



# Educators' perspectives on the implementation of Quality Management Systems in Secondary schools within Chris Hani District, South Africa

Mandla Nathaniel Mkontwana<sup>1</sup>  & Owen Madalambana<sup>1</sup> 

<sup>1</sup> Walter Sisulu University, South Africa.

## ABSTRACT

This study explored educators' perceptions of the implementation of the Quality Management System (QMS) in selected secondary schools within the Chris Hani District, South Africa. Drawing on the theoretical framework of Total Quality Management (TQM) in education, the study critically examined the challenges, resistance, and contextual factors influencing QMS adoption. The findings revealed that educators had varying and often negative perceptions of QMS due to a lack of training, poor communication, and limited understanding of its developmental purpose. Resistance was further compounded by the absence of transparency during evaluation processes, anxiety associated with performance appraisals, and inadequate support from school management teams (SMTs) and external moderators. The study underscores the importance of continuous professional development, internal capacity-building, and collaborative stakeholder engagement to foster a culture of quality and accountability. It concludes that for QMS to be effectively implemented, it must be repositioned as a supportive and developmental tool, aligned with the principles of TQM to ensure sustained improvement in teaching and learning outcomes. Through its interpretivist, qualitative design, the study enriches methodological discourse by demonstrating the value of capturing educators' narratives to uncover the socio-cultural and institutional dynamics that shape quality management in schools. This research advances the scholarship on educational management by linking theoretical constructs of TQM with the real-world experiences of educators, thus offering a framework for rethinking quality assurance as a participatory and developmental process within the South African education system.

**Keywords:** Quality Management System, Educator Perceptions, Total Quality Management, School Evaluation, Educational Leadership

## INTRODUCTION

The effective implementation of performance management systems in education, such as the Quality Management System (QMS), remains a critical concern in South African schools. Introduced as a strategy to promote professional development, ensure accountability, and improve teaching quality, the QMS was designed to foster a culture of continuous improvement within schools. However, its practical application has revealed numerous challenges, particularly in under-resourced and rural contexts such as the Chris Hani Education District. Evidence from schools in this region suggests that educators and

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**CORRESPONDENCE** – Owen Madalambana Email: [omadalambana@wsu.ac.za](mailto:omadalambana@wsu.ac.za)

**PUBLICATION HISTORY** - Received : 9<sup>th</sup> August, 2025 | Accepted: 5<sup>th</sup> February, 2026 | Published: 13<sup>th</sup> April, 2026.

**TO CITE THIS ARTICLE** – Mkontwana, Mandla Nathaniel, and Owen Madalambana. "Educators' perspectives on the Implementation of Quality Management Systems in Secondary schools within Chris Hani District, South Africa." *Journal of Education and Learning Technology* 7, no.3 (2026): 287 - 298. <https://doi.org/10.38159/jelt.2026736>

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school management teams often experience the QMS as a compliance-driven exercise rather than a developmental opportunity. There was a growing perception among practitioners that the system was not aligned with classroom realities, lacked adequate support structures, and was inconsistently applied across schools.

These issues were compounded by limited professional development, inadequate training in appraisal procedures, and varying degrees of leadership engagement, all of which contribute to a fragmented and, at times, superficial implementation of the QMS. Although policy frameworks articulate clear goals for educator performance and accountability, the lack of context-specific research has led to a disconnect between policy intentions and on-the-ground experiences. The absence of a robust understanding of how educators perceive and engage with the QMS impedes the development of responsive and sustainable appraisal systems. Therefore, this study aims to explore the perceptions of educators and school leaders regarding the implementation of QMS in selected secondary schools within the Chris Hani Education District. In doing so, it seeks to uncover systemic barriers, identify opportunities for support and refinement, and contribute to a more effective integration of performance management within South Africa's educational landscape.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The implementation of the QMS in educational institutions has generated considerable interest and concern, especially within the South African context. This literature review explores various scholarly perspectives on the challenges, perceptions, and systemic factors affecting QMS implementation. Key themes include resistance from educators, lack of transparency, anxiety about evaluations, and the need for intervention and training. The successful implementation of QMS in schools is highly dependent on the acceptance and commitment of educators. However, research indicated that educators have varying perspectives on QMS, which often results in resistance.<sup>1</sup> This resistance is primarily attributed to a lack of exposure to effective QMS strategies and insufficient professional development opportunities. Owuotanda corroborates this finding, emphasizing that many educators were inadequately prepared to integrate QMS into their teaching environments.<sup>2</sup> Negative perceptions and limited understanding of QMS objectives have further contributed to resistance, highlighting the importance of preparing educators for systemic changes in appraisal and evaluation frameworks. Stevenson argues that an effective educator appraisal system should be developmental rather than punitive, promoting professional growth and boosting educator confidence.<sup>3</sup>

The lack of a shared understanding regarding QMS's developmental intent has resulted in its misinterpretation as a mechanism of inspection rather than a mechanism of support. Transparency is an essential component of any evaluation or appraisal process. However, in many instances, schools have reported a significant lack of openness in QMS evaluation procedures. External moderators, such as district officials, often fail to communicate expectations and assessment criteria in a timely manner, leaving educators uncertain about the process and its outcomes. This lack of timely feedback frustrated educators and undermined trust in the system.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, the inability of SMTs to adequately prepare for moderation sessions further exacerbates the situation. When educators are not included in planning or evaluation discussions, they become disengaged, sceptical of the outcomes, and less likely to accept the validity of the process. These issues highlight the need for transparent communication and inclusive evaluation procedures. A recurring theme in the literature is the anxiety experienced by educators during QMS evaluations. Despite QMS being a joint product of the Department of Basic Education and labour unions, many educators remain apprehensive about the process. The residual perception of evaluations as inspections contributes to emotional distress and professional discomfort.

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Mathew, Hilda Pillay, and Kiran Bala, "Educators' Perceptions and Readiness towards Performance Appraisal Systems," *International Journal of Educational Management* 29, no. 4 (2015): 444–56.

<sup>2</sup> John S. Owuotanda, "Challenges in the Implementation of Performance Management Systems in Public Secondary Schools: A South African Case," *African Journal of Education and Practice* 6, no. 1 (2020): 75.

<sup>3</sup> Henry J. Stevenson, "Teacher Appraisal Systems and Professional Growth: A South African Analysis," *South African Journal of Education* 38, no. 3 (2018): 11.

<sup>4</sup> Md Mamoon-Al-Bashir Ahea, Md Rezaul Kabir Ahea, and Ismat Rahman, "The Value and Effectiveness of Feedback in Improving Students' Learning and Professionalizing Teaching in Higher Education.," *Journal of Education and Practice* 7, no. 16 (2016): 39.

The Department of Basic Education, along with relevant stakeholders, must address this anxiety by demystifying QMS processes and strengthening their developmental nature. Building trust through consistent messaging and supportive intervention can reduce educator apprehension and encourage greater engagement. Effective intervention strategies are necessary to mitigate challenges in QMS implementation. Literature strongly supports the need for structured and continuous professional development. Training workshops and the dissemination of QMS manuals are essential to ensure that educators understand the principles and practicalities of the system. As a participant in the study emphasized, the QMS manual should serve as a foundational document akin to a “bible” that guides the educator in his professional conduct. However, challenges remain, particularly around the misinterpretation of manual content. This underscores the importance of mentorship and peer learning, where knowledgeable individuals facilitate workshops to promote collaborative understanding. Internal training, spearheaded by school-based personnel, can create spaces for open dialogue and robust discussion, allowing educators to share insights and develop a collective approach to QMS implementation.<sup>5</sup> Curriculum management is central to the educator appraisal process, with SMTs bearing the responsibility for monitoring, supervision, and support. Effective curriculum management not only supports individual educator development but also contributes to broader school improvement. According to the study, robust planning, evaluation, and monitoring systems empower SMTs to drive academic performance and enhance school leadership.

Through engaging educators in strategic planning and decision-making, schools can cultivate a sense of collective responsibility and professional pride. Collegial relationships, team building, and shared accountability are critical factors in the promotion of a culture of continuous improvement and quality teaching. The broader school context plays a crucial role in the success or failure of QMS implementation. The study revealed that educators’ knowledge and commitment directly influence the quality of teaching and learning. Resistance to QMS is often rooted in contextual factors such as school leadership, resource availability, and institutional culture. Dyosini and Thokozane emphasizes that committed and competent educators are the cornerstone of educational success.<sup>6</sup> These educators not only implement curriculum effectively but also engage meaningfully with evaluation and assessment processes. Therefore, stakeholder collaboration is essential. SMTs, educators, learners, and external moderators must work together to create environments conducive to quality education.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Total Quality Management (TQM), from the 1980s to the early 1990s, served as a foundational theoretical framework for understanding the implementation of QMS in educational institutions. Originally developed for industrial and corporate environments, TQM has been adapted to the education sector to emphasize continuous improvement, stakeholder involvement, transparency, and accountability. Central to TQM is the principle that quality is not a one-time achievement but an ongoing process that involves all stakeholders, from management to front-line staff. In the context of schools, this translates into the participation of SMTs, educators, and external stakeholders (e.g., district officials) in collaboratively setting goals, evaluating performance, and implementing strategies for improvement. When aligned with QMS, TQM principles encourage the establishment of a culture of excellence through regular evaluation, constructive feedback, professional development, and shared responsibility for learner outcomes.

Applying TQM to this study allows for a comprehensive analysis of educators' perceptions of QMS implementation in secondary schools within the Chris Hani District. The QMS framework helps explain the frustrations expressed by educators about lack of transparency, delayed feedback, and unclear communication from moderators, issues that contradict the core QMS values of open communication and continuous feedback. Furthermore, QMS underscores the importance of training and capacity-building, which aligns with findings indicating that many educators feel unprepared or

<sup>5</sup> Douglas Matorera, “The Significance of Teacher Development in Improving Quality Education: A Case of South African Public Schools,” *Journal of Education and Human Development* 7, no. 2 (2018): 89.

<sup>6</sup> Thokozane P. Dyosini, “Professional Development of Teachers: Perceptions and Challenges of Foundation Phase Teachers,” *South African Journal of Childhood Education* 14, no. 1 (November 15, 2024): 8. <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajce.v14i1.1572>.

unwilling to engage with QMS due to insufficient exposure and guidance. Grounded in QMS, the research situates QMS implementation not merely as a compliance mechanism but as a strategic, systemic effort to embed a culture of continuous improvement and accountability in the teaching and learning environment.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

The study employed a qualitative research design rooted in the interpretivist paradigm to explore educators lived experiences and perceptions of the implementation of the QMS in secondary schools within the Chris Hani Education District, South Africa. This approach was chosen for its capacity to capture participants' subjective meanings and context-specific understandings of QMS practices in real-world educational settings.\

### **Study Sample and Population**

The target population comprised educators, Heads of Departments (HODs), deputy principals, and principals from ten secondary schools in the Chris Hani District. Purposive and convenience samplings were used to select participants based on their experience and involvement in QMS processes. This ensured the inclusion of individuals with relevant knowledge and insights to provide rich, detailed data.

### **Data Collection**

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews, allowing participants to express their experiences and perspectives openly. Interviews were conducted at convenient times for participants to minimize disruption to their professional duties. An interview guide ensured consistency across sessions, and, with consent, interviews were audio-recorded to enhance accuracy. A follow-up validation session was held to confirm the credibility and precision for interpretations.

### **Data Analysis Procedure**

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's framework.<sup>7</sup> The process involved familiarization with the transcripts, systematic coding, and the identification of recurring patterns and themes. The emerging themes reflected educators' perceptions of QMS implementation, leadership roles, challenges, and levels of motivation and engagement.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Ethical approval was obtained prior to data collection. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, their right to withdraw at any time, and the confidentiality of their responses. Informed consent was obtained from all participants and data were handled with strict adherence to ethical research standards to ensure anonymity, respect, and trustworthiness.

## **PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS**

### **Theme 1: Perspectives on the impact of QMS on educator development**

The participants were engaged on how they view or perceive QMS as an educator performance appraisal instrument; they indicated that educator professionalism was part and parcel of educator development. Their submissions are presented below.

P.08:

Educator professionalism involves multiple factors that comprise ethical conduct, competent educator and punctuality at school and produce the expected product. Use of relevant and suitable teaching methodologies. All this indicates the depth of educator development that is encompassed by attending organised workshops that talk about educator development.

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<sup>7</sup> Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology," *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3, no. 2 (2006): 77–101.

P. 14:

Professionalism is timeless. That means all the time an educator conducts him/herself in a professional manner whether during working hours or outside working hours. The absence or lack of professionalism of educators requires the intervention of SMT to engage external structures to organise the workshop for capacitation.

P. 20:

QMS helped us to improve our teaching skills required in teaching practice, which is regarded as educator development.

P. 18:

“QMS equipped educators’ knowledge and skills required in teaching and learning. Also has an important role to play in improving educator practice, subject content delivery, and applying current methodologies.”

### **Theme 2: Absence or lack of collaborative practices amongst educators**

The data gathered indicated that educators were not familiar with the practice of collaboration and depended solely on the use of traditional practices of working in silos.

P. 16:

Other educators were not prepared to share their educational experiences with other fellow colleagues. They regarded it as a waste of time.

P. 05:

Some of the educators were not used to working in groups with other educators, and that brought about a huge challenge for the proper implementation of QMS. Educators were not familiar with collaboration practices.

### **Theme 3: Lack of basic infrastructure and school resources**

Looking at the connection between resource provisioning and QMS implementation, participants revealed that the absence or lack of infrastructure and some basic school facilities had an adverse impact on the effective implementation of QMS in selected secondary schools.

P. 15:

Our school is situated in deep rural areas, so it becomes a challenge for us to reach the town because of the road and transport challenges. Also, our school suffers from district office visitations because of its location.

P. 13:

Not only did the absence or lack of fundamental infrastructure facilities affect educators from enhancing their teaching practice, but it also affected educators from working together with other colleagues from neighbouring schools, which is critical and imperative for effective and efficient QMS implementation.

### **Theme 4: Lived experiences of educators during performance appraisal**

All participants in the study alluded to the fact that training workshops were held, though the time was not enough. More time was still needed because QMS was a new concept for educators. These workshops had an impact on the successful implementation of QMS.

P. 05:

All educators received training in QMS implementation, although the time allocated was insufficient.

P. 20:

All educators were able to attend QMS training workshops. Special workshops were put in place for newly appointed educators. This implies that no educator was offered QMS training, therefore, expected would be an improvement in the quality of education.

- P. 15:  
Workshops were held, though there was not enough time for the suggested follow-up workshops to reinforce what had already been presented.
- P. 03:  
DBE really presented them with workshops, although time was a challenge. The training workshops for QMS implementation were so critical and imperative in the implementation of QMS in an efficient, effective, and economical manner in secondary schools in the Chris Hani West Education District, South Africa.
- P. 12:  
More training workshops need to be organized, and also every educator is expected to attend.
- P. 20:  
Most educators do not understand the QMS properly as they suffer from adequate and effective training. They engage with QMS for compliance's sake. Educators do not understand the significance of QMS. Most of them do it because there is a reward or incentive.
- P. 07:  
There is a lack or absence of training for QMS implementors, in this case are SMT members. Internally, the school can appoint QMS coordinators amongst the SMT because QMS is driven by the SMT. SMT is at the centre of QMS implementation as per the QMS document.
- P.10:  
Educators are not negative about QMS because they do not understand and are not knowledgeable about the newly introduced educator appraisal system (QMS). This would be triggered by the absence or lack of developmental programmes by the DBE.
- P. 18:  
Some secondary schools do not have the financial muscle to organise and run workshops for educators. The DBE is mandated by law to provide this training for educators. Due to budgetary constraints, the DBE is unable to financially support all its educational activities to the fullest. In between there are hiccups.

#### **Theme 5: Absence or lack of feedback**

In common instances, performance assessments are aligned with feedback that assists, improves or develops educators. Therefore, feedback is considered one of the methods that can support growth and embrace quality education.

- P. 06:  
Lack or absence of feedback after assessment is a huge challenge in our schools and the districts.
- P. 02:  
Feedback is not considered an urgent matter for educators; instead, it is downplayed. In addition, feedback does not address individual challenges but is generic. Address all the challenges of school. Individual feedback suffers a great deal.
- P. 11:  
The Educator performance appraisal reports and scoring instruments are referred to the DBE district offices, but no response of feedback comes forth. This is also demotivating and frustrating for educators because they are eager and ready to receive their reports and be assisted in areas where they performed poorly.
- P. 17:  
No immediate feedback destroys educator interest and willingness to be part of QMS implementation.
- P. 20:  
Lack or absence of prompt feedback would be catastrophic for the education system.

### **Theme 6: Implementation of QMS**

Proper implementation of QMS helps educators in pinpointing those topics where they experience some challenges and need intervention to improve their academic performance. For efficient and effective QMS implementation, active participation and contribution of educators is expected.

P. 03:

QMS is another type of leadership and management that aims to produce quality education and results. It encourages educators to assess their strides and achievements in relation to learner academic performance.

P. 04:

QMS assisted learners in recognizing their elevated academic performance. Also, the standard and quality of service rendered improved QMS implementation.

P. 8:

QMS implementation exposes educators to their expected responsibilities and duties.

### **Theme 7: Readiness and capability to implement QMS**

Most of the participants in this study revealed that they still need more training and workshops in QMS implementation since it is a new concept and phenomenon that differs from what had been in place previously. Even the principal who participated in the research indicated:

P7:

Even I, as a school principal I am not sure of how to explain and implement QMS in my school. Therefore, more workshops are needed to equip and capacitate us as managers.

P. 14:

I took QMS lightly, but because the focus is on the school principal to drive and ensure that it is effectively and efficiently, I changed my perception.

### **Sub-theme 7.1: QMS knowledge, exposure and acquisition**

Knowledge is power. Without knowledge, it becomes difficult to start and implement anything. Knowledge is acquired through workshops and training. The main objective of training workshops is to equip and equip educators with skills and knowledge to enrich their personal growth and professional development.

P. 11:

For me, I still need some more QMS training exposure since we were given a one-day workshop. For me to implement and monitor QMS, I need more workshops since it is my first opportunity to be hands-on.

It has been indicated that QMS training should be compulsory for all educators before they can implement it. Therefore, QMS is regarded as an ongoing exercise within the schools. By doing so, more educators become confident and equipped with knowledge and skills.

### **Theme 8. Absence or lack of educator commitment to educator appraisal**

During the interview session with the school principals, they revealed the way educators displayed their lack or absence of commitment during QMS implementation.

Participant 5

“They really do it to appease their superiors, not for professional growth and development.”

P.09:

It is a stipulated program with fixed dates and times. Educators are not interested in educator performance appraisal; they do it for compliance's sake.

P.06:

Educators to prove their lack of interest in educator appraisal, they showed no interest or welcome to QMS as a new baby in the block of educator appraisal. Educators never accepted QMS as a new instrument for educator development, instead of taking it as a milk cow. Hence, they were not prepared to participate in the exercise if no monetary rewards would be gained.

**Theme 9: Motivation**

Motivation manifests itself in different forms. Two types of motivation are debated that is, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

P.06:

Motivation is fundamental and critical in improving learner performance and participation. This can be achieved through career guidance, educator, and learner awards, and recognition of their contribution to society. Management should be able to teach the learners different roles and responsibilities to perform within the school and communities, since education is a societal issue.

P.09:

Extra performing learners deserve to be awarded and those still struggling need to be motivated.

P.12:

Professional intervention and engagement contribute positively to learners’ performance.

P.04:

Motivation is a moving vehicle to accelerate the academic performance and participation of learners.

**Theme 10: Monetary rewards**

P.14:

For educator performance appraisal to be afforded the attention it deserves, educators need to be intrinsically and extrinsically motivated.

P.18:

Educators are expected to be motivated so that they can improve their academic input, which can lead to their positive attitude towards QMS implementation.

P.10:

Educator appraisal is in a better position to change for the better when they are also recognized for their educational performance.

P.20:

Educators need to be rewarded for the academic performance of learners in the form of certificate awarding.

QMS in secondary schools. These initial codes were grouped into broader categories that reflected meaningful themes, such as “perceived effectiveness of QMS,” “leadership involvement,” “challenges in educator appraisal,” and “participant motivation and engagement.”

**Table 1: Summary of Participant Demographics**

Participant	Gender	Current Position	Highest Qualification	Years of Teaching Experience	Year Joined Profession	Remarks / Career Progression
01	Male	Deputy Principal	PGCE& B.Agric	34	1990	5 years as Deputy Principal
02	Female	Principal	Master of Educational Management	31	1993	Promoted from Educator → Deputy → Principal
03	Male	Principal	Honours in Educational Management	26	1998	Promoted from Educator → HOD → Deputy → Principal
04	Female	HOD (Languages)	B.A. in Languages (IsiXhosa & English)	35	1989	Promoted from Educator → HOD

05	Male	Principal	Not specified	28	~1996	8 yrs Educator, 5 yrs Deputy, 15 yrs Principal
06	Female	HOD	Educator's Diploma	34	1990	Majority of career as HOD
07	Male	Principal	Advanced Certificate in Educational Management	30	1995	Educator → Deputy (8 yrs) → Principal
08	Male	Principal	Honours in Educational Management	36	1988	Educator → HOD → Deputy → Principal (since 2015)
09	Female	Post Level 1 Educator	Honours in Educational Management	37	1988	Oversees QMS appraisal at school
10	Male	Principal	Honours in Educational Psychology	25	2000	Educator → HOD → Principal
11	Female	Deputy Principal	Honours in Educational Management	26	1998	Educator → Deputy Principal
12	Male	Post Level 1 Educator	Educator's Diploma & Advanced Certificate	34	1990	Long-serving educator
13	Male	HOD	Degree in Educational Management	36	1988	Educator → HOD (since 2000)
14	Female	HOD (Science)	Honours in Educational Management	23	2002	Educator → HOD (since 2005)
15	Male	Post Level 1 Educator	Honours in Educational Management	28	1997	Experienced educator
16	Male	Deputy Principal	Honours in Educational Management	34	1990	Educator → HOD → Deputy (since 2001)
17	Male	Post Level 1 Educator	B.Ed. & Teaching Diploma	25	2000	Studying for Honours in Ed. Management
18	Female	Post Level 1 Educator	Honours in African Languages	25	2000	Teaches IsiXhosa & English
19	Male	Post Level 1 Educator	Honours in Educational Management & Leadership	20	~2005	Teaches Commercial Subjects
20	Male	HOD (Commerce)	B.Com Honours in Business Management	37	1988	Educator → HOD (since 1998)

### Summary Insights

- Gender distribution: 12 males and 8 females.
- Positions: 6 Principals, 3 Deputy Principals, 4 HODs, 7 Post Level 1 Educators.
- Experience range: 20–37 years of service.

- Common qualifications: Honours in Educational Management (most prevalent).
- Typical career path: Post Level 1 Educator → HOD → Deputy Principal → Principal.

## DISCUSSION

The findings revealed that educators across many schools held varying perspectives on the implementation of the QMS, resulting in instances of resistance. Mathew et al. observed that educators lacked the willingness to engage with the QMS due to insufficient exposure to strategies for its effective implementation.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, Owuotanda found that educators were not prepared for QMS and often had negative perceptions about its impact on teaching and learning practices.<sup>9</sup> He recommended improved monitoring and evaluation methods, coupled with in-service training, to address these gaps. Many educators appeared to lack a comprehensive understanding of post-democratic educational reforms, contributing to reluctance in accepting QMS as a valid appraisal tool. Stevenson emphasized that an effective educator appraisal system should support the development of knowledge and skills, ultimately boosting confidence.<sup>10</sup> Transparency remains a cornerstone of institutional integrity; however, it poses a significant challenge during evaluations, especially when conducted by external stakeholders such as district officials. The absence of timely feedback further exacerbated educators' frustration, as they were often unaware of performance outcomes. Moreover, external moderators did not communicate assessment frameworks promptly to selected schools, and necessary feedback mechanisms were often lacking.

Ahea, Ahea, and Rahman emphasized that effective feedback enables schools to provide supporting evidence that helps moderators make informed decisions.<sup>11</sup> Delays or complete absence of feedback were a common complaint. SMTs struggled with necessary preparations, undermining trust in the evaluation process. Educators felt excluded from the process and, therefore, were unable to understand its purpose.

These concerns are validated by the study. Evaluation processes often lack transparency, leading to educator demotivation. The SMT members themselves were often unclear about the procedures, creating further confusion. Anxiety also emerged as a major issue among educators during final evaluations. The Department of Basic Education, along with teacher unions, must address this to alleviate fears, especially since QMS is a product of collective bargaining between employers and unions.

Although intended as a tool for development, QMS was perceived as an inspection mechanism. An effective intervention is urgently needed to address challenges and improve implementation. The training and empowerment of educators are crucial. As the saying goes, "knowledge conquers everything." Reading and correctly interpreting the QMS manual, described as an "educator's bible", is essential. Misinterpretation of manual risks that undermine implementation. It is recommended to involve knowledgeable individuals during the QMS development stages, with internal workshops promoted to foster collaborative learning and robust discussion. These workshops offer a platform for diverse perspectives and help build ownership. Regular QMS meetings were recommended, as well as maintaining appropriate educator-learner ratios to enhance implementation efficacy. This aligns with Matorera, who stressed the importance of educator training and upskilling for successful QMS execution, ultimately leading to improved teaching quality and learner satisfaction.<sup>12</sup> The South African appraisal system places curriculum monitoring and supervision primarily on SMTs, who are expected to support both educators and learners. Curriculum management is essential to learner success, and effective monitoring and evaluation are crucial for academic improvement.

Strategic planning promotes leadership commitment by involving educators in professional development. However, signs of resistance to QMS persist in some schools. Teaching quality is largely

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<sup>8</sup> Mathew, Pillay, and Bala, "Educators' Perceptions and Readiness towards Performance Appraisal Systems," 446.

<sup>9</sup> Owuotanda, "Challenges in the Implementation of Performance Management Systems in Public Secondary Schools: A South African Case," 76.

<sup>10</sup> Stevenson, "Teacher Appraisal Systems and Professional Growth: A South African Analysis," 5.

<sup>11</sup> Md Mamoon-Al-Bashir Ahea, Md Rezaul Kabir Ahea, and Ismat Rahman, "The Value and Effectiveness of Feedback in Improving Students' Learning and Professionalizing Teaching in Higher Education.," *Journal of Education and Practice* 7, no. 16 (2016): 39.

<sup>12</sup> Matorera, "The Significance of Teacher Development in Improving Quality Education: A Case of South African Public Schools," 89.

influenced by the knowledge and performance of educators. Furthermore, contextual school factors play a role in QMS implementation and, by extension, teaching quality. Dyosini and Thokozane argue that committed and competent educators improve academic outcomes, particularly in curriculum delivery and assessment practices.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, collaboration among all stakeholders is critical.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Adopt a bottom-up participatory model in the implementation of the Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS), ensuring that educators, school management teams, and district officials are meaningfully engaged in policy design, planning, and review processes. Separate IQMS ratings from salary adjustments to maintain the developmental purpose of the system and reduce tendencies toward inflated performance scores. Allocate targeted funding and resources to support professional development initiatives, especially in under-resourced and rural schools within the Chris Hani District.

### **For District Education Officials**

Provide continuous support and oversight throughout the IQMS cycle by assisting schools with planning, training, and monitoring activities. Establish external or rotating evaluation panels that comprise experienced educators and officials from other schools to enhance the objectivity and credibility of teacher evaluations. Organize capacity-building workshops to train school management teams on fair appraisal practices, feedback mechanisms, and data-driven decision-making.

### **For School Principals and School Management Teams (SMTs)**

Promote a participatory school culture by involving educators in decision-making, setting goals, and the formulation of school improvement plans linked to the IQMS findings. Ensure transparency in evaluation processes by clearly communicating criteria, timelines, and feedback methods to all staff. Tailor professional development activities to align with the varying career stages of educators, providing mentorship for novice teachers, advanced training for mid-career staff, and leadership development for veteran teachers.

### **For Educators**

Actively participate in self-evaluation and peer-review activities to promote professional growth and reflective practice. Collaborate with SMTs and district officials to identify personal development needs and design improvement plans aligned with school goals. Participate in continuous professional development (CPD) programs and share best practices to strengthen teaching quality across the district.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study affirms the relevance of TQM as a foundational framework for interpreting educators' perceptions of QMS in the secondary schools of the Chris Hani District. TQM promotes continuous improvement, inclusive participation, and systemic accountability essential for a thriving school culture. However, the findings highlight a gap between these ideals and the practical realities of QMS implementation. Challenges such as inconsistent communication, lack of feedback, minimal stakeholder participation, and insufficient training suggest that the core principles of TQM have not been fully implemented. These issues risk turning QMS into a compliance tool rather than a developmental mechanism. When educators feel ill-equipped and unsupported, meaningful participation decreases, weakening long-term institutional transformation. To overcome these shortcomings, educational authorities and school leaders must reinforce transparent practices, prioritise ongoing professional development, and facilitate authentic stakeholder collaboration. The incorporation of QMS in a TQM framework requires more than procedural alignment; it demands a cultural shift in perceptions of quality, accountability, and professional growth. Only through this change can QMS drive sustainable educational progress within the Chris Hani District and beyond.

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<sup>13</sup> Dyosini, "Professional Development of Teachers: Perceptions and Challenges of Foundation Phase Teachers."

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## ABOUT AUTHORS

Mandlenkosi Nathaniel Mkontwana is a South African academic and experienced educator currently serving as a lecturer at Walter Sisulu University, Komani Campus. He holds a PhD in Education (2025) and multiple postgraduate qualifications in history, governance, and heritage studies from the University of Fort Hare, the University of Pretoria, and the University of the Free State. With over three decades of experience in the education sector, including roles as Head of Department and Acting Principal, his expertise spans inclusive education, curriculum studies, and educational leadership. His academic and professional work reflects a strong commitment to advancing teaching, learning, and educational transformation in South Africa.

Owen Madalambana is serving as Deputy Head of Department and Senior Lecturer at Walter Sisulu University. In this role, he contributes to both academic and administrative functions, including curriculum planning, faculty mentorship, and the promotion of a culture of continuous professional development. He has also published peer-reviewed articles in accredited journals, contributing to scholarly discourse in his fields of interest. He is actively strengthening his scholarly expertise through participation in internal and external academic reviews of postgraduate programs and examination processes. His research niche areas are History Education, Educational Leadership and Management, Inclusive Education and higher education transformation agendas. His ongoing scholarly work and professional engagements reflect a strong commitment to advancing educational practice and fostering inclusive, evidence-based approaches to leadership and teaching. He is also participating in quality assurance as a catalyst for transforming higher education, focusing on the contextual challenges and opportunities that shape South African higher education.