development activities at the school must centre on the classroom. Sejankabo High School, for example, concentrates its professional development resources and time on engaging teachers in learning about the materials they teach and skills they need to improve classroom instruction. The district works need to identify teachers that need assistance and helps to counsel teachers out of the profession if they do not improve.

### 5.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The limitations of this study relate mainly to the case study method which restricts the generalizability of findings. Moreover, due to mechanical failure of the electronic data capturing device during the interview of the principal and teachers, alternative methods to capture the data such as asking the principal to write her responses may have affected the spontaneity and relevance of some of the responses. Notes taken during the interviews helped to close some gaps in the information provided. Information from teachers not captured electronically was supplemented by notes taken by the researcher as well as teachers' written responses.



## **5.6 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

It is suggested that further research could explore the role played by the SGB and district office in supporting schools in their efforts to improve themselves.

## **5.7 CONCLUSION**

This chapter has provided a summary of the research on how one particular high school managed to turn-around itself around from being a “trapped” school. It has been observed that leadership skills in the conceptualization, implementation and sustainability of democratic change are all the factors that make a school successful. And for the school to turn-around for better performance, the school principal, teachers and the quality of the leadership of the principal is the key to all the changes. Other school principals who need to turn their schools around can learn from the findings of this study that transformational leadership develops the subordinates to do their best and provides them with meaning and purpose to develop a clear school mission. School principals need to work in partnership with the community because schools cannot do their jobs alone. Under-performing schools, in particular, need the assistance of community stakeholders to raise learners’ performance. Parental involvement is essential and teacher unions can be cooperative allies in the process of change if they are invited to work in the partnership to improve under-performance schools.

This research on turning the school around was motivated by the need to establish how some schools manage to turn themselves around in spite of having learners from poor family background. As a researcher, I strongly believe that if the principal’s management and leadership style is effective, then learners’ performance and teachers’ teaching skills will improve.

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## APPENDIX A

### A LETTER OF PERMISSION TO THE PRINCIPAL: TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH AT THE SCHOOL

Dear Madam

My name is Rebone Martha Phalatse, a Masters Degree student at the University of North West. I would like to ask permission to visit your school and interview you, the principal, six teachers, and fifteen learners.

I have chosen your school because it has managed to turn itself around since your arrival. I am interested in investigating factors that have contributed in turning your school around. In particular, I would like to make a research on: factors that contribute to the successful turn-around of your school; (b) challenges that you faced in turning the school around and (c) how you overcome those challenges. This research will also assist other school principals with various strategies that they could implement in helping them to improve the quality of education in their schools.

I look forward to a fruitful interview with you.

Yours truly,

---

(Researcher)



## APPENDIX B

Dear Student/Teachers

My name is Rebone Martha Phalatse and I am a Masters Degree Student of the North West University. I am presently conducting a research study, which focuses on: Factors that contribute to the successful turn-around of schools. The North West Department of Education has granted me permission to conduct the study.

Your school and you are being selected to participate by responding to the attached consent response form, and therefore you are kindly requested to participate in the interview that will last 1-2 hours. Your participation will assist me in establishing factors that have contributed to the successful turn-around of your school. The findings of this research will not be published without permission from the North West Department of Education.

Please do not write your name or the name of your school anywhere. All information supplied by you will be treated with extreme confidentiality.

Thank you very much in advance.

Yours truly,

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(Researcher).

## APPENDIX C

### CONSENT FORM TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH: TO THE PRINCIPAL AND TEACHERS

INVESTIGATOR \_\_\_\_\_ TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_  
SPONSOR \_\_\_\_\_

The Faculty of Education's Higher Degrees committee of the North West University has given approval for this research project. For information on your rights as a research subject, contact \_\_\_\_\_

You are invited to consider participating in this research study. I will be evaluating factors that have contributed to the successful turn-around of your school. In particular, I am interested in challenges the school was faced with and how the school managed to overcome those challenges. Each interview activity will take approximately 1-2 hours. A tape-recorder will be used to record what you are saying during the interview. All the interview activities will be completed over two days.

If you agree to participate, please sign this consent form. I undertake to give you a written summary of the research results if you so wish.

You may contact \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ any time you have questions about the research.

You may contact \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ if you have questions about your rights as a research subject.

Your participation in this research is voluntary, and you will not be penalized or lose any benefits if you refuse to participate or decide to stop.

Signature of participant(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



## APPENDIX D

### CONSENT FORM TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH: TO LEARNERS

INVESTIGATOR \_\_\_\_\_ TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_  
SPONSOR \_\_\_\_\_

The Faculty of Education's Higher Degrees Committee has granted approval for this research project. For information on your rights as a research subject, contact \_\_\_\_\_

My name is Rebone Martha Phalatse. I am a Masters Degree Student of the University of North West.

You are invited to consider participating in this research study. I will be evaluating factors that contribute to the successful turn-around of your school. In particular, I would like to investigate (a) things that your principal is doing in improving the school (b) difficulties you think your school faces to improve matric results. A tape-recorder will be used during the interview activity to record what you will be saying. The interview will last between 1-2 hours. All the interview lasted for a three week period.

If you agree to participate, please sign this consent form.

You may contact \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ any time you have questions about the research.

You may contact \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ if you have questions about your rights as a research subject.

#### LEARNERS' CONSENT FORM

I have read the information provided in this Informed Consent Form. All my questions were answered to my satisfaction. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

Signing this document means that the research study, including the above information, has been described to you orally, and that you voluntarily agree to participate.

Your signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Everything you say will strictly be confidential

## APPENDIX E

### INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR THE PRINCIPAL

1. Tell me how long you been the principal of this school and how you came to work here.
2. What hurdles did you encounter in your attempt to change the staff and the running of the school?
3. Can you describe your leadership style, and why it is suitable for the smooth running of the school?
4. Do you use Departments Documents for the improvement and effectiveness of your school? Do you find particularly it useful in helping you improve your school? Can you explain in what ways these documents are helpful?
5. Does your school management team monitor the work of teachers and learners?
6. How do they monitor the work?
7. What factors have contributed to the successful turn-around of your school since you started being the principal?
8. Please feel free to list as many factors as you can think of.
9. What can you tell me about parental involvement in their children's learning?
10. How about the S G B –are they supportive of your efforts to improve the school?
11. Did you encounter any challenges in your efforts to turn the school around? Please share as many of those challenges as possible. How did you manage to overcome those challenges?
12. Do you feel you are succeeding to bring about change in your school?
13. How do you manage to bring about change in your school?
14. Please describe the sorts of actions you take, in other words, the things you do to bring about change.
15. What advice would you give to other principals who wish to improve their school?



## APPENDIX F

(Interview schedule for Teachers) Focus group interview questions

1. How was this school performing in the matric results before the current principal joined the school?
2. Can you explain in what ways the school in general has improved since the current principal took over the running of the school?
3. In what ways can you teachers contribute to the improvement of matric results?
4. In what ways did you contribute to the improved pass rate of learners, which helped to remove the school from its “trapped” position?
5. What challenges did you face in your efforts to turn the school around? How did you overcome those challenges?
6. Did you find it easy or difficult to adjust to the changes that had to be made to improve the school’s results?  
Please explain what made it easy or difficult for you to adjust.
7. Are there any specific factors that make it easy for you to contribute to the improvement of the school and its results? Please explain more.
8. What factors hinder your ability to contribute fully to the improvement of the school?

In your opinion, are parents and S G B members supportive of learners’ activities? Please explain more.

To what extent do you think learners (especially at matric level) are responsible for their own learning? In other words do you think learners at your school are motivated and committed to learning? Please elaborate.

## APPENDIX G

### INTERVIEW SCHEDULE WITH OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS FOR LEARNERS

1. Write down one thing you like about learning in this school (in other words what makes you proud to be a learner in this school)

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2. Write down one thing that your school principal is doing to improve the school.

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3. What challenges (i.e. difficulties, problems etc) do you think your school faces? (Focus on challenges that relate to efforts to improve the school matric results).

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4. What do you think learners and teachers can do to help the principal overcome the challenges that you mentioned above?

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5. List all the learning activities that take place in your school to improve performance of learners. (E.g. school-debates and etc)

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5.1 Write down one sentence to explain how your participation in these activities helps you improve your performance in your school work.

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6. Do you participate in school activities outside the classroom? How much or how often do you participate?

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7. In your opinion what changes should be done in your school to improve matric results?

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8. Do you feel happy and accepted in this school? (In other words, do you feel you “belong” in this school?)



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In your opinion do learners take responsibility for their own learning?

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9.1 Write down one thing learners do that shows they take responsibility for learning.

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9.2 Write down one thing that learners do really shows they do not take responsibility for learning.

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10. Write one thing that makes you think parents co-operate with the school in matters that deal with the development of the school.

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11. In what way do your parents support you in your learning?

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## APPENDIX J

### SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

#### Summary of responses from the principal

Tell me how long you have been the principal of this school and how you came to work here.

The turn-around process occurred over the course of about five years, I was deployed from Kebonang High School. When I arrived at this school as the new potential principal, I asked if I could take one day to observe it first.

What hurdles did you encounter in your attempt to change the staff and the running of the school? Before I came to Sejangkabo High School, the previous administrator had been at the end of her career and ready to retire. Goals were not being met, and challenges weren't being established to improve certain aspects. Grade levels did whatever they wanted. Some of the teachers retreated to very traditional learning styles that did not engage their learners. However, most teachers taught the standards but never had any professional conversation with one another. The school suffered from low student achievement, report card grading was consistently coming in as below average and the overall improvement rating for the school was stagnant. The student population had changed over the years since the school had been built. The school went from a very middle class population of students to students who lived daily with a high degree of poverty. Academically, the school was on the decline. A very small percentage of students in the school were scoring in proficiency and advanced levels and most students fell in the bottom categories of below basic levels.

Can you describe your leadership style, and why it is suitable for the smooth running of the school?

Democratic, Consultative, everyone is taken on board. Examples of the Total Quality Management (TQM) theory can be seen throughout the process that I used to turn the school around. For example, prior to meeting with the staff to establish a collective agreement about my mission (direction), I felt that the first order of business was to clean the school up to make it a comfortable, suitable and conducive place to learn and work.

Do you use department documents for the improvement and effectiveness of your school? Do you find them useful in helping you improve your school? Can you explain in what ways these documents are helpful?

Yes, mainly the (Integrated Quality Management System) IQMS, which embraces three integrated systems, namely, the Developmental Appraisal System (DAS), Whole School Evaluation (WSE) and the Performance Management System (PMS), aims at identifying specific needs of teachers, schools and district offices; providing support for continued growth, promoting accountability, monitoring an institution's overall effectiveness; and evaluating teachers' performance.

The provincial departments are providing sufficient training to teachers in the field of IQMS is useful to all teachers. In fact, most of the teachers undergo once-off training. The cascading model of training, the insightful knowledge of the IQMS by facilitators, the proper implementation of IQMS, the top-down approach of the department, the transformational leadership of principals and school management teams, sufficient resources in previously disadvantaged schools, are some of the reasons for teachers initiating the implementation of the IQMS. The department together with principals has encouraged teachers for implementing IQMS. With Outcomes-based Education



(OBE), the Revised National Curriculum Statements (RNCS) and the National Curriculum Statements (NCS), and the top-down approach of the different provincial departments in policy matters has seriously infringed on the successful implementation of IQMS.

Does your school management team monitor the work of teachers and learners? How do they monitor the work?

Yes. Monthly files are submitted. Unannounced class visits are done regularly. The members of the SMT appear to know their functions in curriculum management as stipulated in policy and could identify them but their responses show that they had boundless understanding of the functions. The majority of the SMT members enlighten their functions with their leadership roles. They have a deep and boundless knowledge of curriculum management functions and this reveals a theoretical understanding of these functions. In addition, the SMT members have a common understanding hence their practices are vastly different. They base their understanding on information that they obtain from colleagues at other schools together with what they know from reading and talking together about their functions. The school has got copies of the government curriculum documents. These are the tools for guidance in curriculum management and are essential for them to interpret and develop their own understanding. As a result, each member in the team has a similar understanding of the functions and performed his/her roles differently.

What factors have contributed to the successful turn-around of your school since you started being the principal? Please feel free to list as many factors as you can think of.

A few of these include: increasing self-awareness, principal self-efficacy, giving feedback to others, work team orientation, handling change and innovation, decisiveness, communication skills, learning from experience, seeking and receiving feedback for self-improvement, demonstrating emotionally appropriate responses, and interpersonal relationships. From then on, the school continued to improve and began implementing more and more processes each year.

What can you tell me about parental involvement in their children's learning?

Not as good as most learners are staying with grandparents. In addition, the school has put more effort to encourage learners to do more and take responsibility of their school work.

How about the S G B –are they supportive of your efforts to improve the school?

The SGB (School Governing Body) are very supportive in that they even organize parents meetings and come up with new strategies of turning the school around. Learners and SGB support each other with new ideas that build better education therefore better results.

Did you encounter any challenges in your efforts to turn the school around? Please share as many of those challenges as possible. How did you manage to overcome those challenges?

Not really. Everybody was supportive starting with the departmental officials.

Do you feel you are succeeding to bring about change in your school?

How do you manage to bring about change in your school?

Please describe the sorts of actions you take, in other words, the things you do to bring about change.

Yes, I do manage to bring change in my school by doing the following:

As the school principal who wishes to turn the school around I have started assessing the teaching method of the teachers and after realising their shortfall in their application, the principal utilised



an inclusive approach in order to change poor application and improve their strategies. This was done by instilling a sense of responsibility in everyone and appreciating the goodness that the teachers and learners are doing. As a school principal, I monitor that extra classes during school vacation are conducted effectively. I make sure that the departmental policies such as curriculum 2005 and the RNCS (Revised National Curriculum Statement) bring change efficiently. What advice would you give to other principals who wish to improve their school?

Instill a competitive spirit to both the teachers and the learners by awarding a prize to both teachers and learners. Arrange for a prize-giving ceremony where parents and teachers as well as the learners attend. Become hard workers, encourage people to try harder. Be a good example in whatever they do and easy going but be firm. To know what the vision and mission of the school is and set that vision for the staff, and be able to talk with the staff respectfully, and bring the collaboration together of the whole school from the custodial staff, and supporting staff and the teachers and parents, bringing the whole community together as one.

As a school principal, a transformational leadership style needs to be applied for the school to be successful. The school governing body (SGB), parents and teachers play a pivotal role in turning the school around. This team needs to work together and compete with one another to enhance the school to reach its goals.

#### Summary of responses from teachers

How was this school performing in the matric results before the current principal joined the school?

The majority (70%) of the teachers agree that before the current principal joined the school the matric results were poor in terms of learners' performance. Whereas minority (30%) of the teachers disagree that before the principal joined the school the matric results were poor in terms of learner performance.

Can you explain in what ways the school in general has improved since the current principal took over the running of the school?

The majority (85%) of teachers agree that discipline is the aspect that has improved the most since the principal took over the running of the school. Some teachers identified factors such as the learner's attendance, their performance and the general school's standard has picked up.

In what ways can you contribute to the improvement of matric results?

The majority (75%) of teachers believe in the need to change their ways of doing things with regard to their attitude, teaching style, and motivating the learners. They also believe that being there for the learners can have an effect on the improvement of the matric results. Being punctual to school and attending lessons on time by the teachers and learners and giving regular assessment and feedback to the learners can lead to improvement.

In what ways did you contribute to the improved pass rate of learners, which helped to remove the school from its "trapped" position?

The majority (70%) of teachers instilled discipline to keep the learners in line, whilst the minority ensured that they completed the syllabus in time before the exam time, and giving the learners



extra classes and encouraging them to attend on weekends and on holidays in order to have improved pass rate of the learners.

What challenges did you face in your efforts to turn the school around? How did you overcome those challenges?

The majority (65%) of teachers faced challenges such as transforming the learners' attitudes, instilling discipline and motivating them to believe that they can do better than they are doing. The minority had a problem with the learner's parent's involvement in their children's performance which plays a vital role in the school's image. Others had challenges which needed the Department of Education's attention and overall the school is slowly implementing change initiatives.

Did you find it easy or difficult to adjust to the changes that had to be made to improve the school's results? Please explain what made it easy or difficult for you to adjust.

The majority (70%) of the teachers agree that it was an easy task to adjust to the changes that were made to improve the school's results. While the minority found it difficult because this forced them to change their ways (good or bad ways such as late coming or not helping the learners). They all have a similar concept of cultivating the culture of learning and improving the school's image into a positive one.

Are there any specific factors that make it easy for you to contribute to the improvement of the school and its results? Please explain more.

The majority of teachers agree that factors such as discipline, punctuality and absenteeism have been reduced. The minority agree that there is still room for improvement in the learner's results and a spirit of willingness and cooperation.

What factors hinder your ability to contribute fully to the improvement of the school?

The majority (70%) of teachers have a problem with learners' parents not being supportive of their children. Attending meetings, helping the learners with their school work means a lot to the child's morale and confidence. The minority of teachers have a problem of resources, inadequate planning by the department and lack of funds which ends up hindering their ability to contribute fully to the improvement of the school.

In your opinion, are parents and SGB members supportive of learners' activities? Please explain more.

The majority (65%) of the teachers agreed that the SGB members are supportive of the learners' activities such as helping during farewell functions, having motivational talks with learners while most of the parents' support is very low. The minority of Teachers agree that not all of the SGB members and parents are supportive. Some of the parents did not have the privilege of going to school and some of the learners are under a guardian's care.

To what extent do you think learners (especially at matric level) are responsible for their own learning? In other words do you think learners at your school are motivated and committed to learning? Please elaborate.

The majority (70%) of the teachers felt that the learners at matric level are not motivated therefore do not take responsibility for their own learning. They do not do their homework, school work, submit projects and assignments. Through poor communication between them and their parents, the learners do not see the importance of education in their lives.



### Summary of responses from learners

Write down one thing you like about learning in this school (in other words what makes you proud to be a learner in this school)

The majority of learners highlight factors such as quality, commitment of their teachers and principal. They indicate a positive attitude about their school.

Write one thing that your school principal is doing to improve the school.

The overall response about the principal from the learners is efficiency in terms of strict code of conduct enforcement, motivating the teachers and learners and the importance of putting more effort by extra classes and holiday school attendance.

What challenges (i.e. difficulties, problems etc) do you think your school faces? (Focus on challenges that relate to efforts to improve the school matric school results).

With regard to the challenges that relate to the efforts of matric results improvement, most of the learners have identified lack of resources such as laboratories for science learners, the 100% pass rate if the learners change their playful attitude and their overall behavior towards the teachers. While only minority saw teenage pregnancy as a problem.

What do you think learners and teachers can do to help the principal overcome the challenges that you mentioned above?

The majority of learners came to a conclusion that the only way to help the principal was if all stakeholders: the learners, parents, teachers and the principal participate in the decision making process in order to come up with solutions to be able to achieve the aim of obtaining 100% pass rate, having a schedule for extra classes, raising funds and improve the channels of communication between all stakeholders.

List all the learning activities that take place in your school to improve performance of learners(e.g. school debates, etc)

The learners highlighted that sporting codes such as athletics, netball and soccer do improve their performance as the sports keep them active and stimulates their minds. The minority are involved in the school debating society to improve their confidence and vocabulary. A small number of learners do not participate in anything, except extra classes which are compulsory while others are in conservation for their love of nature and agriculture.

Write down one sentence to explain how your participation in these activities helps you improve your performance in your school work.

Learners who participate in the different sporting codes and athletics say that being active helps them in putting their minds at ease by relieving stress. Those that are involved in the debate society and attend extra classes, and come to school on weekends and holidays believe that this helps them with their reading and writing skills. They are able to solve equations through group studying. Moreover, improvements can be done to enhance these activities that the learners rely on to handle the pressure of learning.

Do you participate in school activities outside the classroom? How much or how often do you



participate?

The majority of the learners do partake in these activities regularly, at times, whenever they get a chance because they are in matric. Some do not want any disturbance to their studies as they feel these activities will take their studying time. There's pressure from the parents, their peers and the community at large, which is why the majority of the matriculates are emphasizing the goal of obtaining 100% pass rate for their school.

In your opinion what changes should be made in your school to improve matric results?

Planning, organizing time management and managing of extra classes, study camps and attendance on holidays and weekends are what the learners in matric advocate. As mentioned earlier, lines of communication need to improve because some of the learners have indicated that they are afraid to talk even when they do not understand in class. They have indicated that some teachers experience pressure and end up yelling in some instances.

Do you feel happy and accepted in this school (In other words, do you feel you "belong" in this school?)

The majorities of the learners do feel happy and accepted in this school, even though a minority indicated that they were not because of the subject choices being offered in the school.

In your opinion do learners take responsibility for their own learning?

The majority of the learners have indicated that most of them do not take responsibility for their studies. Some bunk classes, they do not do their homework and school work is influenced by peer pressure and others are playful. A point to note is that the minority have highlighted that it depends on an individual's self determination. Some have pointed out the fact that they see no reason in learning or being serious because of a high ratio of youth unemployment, so it implies that there's fear of the unknown.

Write down one thing learners do that shows they take responsibility for learning.

Instead they have written their aspirations (what they would like to see their fellow learners doing and having a positive attitude towards their studies).

Write down one thing learners do that really shows they do not take responsibility for their learning.

The learners identified low class attendance, not being dedicated to their school work, absenteeism, and bunking classes as some of the factors that show that some learners are not taking responsibility for their learning.

Write one thing that makes you think parents co-operate with the school in matters that deal with the development of the school.

The majority of learners agree on the fact that their parents do show commitment when it comes to meeting attendance concerning their children and the school. The majority of the parents/guardians form part of the SGB (School Governing Body). Therefore, are active in all the issues concerning their children.

In what way do your parents support you in your learning?

Parents show support to their children in providing the basic needs such as paying school funds, collecting learners' reports, attending meetings, buying necessities, i . e stationery, food and clothing. But the learners have highlighted that they need emotional support most importantly from their parents or guardians. Some of the learners have complained that their parents/guardians are hardly at home for them to assist with home work or just to merely ask how they are coping with their studies. A small minority of the group are faced with the challenge of doing house chores which consumes their time to study and also do their homework. Clearly a communication problem between the learners, parents/guardians, teachers and the principal is a critical factor that needs to be dealt with.