

**Research Article****Teacher Accountability on Underperforming Schools: An Investigation in Primary Schools around Mapela Circuit in Mogalakwena District \***Dimakatjo Julia LEBELO <sup>1</sup>  Motalenyane Alfred MODISE <sup>2</sup>  Ngobeni Elisas TSKANE <sup>3</sup> **Abstract**

The department of Education (DoE) clearly stated that other South African primary schools are underperforming. The aim of this study was to investigate teacher causes of underperforming schools in Mapela Circuit at Mogalakwena District. Data was also collected from 5 selected primary schools where commonly known by underperforming. Semi-structured interviews which included open-ended questions were included as part of a way of changing school for open communication, to understand how underperforming can make the culture of the school to look very bad. Sampled schools were referred to as a school A, B, C, D and E. The study indicated that lack of resources in the rural schools compare to urban school contribute to the poor performance. The study further indicated that the large number of students prohibit the teachers to pay attention to all learners. The main problem was the impact of teacher accountability on underperforming schools and how it affects the Circuit, District, Province and National. Schools must come with new strategies to improve their performance and the Department of Basic Education must provide the necessary support to schools. The study further recommended the principals, school governing body and teachers to work together to achieve their goal setting in order to close the gaps.

**Keywords:** Accountability, teachers, underperforming schools, learners**1. INTRODUCTION**

The term “accountability” refers to a management practice in which a person takes responsibility for his/ her actions in an organization (Guijt, 2020). These responsibilities can be positive or negative, and they can either enhance or inhibit the smooth running of the organization. Based on the action or response, accountability processes may require the person to correct his or her error. Accountability also refers to one’s ability to take responsibility for the work and provide answers to peers and superiors to explain performance, actions, and decisions (Bovens, Goodin & Schillemans, 2014). Stobart (2007) defined *accountability* as meeting the minimal requirements, expectations, and standards associated with the effectiveness of actions taken by an employee or person in a position of power. The term “Accountability” is also synonymously with responsibility, blameworthiness, and liability (Wood & Winston, 2005). In education, school accountability involves evaluating the school’s overall performance in terms of learner performance or examination scores (Figlio & Loeb, 2011). However, accountability is using administrative data to increase learner performance. Accountability can generate rewards or sanctions for a school based on students’ scores in public examinations. The rewards could be monetary, promotions for teachers who produced excellent results, threats of demotion or closure of underperforming schools, loss of jobs, community unrest, and strikes for better results.

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In education, accountability provides means that allow policymakers at national, district, circuit, and school levels, parents, and taxpayers to monitor learners' performance in schools. Performance is regarding how resources are utilized to achieve the organization's objectives. Accountability systems require educational institutions to report their progress to the public, taxpayers, and policymakers (Van Gronigen & Meyers, 2019). Accountability is consequential to the actors, either reward earned because of outstanding performance or sanctions imposed for poor performance.

Accountability is vital in education since the community's expectations lie with the school system (Jongbloed, Enders & Salerno, 2008). All school activities should meet societal expectations by making the education system responsive to the needs of the communities, competitive compared to other institutions and productive in producing quality learners who can be integrated into the world of work. School administrators are also accountable to all stakeholders in education and tasked to achieve education goals using minimal resources. Accountability in education requires administrators to skillfully mobilize their subordinates and resources to achieve education goals (Farrel, 2015).

### **1.1. Environmental Factors**

Background of the study was conducted at Mapela Circuit in Mogalakwena District based on the teacher accountability on underperforming schools. It is all about accountability from an international context, African accountability context, and in South African context.

Worldwide reveals accountability as the as the main problem in various organizations. The educational sector needs all stakeholders to be accountable in their various departments. In African context the study based on in Nigeria, United Kingdom and United State of America. In Nigeria Spuall and Taylor (2015) defined accountability as being in a position to provide answers to someone in authority for the actions of the decision made. In United States, both Democratic and Republican federal administrators' education policies use accountability as a measure to monitor education system. Accountability in South African context explained that accountability from this perspective promotes a sense of love, assist communities and discourage selfishness, discouraging diverting public resources for personal enrichment. Accountability calls for the need for South African citizens to be united and create equal access to education irrespective of differences in individual backgrounds (Nandozie, 2017). Schools are held Responsible for their Outcomes or Performance.

### **1.2. Job Description of School the Principal**

Down (2018) states that the principal's job is to provide guidance on all school activities. The principal is other core responsibilities include attending after-school activities, sports, concerts, theatre, parenting conferences, and school board meetings. Other important duties include ensuring the safety of learners and emergency response procedures. Other core responsibilities of the principal include attending after-school activities, sports, concerts, theatre, parenting conferences, and school board meetings.

The emphasis on measurable learner outcomes requires principals to jointly work with teachers to set and achieve high standards of performance. Principals must always be prepared to answer questions how the school adjusts to any success gaps between different groups of students and overall performance. The principal's duties and responsibilities vary depending on the needs and requirements of the school. The principal is the school's accounting officer and is in charge of the school's professional management. He gives appropriate instructions and guidelines for student admission and placement (Mestry, 2013). He is also in charge of various school accounts and records, as well as their upkeep and the effective use of funds for the benefit of students using relevant agencies such as the SGB. The principal is in charge of all academic resources.

The principal participates in the recruitment of staff members. It is the principal's responsibility to guide newly appointed teachers and integrate them into the school culture, directing and providing professional advice. The principal ensures that responsibilities are shared equally

among staff based on their specific areas, so that students receive adequate teaching. The principal is responsible for the appointment of teachers and other support staff, recommends promotions, and is a member of the school advisory committee and chairs several school committees. The principal plays an important role in promoting academic and extra-curriculum activities such as participation in sports, education, and culture organized by community organizations.

The principal is responsible for liaising with the school's external stakeholders. He serves as the school governing body and is a link between the school and the community. The principal interacts with the community on behalf of the school by participating in community-related activities. The principal is responsible for communicating with the circuit office, district or district offices, providers, and the finance department about administrative issues, such as staffing, accounting, procurement, research, and student and student statistics. The principal liaises with other relevant government departments that directly support schools, such as the Department of Health and Social Services and Public Works. Other key functions include collaborating with higher education institutions such as universities, colleges, and other student record-related programs as well as INST programs and management development programs. The principal participates in professional committees and seminars that review expert opinions/principles. The principal can organise, delegate, direct and supervise school activities. The principal responded to the circuit even in the district with the passing of the students.

### **1.3. Job Description of School the Deputy-Principal**

According to Kelly (2020), the deputy principal's role is to assist the principal. The deputy principal is the person in the school organogram who is second in power to the principal. The main function of the deputy principal is to provide administrative support to the principal. Furthermore, the deputy principal maintains full oversight of administrative procedures throughout the school curriculum. The duties and responsibilities of a deputy principal vary from one school to another depending on the school enrolment, staff size and the style of leadership or model used in a particular school. However, the general duties of a deputy principal include assisting the principal with school management tasks, compiling a list of tasks, dealing with absenteeism, internal and external assessment and evaluation, school calendar, admission of new students, distribution of classrooms, and organizing school activities. School fees and maintenance of resources, for example, cost planning and budgeting, budgeting/resources, general cleanliness, maintenance and condition of the school and its furniture and equipment, annual stock management-testing.

In addition to classroom teaching activities, the deputy principal has a role to play in additional activities and subject-related activities such as coordinating the work of study teams and groups, planning and developing programs, and organizing the teaching process. Another important role is to assist the Principal in overseeing student counselling, activities, ethics, compulsory school attendance and well-being of all learners. The deputy principal also supervises and supervises the work and activities of other staff members and, where necessary, discusses and writes reports. The deputy assists teachers in reviewing their professional work to improve teaching and learning.

### **1.4. Job Description of School Teacher/Educator**

The term "teacher" means any person designated to teach, teach or train other people (students). Teachers provide professional services in community schools, other training institutions, and adult basic education institutions. The teacher's main task is to engage the students in the classroom. Other activities include administrative support, disciplinary education issues, and planning additional and joint activities. The teacher's responsibilities include the promotion of meaningful learning. The teacher's duties are to prepare practice-focused courses, regional courses, new methods, strategies, assessments, and resources in their field. The teacher takes on the role of leader as the lesson's subject. The role of the teacher is to plan, coordinate, control, manage, evaluate and report the learner's progress in his / her studies. The teacher should use various strategies to meet the curriculum

outcomes (Yusof, Roddin & Awang, 2015). Teachers should create an inspiring classroom environment that engages students enthusiastically in learning. The teacher should use the learners' knowledge to support teaching and learning.

In addition to classroom activities, the teacher is responsible for additional co-curricular activities. The teacher assists the HOD with subject-related matters such as teaching and conducting course meetings. Another role of teachers is to perform pedagogical activities by providing education and well-being for all students. Teachers also provide student counselling, career guidance, disciplinary roles, and care for student well-being. Another role of the teacher is to plan additional and co-curricular activities such as sports and other community school activities.

The teacher also acts as the subject manager for coordinating and overseeing all special subject-learning activities. Other activities include controlling and coordinating stock and equipment used and required for practical lessons, performing or assisting with one or more of some of the non-teaching management activities confined to the school premises. Teachers are also authorized to contact stakeholders such as parents, district officials, students and school supplies. Teachers participate in agreed-upon school/teacher assessment programs regularly. They review their professional work to improve teaching, learning and management.

Communication is one of the most important resources in any organization (Isa, 2015). Collaboration between teachers from all grades is essential to maintaining teaching standards and student progress. Organizational communication promotes effective management within the school (Alansari & Rubie-Davies, 2021). Teachers from different schools can participate in planning and conducting additional exchange and co-co-curricular activities. Teachers can also schedule parent meetings to discuss student progress and behaviour. This helps to build a teacher-parent relationship. The relationship between parents and teachers helps develop the child academically, morally, and socially.

### **1.5. Research Questions**

The researcher used main question and followed by the four themes questions.

#### *1.5.1. Main research question*

*1.5.1.1. What is the impact of teacher accountability on underperforming schools?*

#### *1.5.2. Sub research questions*

The following sub research questions are from the main research topic:

*1.5.2.1. What are the causes of poor performance in your school?*

*1.5.2.2. What is teacher accountability in education?*

*1.5.2.3. How can be done as teachers to address the issue of underperforming during teaching and learning?*

*1.5.2.4. How do teachers implement teacher accountability at schools?*

It was important to have good knowledge of what causes other schools to underperform and which strategies can be implemented to assist both teachers and learners to perform well.

### **1.6. Theoretical Framework**

According to Anfara and Meretz (2015), a theoretical framework is "any empirical or quasi-empirical theory of a social and psychological process that can be applied to the understanding of events". The researcher uses the framework to construct the research findings, guiding the researcher to work within the confines of the accepted ideas when offering academic courses.

Furthermore, the theoretical framework helps the researcher put the research's focus into perspective (Shah & Al-Bargi, 2013). The theoretical framework is linked to the research problem (Tamene, 2016). Guides the researcher when choosing research design and data analysis methods. Therefore, the theoretical framework assists the researcher in selecting the most appropriate research methodology, analytical tools, and processes for his or her study.

### *1.6.1. Theory of action*

Action theory defines the relationship between inputs and materials, functions, effects, and outputs. This operational perspective governs the objectives and objectives of the system. Theory connects organizational goals, accountability structure, outcomes, communication, and support to policymakers' expected outcomes. The action theory describes how an accountability system brings about the necessary changes in education. The theory helps to judge the suitability and efficiency of an educational system. The theory of action emerges from the philosophy "knowledge is power." It holds the view that when employees are subjected to consequences of their actions, they improve their efficiency and strengths, correct their mistakes and minimize the wastage of resources. The following concessions are helpful when building an efficient accountability system.

1. Accuracy in reporting results.
2. Correct Interpretation of results
3. There are alternative ways to improve the situation strategies to achieve organizational goals.
4. Administrators are willing to lead and motivate employees.
5. Employees are knowledgeable of alternative strategies.
6. Selected actions are correctly executed.
7. Selected actions enhance the realization of results.

According to [Deventer and Kruger \(2003\)](#), the principal must foster a collaborative environment so fewer people can do more work. This can be accomplished by providing services that enable employees to perform their duties effectively, as well as by fostering an environment conducive to the implementation of education management principles such as support, cooperation, solidarity, and trust in order to provide individuals and departments with the resources they require ([Smith & Cronje, 2000](#)). After the school has been fully staffed and divided into departments and units, responsibility and authority must be assigned to each position in the school building. The teacher's assistant (s) receives instructions (from the employee). It is the leader or teacher's responsibility to carry out the instructions.

### *1.6.2. Application of the theory to the study*

The study uses the theory of [Deventer \(2003\)](#). This theory falls into this study because its organizational framework directs teacher accountability mechanisms that help improve student performance. The organizational structure of [Deventer \(2003\)](#) is similar to the school organogram. The principal is the centre of power and goes from top to bottom (staff and students). This is called a "top-down" or successive management framework. In this organizational structure, the principal has authority or another employee acting following his or her instructions. The deputy principal is the second highest authority in the body responsible for the specific functions assigned to the principal. Powers of authority are defined, and the duties and responsibilities of each employee are set out.

This structure promotes good communication, which contributes to the performance of staff. In this organizational structure, all stakeholders have roles, responsibilities and responsibilities that contribute to student performance. Everyone should be held accountable for their actions, and teachers should be accountable for learners' performance. If a school does not do well, it means that the entire structure of the organization did not do its job as expected by the Department of Education. Every teacher has got his or her own job descriptions according to their levels. Their job descriptions are as follows:

## **2.1 Research Methodology**

The methodology is the overall plan upon which the study is conducted, and it guides the researcher on "how" the research should be conducted ([Mohajan, 2017](#)). This methodology chapter includes the following research paradigm, research approach, research design, case studies, population, sample, data collection and analysis, trustworthiness, and ethical consideration.

In this research, the researcher used a qualitative research approach. According to [Aspers and Corte \(2019\)](#), qualitative research is an interactive process of understanding the phenomenon studied. According to [Skovdal and Cornish \(2015\)](#), qualitative research is a method of inquiry describing social meanings [Skovdal et al. \(2015\)](#). Using qualitative research can generate evidence to develop programmes tailored to local contexts. The researcher used qualitative research because the researcher will go to underperforming schools to focus on participants' understanding, descriptions, labels, and meanings to observe teachers and learners, interview them, observe their teaching methods, and even how they use their teaching methods when teaching learners.

The researcher used participant observation in her study and the objective based on more recent field research, how teacher accountability has more impact on underperforming schools. The department of Education deployed circuit managers to monitor the situation at schools. Deploy the curriculum advisors to manage the curriculum and to give support to teachers by giving them workshops and more training. Those selected schools were visited more often to give them support.

## 2.2. Participants

Five schools in this circuit were selected for the research. The sample consists of 16 educators which is 5 principals and 11 HODs. And semi-structured were used in the study with interview questions. The researcher presents the data collected from one-on-one interviews with the school principals and school Department Heads. The researcher asked the from participants question to gain more information and to explain more about their own background and to assured the participant that their information will be privacy and will be kept. Both male and female were interviewed and each interview were running between 40 minutes and 1 hour. The participant's ages ranged from 30 to 59 years old. Two participants were female ranged between 30-39. While others ranged between 40-50 years old.

## 3. FINDINGS

Findings of this study as provided through Principals' and Departmental Heads questionnaires.

### 3.1 Theme: Sufficient resources for teaching and learning

Lack of resources at schools led to most learners' poor performance in primary schools. If the department supplies the schools with enough relevant LTSM (Learner Teaching Supporting Materials), the teacher will ensure that quality teaching and learning will be given to the learners. Teachers must use the LTSM up to a moral standard. Regarding this situation, principals and DH must request books on time so the syllabus covered from all angles. A participant mentioned that:

*"No teachers and learners need technology gadgets e.g. Tablets, computers and Wi-Fi for them to access information very easy. We need all-purpose Labs E.g. Computer Labs, Science Labs etc."*

In contrast to ISIP 1, ISIDH3 indicate that:

*"Yes, some resources are provided to us by the Platinum Mine (AASA) programme."*

Reflecting on the above quotation, perhaps there is a shortage of staff and poor allocation of staff according to specialization. Enough teachers are allocated to the school. According to the post establishment, the learners will get enough curriculum coverage. All curriculum documents must be followed properly, and the relevant people must properly supervise and monitor.

### 3.2 Theme: Overcrowding has an impact on learner performance at school

Overcrowding impacts learner performance in the school. Together with the School Governing Body (SGB), the principal could apply for mobile classes for effective teaching and learning. The learner will be more manageable in the class. To comply with Corvid 19. Participants ISIDH1 and ISIDH3: mentioned that:

*“The issue of overcrowding is also another problem that leads to poor performance. Teaching and learning are not effective in overcrowding classes. Teaching cannot reach the needs of all learners if they are many in one class. Resources sometimes not sufficient for a large group”.*

On the other hand, participants in ISIP1 and ISP2 contrast a view that:

*“Teachers are unable to identify slow learners. They take time to assess learners individually. Play full may not be noticed”.*

Reflection on the above quotations, if learners may not attend class simultaneously, all learners will be attended individually, and those not performing well will be noticed. The few learners will be manageable in the class.

### **3.3 Theme: Teachers accountability in the class**

When principals and HS communicate, they can work together towards this common goal. Every subject manager must be accountable for the decision or action was taken by the term or annual results because the learners' progress is in their hands. If learners are underperforming in the different subjects in class, it will affect the school's performance, circuit, district, province, and even the nation. Hardworking is the key to success. Participant ISIP4 mentioned that:

*“It ascertains that teacher stay on their lanes in as far as teaching and assessing are concerned. It helps to identify learner's barriers to learning”.*

Reflection on the above quotation may argue that teachers must give learners feedback after writing their activities, and the results must be analyzed.

## **4. DISCUSSION and CONCLUSION**

This theme entails managing the causes of poor performance in schools. The principals, DHs, teachers, and learners must work together to improve performance. The following are the major cause of poor performance in schools: insufficient resources, overcrowding in the classroom, and poor management at school. Sub-themes: The causes of poor performance at school. Main issues: sufficient resources for teaching and learning, the impact of overcrowding on learner performance at school, and the importance of accountability in the classroom.

To improve the quality of teaching, all principals must make sure that teachers, learners and parents are involved in implementing school policies. For effective teaching and learning, teachers must prepare their lessons thoroughly in the subject guideline. Teaching and learning can be effective when teachers can use different teaching methods to cater to all learners. Using appropriate teaching aids and giving enough activities according to various subjects will be more useful to the learners. Remedial work should give the learners more competence in their subjects. The researcher recommends that accountability is more important in the classroom because it helps teachers know their subjects very well. It allows teachers to be more strategic and accountable; teachers will be more developed in their areas of expertise. It helps them track their performance and identify gaps and where they need to be closed, leading to analyzing the results. The study recommends that it is important that teachers must account for education. The study recommends that teacher accountability is a wonderful process whereby all educators account for or give feedback for all subjects they teach. Doing this will help to detect performance gaps so that they get ways of improving their subject for better performance. Teachers must teach in order to improve learner performance. Curriculum delivery should be done fruitfully to unfold the learner's potential to the best of his ability. Teaching and learning should be directed to a learner as a total being.

The researcher recommends that teachers experience most of the challenges during teaching and learning, such as overcrowded classrooms, less attention to individual learners, and minimal teaching and learning aids. The principal and the SGB for overcrowding in the Department of education and make applications for the mobile makings may address these challenges. Learning and teaching will be conducive to the learners; learners will be more manageable in the class.

The researcher recommends that the teaching and learning be effectively and efficiently if there effective learning. Learners must attend classes without fail, be punctual, and introduce extra lessons. Proper planning will lead the school to perform well and attend classes regularly; it will make learners get more information as required for the examination.

Commitment among teachers and learners will make them build a strong team to improve learner performance at school. These challenges may be addressed that every stakeholder around the school must be involved, moreover, by establishing working subjects' committees, Professional Learning Communities among the clustered schools. The committees must work as a team in order to improve learner performance. Furthermore, all teachers must be committed to teaching and learning.

Teachers must attend classes without fail, be punctual for teaching and learning, give learners more activities, be assessed every time and get immediate feedback. The principal may address these challenges to check and monitor the situation, and quarterly feedback must be given to the parents according to their children's performance. The researcher recommends using different teaching strategies to improve teaching and learning. Visual and display of learner performance results and written accountability committed to effect changes towards teaching and learner assessment. These challenges may be addressed that will then have a record by writing for future reference. Write the changes that can be done next term, if not a year. The researcher recommends that presentations be done during designated staff meetings as writing, and it will make teachers commit themselves by writing to implement remedial work.

For the betterment of the school in order the school to run smoothly, all stakeholders at school such as learners, teachers, departmental heads, deputy principal, principal SGB and parents must play their important role. Learners must attend their classes regularly and write their activities as they are given, teachers must plan, prepare and present their lessons on time, marked learners books accordingly and give feedback to learners and must account on their mediate senior, departmental heads must give teachers support with some internal workshop and make sure they check and monitor the situation as it is required, the Quality Teaching and Learning Campaign (QLTC) is effective, deputy principal as the curriculum manager must make sure that the departmental heads run the phase as it is required, relevant Learner Supporting Material (LTSM) are being used, class visits is practiced and quality time of teaching learners is given to the learners, SGB must run the school according to South African Schools Act 84 of 1996. For the school to run smoothly. Parents must provide the school and support their children with the needs of the school. All the above-mentioned stakeholders can make the school to run smoothly and also to perform well.

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*The data used in this study was confirmed by the researchers that it belongs to the years before 2020.*

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