

## **Exploring Factors Contributing to School Improvement in South African Secondary Schools in the Free State Province**

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**ABSTRACT** Since the advent of the new educational dispensation in 1994, the South African National Department of education has embarked on a process of enhancing the improvement of pass-rates in secondary schools. However, despite these efforts the process has not been very smooth as some schools have not improved or least show signs of the improvement of their performances. This paper therefore explores factors contributing to school improvement in secondary schools. During this generative qualitative study data was collected from principals, SMT members, Teachers, and SGB member's focus groups. Face to face interviews were held with principals, focus group interviews were held with school management teams, teachers and school governing body parents. Documentary analysis from three highly improved schools (those that have seen dramatic improvement in learner attainment and basic functionality over three years) and three less improved schools (those that have not improved their learner attainment and basic functionality over three years) was also done. Data was then analysed using constant comparative analysis within an inductive analytical framework. Among the findings of the study is that management and leadership, effective curriculum management, effective school governance and an effective support structures are at the heart of any school improvement success.