

## Investigating the Confluence of Factors Impacting on Underperformance at Selected Secondary Schools in the Western Cape, South Africa

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**KEYWORDS** Apartheid Government. National Strategy for Learner Attainment. Grade Promotion Policy in Secondary schools. Grade Repetition and Academic Performance of Learners

**ABSTRACT** The primary focus of this paper is to understand the underlying factors responsible for poor performance of learners at underperforming secondary schools in the Western Cape Province, South Africa, which is manifested amongst others in high rates of grade repetition. In South Africa, underperforming secondary schools are defined by the state as those schools that show a 60% or lower Grade 12 pass rate in the final national examinations. The research methodology consisted of both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The unit of analysis was done on underperforming secondary schools in the Western Cape. The sampling frame consisted of underperforming secondary schools based on the 2009 final national Grade 12 examinations and consisted of 22 (out of 78) secondary schools for which detailed data was collected and analysed. The main research finding is that the high levels of grade repetition at underperforming schools can primarily be related to three inter-related factors; an inappropriate grade promotion policy, school level and socio-economic factors.