

Stakeholder Perceptions about Factors that Cause Poor Student Performance in Cambridge Overseas School Certificate (COSC) Examinations in Lesotho**Mapheleba Lekhetho***Department of Educational Leadership and Management, University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa**E-mail: lekhem@unisa.ac.za***KEYWORDS** Poor Performance. Systems Theory. Prior Achievement. Admission Policy. Lesotho

ABSTRACT In Lesotho, students generally perform poorly in the Cambridge Overseas School Certificate (COSC) examinations, as can be seen by the low pass rates, which stood at 55.4% in 2012. Few students (less than 22% in 2012) qualify for tertiary education, and a dismal performance in mathematics and science, resulting in only a small percentage that secures admission into science-based programmes. Using a quantitative design, the study collected data from a total sample of 808 respondents consisting of students, teachers, principals, deputy principals, school board members, education secretaries and Ministry of Education officials. The aim was to probe the participants' perceptions about student performance in COSC examinations. By using mainly frequency counts, the results reflect that most respondents rated the performance of their schools as poor. The reasons for this include a lack of selectivity, especially in Form A (Grade 8), a lack of commitment on the part of teachers and students, and the grinding poverty afflicting mainly rural households, which makes it impossible for parents to support their children's education.