

**Mismatch between Policy Implementation and Ground Realities:
The Case of Science Educator Mentoring in
South African Schools****B. Ncube*, K.J. Mammen and J.M. Molepo***Walter Sisulu University, Mthatha, South Africa***KEYWORDS** Science Educators. Integrated Quality Management System. Educational Policies on Mentoring

ABSTRACT Research findings indicate mismatches between the substantive and procedural components of policies and what happens at the grassroots level. It has been found that mentoring policies were not exceptions. Mentoring is an integral part of the South African schools' Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) and was intended to enhance the professional growth of educators. This study sought to find out whether mentoring actually takes place among high school science educators as part of IQMS. The sample consisted of 40 persons: all 38 high school science educators (the population itself) from six high schools, the district science advisor and the district IQMS coordinator. The study was carried out in one education district in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. Questionnaires, interviews and document analyses were employed to gather data. The data were categorized and then grouped in order to find frequencies and themes. The conclusions, amongst others, were: educators had some knowledge of mentoring but it was very limited; educators saw mentoring as a good idea to support them in their professional growth, but they needed to be helped to understand and be able to implement it; mentoring was dependent on the successful implementation of IQMS; educators sounded positive about mentoring, except for a few expressions of fear of change and a lack of readiness to embrace change. The overall conclusion was that there were mismatches between policy and its implementation. The recommendations include a multifaceted approach involving several stakeholders to enhance the success of mentoring as part of IQMS.