

The Causes of School Decline: Voices of School Principals and Circuit Managers in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

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ABSTRACT This paper reports the findings of a qualitative research that attempted to understand school decline in previously Black South African schools that were known for academic learner performance but have since declined. This small scale qualitative study was conducted in Umlazi and Pinetown education districts in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. Data was generated through semi-structured interviews with four secondary school principals whose schools have declined, and two Circuit Managers who were heading the education circuits under which the school principals were serving. Content analysis was used to analyse the data. The findings suggest that school decline is triggered by several complex factors which include, but are not restricted to, the quality of school leadership; the dedication and commitment of school teachers and learners; socio-economic factors; inadequate support from the Department of Education and the interference of some teacher unions.