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**An Investigation into School Leaders' Perspective as Change Agents in the Implementation of the Performance Management System (PMS): Case of South East and Southern Regions' Junior Secondary Schools in Botswana**

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**An Investigation into School Leaders' Perspective as Change Agents in the Implementation of the Performance Management System (PMS): Case of South East and Southern Regions' Junior Secondary Schools in Botswana**



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**Abstract**

**Purpose:** This background or concept paper develops a case into school leaders' perceptions as change agents in the implementation of the performance management system (PMS) in Junior Secondary Schools in Botswana. As change agents, school leaders were expected to fully implement the PMS. Research has demonstrated that PMS has been unsatisfactorily implemented in Junior Secondary Schools in Botswana (Koruyezu, 2010; Bulawa, 2011; Nkwe, 2015; Molefhi, 2015, Pheko, Bathuleng & Kgosidialwa, 2018). The purpose of this paper is to lay the foundation for the study which will investigate school leaders' perceptions as change agents in the implementation of the performance management system (PMS) in the South East and Southern Regions' junior secondary schools in Botswana.

**Methodology:** The study plans to use the quantitative research approach to explore school leaders' perceptions as change agents in implementing PMS in their schools. A Likert scale questionnaire for data collection from school heads, deputy school heads, heads of department and senior teachers will be employed. This background paper draws from transformational leadership theory to outline an agenda and approach for change agent leadership.

**Findings:** This is an empirical study whose findings will establish views from school leaders on what issues they encountered while implementing PMS. Furthermore if objectives of this policy have been implemented and achieved. From the findings it will be succinctly clear what change attributes school leaders as change agents require in order to effectively implement the PMS. Recommendations will be developed to assist the Ministry of Education Skills and Development on better alternatives of implementing PMS policy including meeting the skills of school leaders to become effective change agents.

**Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy:** as a practice school leaders are mandated to ensure that any approved change for the schools meet the agreed objectives, but there is no study that have focused on the perceptions of the school leaders with regard to this. It is therefore crucial for this proposed study to indicate what type of policy would be appropriate to show the necessary skills required for the implementation of the PMS in the schools. This approach is validated by the transformation theory. Therefore, its unique contribution would be to bring forth the necessity for school leaders to have the requisite change attributes.

**Keywords:** *Change, Change Agent, School Leaders, Preparation, Skills, Change Attributes, Educational Change.*

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## INTRODUCTION

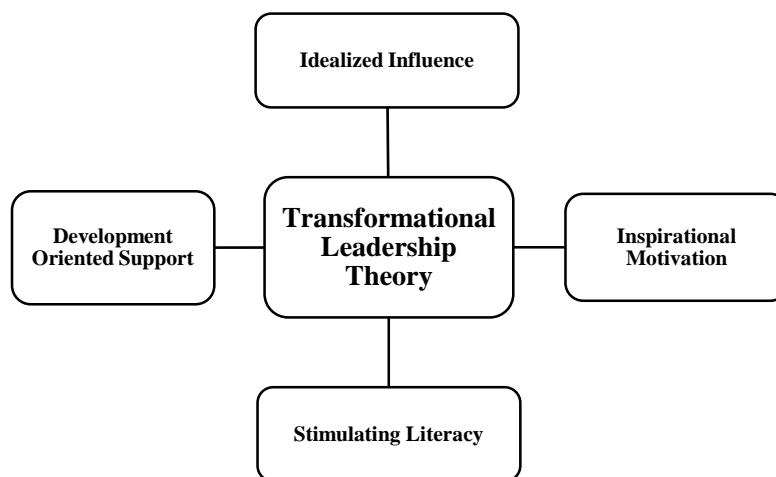
This background paper develops a case into school leaders' perceptions as change agents in the implementation of the performance management system (PMS). Performance Management System (PMS) is a tool for improving the quality of education by setting clear goals, monitoring progress, providing feedback and rewarding achievements. School leaders play a crucial role in facilitating the PMS process, as they have to communicate the vision, motivate the staff, address the challenges and ensure the alignment of the PMS with the school's mission and values. However, implementing the PMS is not an easy task, as it involves changing the culture, structure and practices of the school. Therefore, school leaders need to have the skills, knowledge and attitudes to lead and manage change effectively. They also need to have a clear understanding of the benefits and limitations of the PMS, as well as the potential risks and opportunities that it presents for their school. This paper outlines the rationale and design of the proposed study, which involves quantitative research in twenty Junior Secondary Schools in Botswana. It is undertaken with the primary purpose to explore the school leaders' perceptions their preparedness as change agents, with special reference to the following questions; how their leadership have impact the envisaged change? How were they prepared for the role they played as change agents? The change agent-ship skills they required and the change agents' attributes they needed to implement an educational change reform? Theoretically, the study draws from transformational leadership theory (Erisksen & Cooper, 2018). In addition, Hall and Hord (2015) emphasized that change agent attributes are entrenched in transformational leadership theory of which principals should be accustomed to in order to lead a successful change process. The paper starts by presenting the theoretical framework which informs this study. Thereafter, outlines the key elements of the design of the research study which aims to understand the perceptions of school leaders as change agents in the implementation of educational reforms in Botswana.

### **Transformational Leadership Theory and Conceptualization of School Leaders as Change Agents' Framework**

A transformational leadership theory is adopted for this study. This theory is chosen as a base for this study to provide a framework on the best ways through which school leaders as change agents can learn better attributes of implementing a change strategy in a school setting. The theory will be used to justify that school leaders as change agents should be prepared in order to effectively implement change through the PMS. The theory brings about a process of influencing major changes in the attitudes, beliefs and values of followers to a point where the goals of an organization and vision of leader are internalized and followers achieve performances beyond expectations (Khanin, 2007; Erisksen & Cooper, 2018). Deveshwar and Aneja (2014, p. 178) has proposed four dimensions of transformational leadership:

- a) Individualized consideration: Leader behaves with his/her subordinates according to their own characteristics and capabilities. Leader pays personal attention to individuals in order to develop a healthy relationship by providing new learning opportunities according to interest and skills.
- b) Inspirational motivation: Inspirational and motivational leaders are those who challenge their followers in their jobs and create a clear perspective to reach goals and go toward the future by increasing efficiency in the work place.

- c) Intellectual stimulation: Leaders encourage their subordinates to create motivation and creativity by modifying approaches and opportunities of their own subordinates. The main purpose of the leader is offering free flow of ideas and imaginations so that their followers and subordinates try to reach new techniques and approaches, and
- d) Idealized influence: Leaders become model for their followers by their friendly behavior. They admire, respect, and trust their followers. They pay attention to the needs of their followers than their needs, and avoid using the power for personal interest. This is illustrated by Figure 1 below.



*Figure 1: Four Dimensions of Transformational Leadership Theory*

*Source: Deveshwar and Aneja (2014)*

For this present study, Deveshwar and Aneja (2014) ideas are helpful for understanding the ways in which school leaders as change agents can support, nurture the skills required and identify gaps that need to be closed. The attributes of the transformational theory are relative to enabling attainment and development of much needed relationships to transform the school environment (Ericksen & Cooper, 2018). The transformation tenets create and foster mutual support and increased self-awareness to achieve a positive goal for leaders implementing a reform (Ericksen & Cooper, 2018). These researchers, therefore, hypothesized that school leaders as change agents require a transformational potential to implement a change strategy and work towards improving students' results in Junior Secondary Schools. On the contrary, the researchers opined that without the transformational potential school leaders as change agents will inadequately implement the change strategy and the school results will continue to decline. In addition, Kouzes and Posner (2017) as well as Hall and Hord (2015) popularized transformation leadership theory. Kouzes and Posner (2017) have further proposed that transformational leadership characteristics focus only on collaboration and relationship building to effectively lead staff through change. Kouzes and Posner (2017, p. 27) have proposed further four dimensions of transformational leadership theory as:

- Creating a shared vision
- Modelling the way
- Supporting others to act
- Creating a culture of celebrating values and victories.

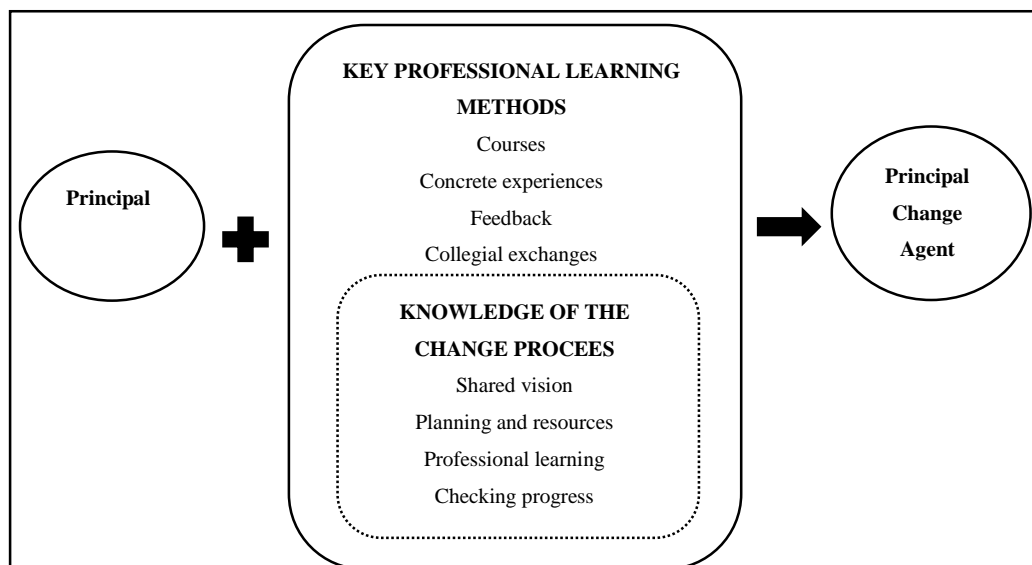
On the same light, Hall and Hord (2015, p. 30) have also espoused six factors framing how to lead a change process as:

- Developing a shared vision
- Planning and providing resources
- Investing In Professional Learning
- Checking Progress
- Providing Continuous Assistance
- And creating supportive of change.

The above mentioned characteristics by Kouzes and Posner (2017) including those by Hall and Hord (2015) complement each another. Drawing from these it was possible for Acton (2021, p. 45) to frame the design for school leaders that include six components:

- Courses
- Concrete experiences
- Feedback
- Collegial exchanges
- Self-study and reflection

From the design above Acton (2021) built a conceptual framework to illustrate how principals could develop skills to become effective change agents as shown by Figure 2 below.



*Figure 2: A Conceptual Framework of the Development of the Principals as Change Agents Adapted from Acton (2021).*

In support of this framework (Huber, 2011) emphasized that the above shows how principals as change agents are developed and supported especially when key professional learning methods are used for them to learn specific knowledge and skills to become effective change agents who will ensure that there will be an effective change process (Huber, 2011). According to Huber (2011, p. 846) the framework “provides not only the structure and analysis for particular research studies but also a framework for evaluation and for the needs assessment of professional development”. Hall and Hord (2015) show that change agent attributes are

entrenched in transformational leadership theory of which principals should be accustomed to in order to lead a successful change process. It is therefore, appropriate that Acton (2021) conceptual framework which emphasises the importance of the transformational tenets is relevant to this study. The most pivotal importance is the need for school leaders understanding their role as change agents, and for them to attain requisite skills needed to effectively implement a change initiative.

For this study, the researcher conceptualised four dimensions of transformational leadership theory as illustrated in Figure 3 below.

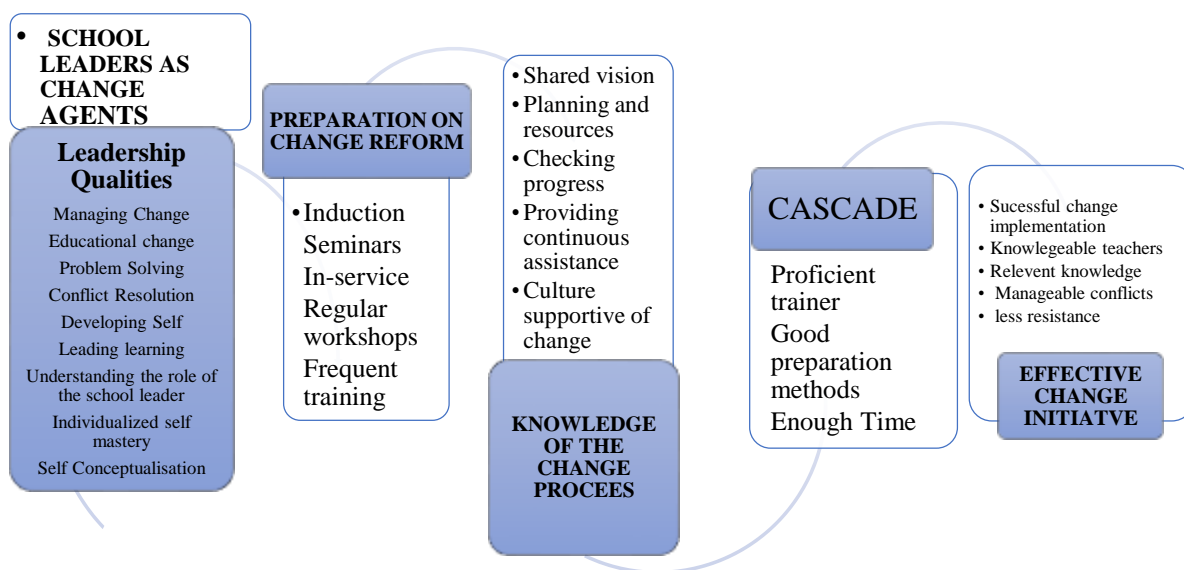


Figure 3: Conceptual Framework for This Study

As illustrated by figure 3 below, the tenets of the transformational leadership theory are understood to support skills acquisition in order for school leaders to be prepared as change agents to influence change in the school set up (Ericksen & Cooper, 2018). The first phase of the framework, shows that school leaders by virtue of their experience and management which were used as criterion to move up the school leadership ladder, would after sometime acquire experience in their portfolios which include: managing change, educational change, problem solving and conflict resolution, developing self, leading learning, understanding the role of the school leader, individualised self-mastery, and self-conceptualisation. On the contrary, school leaders unskilled on leadership qualities may find it very difficult to lead most school programmes. These leadership qualities are pivotal skills for school leaders as change agents as they are pre-requisites milestones for transformational leadership. The second phase of the framework, shows that school leaders should undergo a thorough preparation on the change initiative processes. The preparation is done through induction, seminars, in-service, regular workshops, and frequent training led by the initiators of the change programme or experts. Preparation is the phase that entails equipping the school leaders with knowledge, skills and attitudes anchored around the programme that is implemented as a reform. If that is narrowly carried out, the results anticipated might not be satisfactory.

The third phase of framework, shows that once phases one and two have been completed, the school leaders as change agents would be fully prepared, equipped and knowledgeable on the processes of the change initiative. The expectation is that, at this stage or phase the trainers (school leaders) and trainees (teachers) are sharing a common ground on the vision of change initiative, and they would collaborate in planning and identifying resources for the process of cascading the change initiative. If it happens that there would be no collaboration and no common ground on the new reform, there is a likelihood that there will be more challenges in implementing the new reform. In the fourth phase of the framework, school leaders as change agents would be well prepared, and proficient trainers, ready to cascade the initiative by training teachers. Where preparation was not well done, it is envisaged that cascading of the new processes will be marginally satisfactory. The fifth and last stage of the framework, shows more observable indicators of a successfully implementation of a change programme, through: evidence of knowledgeable teachers, school leaders being able to manage conflict, there being less resistance towards the change initiative and whole school ownership of the change programme being highly evident. This stage will be more evident when stage one, two, three, and four were successfully and satisfactory carried out. If on the contrary, these stages were unsatisfactory implemented the success of new initiative remains impossible.

These framework phases show that school leaders need to be supported, including tapping on the qualities of their experience as school leaders, through induction, seminars, regular workshops to ensure their effective preparation for them to lead new reform or initiative. These critical stages alluded above should result in transforming the school leaders to become change agents who would be proficient trainers, equipped with good skills to cascade the new change programme in their respective schools. The expectation is a successfully implementation of the change programme as indicated by the knowledge of the change initiative and whole school ownership towards the change programme. On the contrary, unsuccessfully implementation of the framework will be impossible to bring any desired outcome.

### **Developing a Perspective on School Leaders as Change Agents in Different Contexts**

Experts in the field of educational change (Lindegaard, 2011; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Fullan, 2016; Jones, 2018; Burner, 2018) all concur that change should be desired, belief on and planned to reform institutions. This perception raises an important point that to have a successfully implementation of a change initiative, change agents should have undergone a thorough preparation and readiness for the task. Research shows that this does not happens, hence Fullan's (2016) concludes that to implement change within public institutions is more problematic in many countries. Despite this emphasis of encountering problems, more countries around the world tend to task school leaders with the implementation of changes in their schools. Like in public organisations, there is evidence that school leaders meet some difficulties in meeting the demands of being change agents (Acton, 2021). According to Gerwing (2016) the problems are that some of them lack requisite skills for change agents such as; knowledge, values, and attitudes to effectively implement, manage and facilitate the process of change. This is supported by literature developed in developed countries, especially the United Kingdom (UK) and New Zealand that acknowledges that in order for school leaders to implement a change reform effectively, they need basic training on the change agent-ship (Acton, 2021).

The two countries which seem to have effectively introduced change agents in the implementation of the PMS to improve students' results are the United Kingdom (UK) and

New Zealand. The UK used head teachers and New Zealand used the principals as change agents. The headteachers in the UK were to implement the PMS as management reform into the school system to improve the work performance of teachers and school effectiveness (Page, 2016). Similarly, New Zealand used school principals as change agents to implement the PMS to promote and sustain high performance levels in schools (Mutch, 2012). As a result, the UK developed professional development programmes for head teachers to sharpen their leadership roles and lead school ever changing environment (Forrester, 2011). According to Bush (2016) the models of preparatory training, certification, selection, assessment, induction and ongoing development for school leaders are necessarily rooted in specific national conditions and contexts in the UK. The guidelines have become the cornerstone for the UK government as the government had been guided by studies, reports and assessments (Bush, 2016). The New Zealand, in comparison to the UK, developed a backdrop of inadequate and few induction programmes which indicated that in comparison to rest of world New Zealand shows commitment to improving change agent-ship and performance of schools (Wylie, 2017). The principals' recruitment drive is from a pool of well experienced teachers, for example, it is estimated that 40% of principals' currently serving in the schools had taught for more than 15 years before becoming a principal (Wylie, 2017). The recruitment drive is supplemented through principals' induction programmes (Patuawa, Robinson, Bendikson, Pope and Meyer, 2013).

The Botswana situation contrasts with the UK and New Zealand models that change agent-ship preparation is linked to effective implementation of educational reforms, as in 1999 Botswana introduced the PMS in junior secondary schools as a change strategy to measure teachers' performance and redress the continuous decline of school academic results. The Government mandating through policy the school heads and the senior management team (SMT) in the schools to lead the PMS implementation as change agents (Republic of Botswana, 2002). As expected, to lead the PMS, school leaders were to receive adequate preparedness on the PMS practices and processes. This was reinforced by the PMS document published as a guiding framework by the Botswana government captured stating that "managers in every Ministry or Department will lead the change process to ensure there is improved performance and delivery of services to the public as well as facilitate a culture of continuous improvement in their respective organizations" (Republic of Botswana, 2002, p. 8).

The emphasis on mandating the school leaders to lead the PMS was that they should cascade the practices and processes to teachers and students in their schools to improve school results. Despite the expectation that schools leaders as change agents would effectively implement the PMS in junior secondary schools, monitor teachers performance closely, improve school results, all it appears unachievable. Several studies conducted on PMS implementation in the education sector revealed that PMS has been inadequately and unsatisfactorily implemented in junior secondary schools, that there is poor measuring of teacher's performance, and a continuous decline of junior secondary schools examination results in Botswana (Koruyezu, 2010; Bulawa, 2011; Nkwe, 2015; Molefhi, 2015, Pheko, Bathuleng & Kgosidialwa, 2018).

It is therefore, against this empirical findings that PMS implementation in junior secondary schools has been very inadequate and unsatisfactory, that a study of this nature is undertaken with specific reference to explore school leaders' preparedness experiences as change agents to implement the PMS in junior secondary schools. This is reinforced by the Revised National Policy on Education (RNPE) of 1994, the current Botswana education blue print that "the head as an instructional leader, together with the deputy and senior teachers, should take major



responsibility for in-service training of teachers within their schools, through regular observation of teachers and organization of workshops to foster communication between teachers on professional matters and address weaknesses (Republic of Botswana, 1994, p.47). It also posits that “the education officers’ visits to schools should supplement the school based in-service training and should be geared towards a general ‘performance audit’ of the school as well as the training of the heads” (p.47). School leaders as change agents therefore, carry a mandate to implement educational reforms in the schools. It is, therefore the government’s policy that school leaders learn new skills and techniques as change agents. As change agents, school leaders were expected to attain relevant skills, be creative, resilient and have the fortitude to withstand the pressure of their responsibilities (Republic of Botswana, 2001). The gap, therefore, seems to be no coordinated, nor structured preparedness of school leaders as change agents in order to implement a change strategy in form of the PMS in junior secondary schools in Botswana. This is supported by Botswana Examination Council (BEC) (2020) junior certificate (JC) results reports that JC results are declining year after year.

In order to achieve the task of implementing a change, school leaders as change agents required requisite skills such as: knowledge of the institution, power to legitimize decisions, ability to create harmony and trust, ability to identify and analyze belief system and norms of the institution, develop and articulate the institution’s vision, extrovert, good interpersonal skills, ability to conceptualize and present ideas, and be a good organizer (Seeletso, Maldives, Lansiquet & Fusitua, 2013). If they have the requisite skills as change agents, it is expected that they would implement the PMS processes by cascading their knowledge to teachers and students to drive them towards results improvement. Nevertheless, for the past 24 years, there seems to be no improvement in the PMS implementation and students’ assessment (JC) results, even though there are school leaders as change agents who are implementing the PMS. For this reason, there seem to be a gap in the preparation of school leaders as change agents to the PMS implementation as the outcome of the overall junior certificate (JC) results from merit to grade C has not improved but rather declined. This continuous unsatisfactory performance of junior secondary schools performance may be an indication that school leaders as change agents were not well prepared and skilled to implement the PMS. This is consistent with Fullan (2011) findings that, all successful schools experience “implementation dips” as they move forward hence leaders requires new skills and new understandings (Fullan, 2011).

Using Fullan (2011) assertions, unsatisfactory examination results in Botswana junior secondary schools may be linked directly to the existence of a gap in the manner in which school leaders as change agents are prepared, especially that they are responsible for the performance of their schools and accountable for learners’ results. Conversely, this also resonates with an assessment and evaluation report by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2006) on educational policy in Botswana, which maintains that public awareness on educational policies in Botswana is very low, even those charged with the responsibility of implementing education policy in the different sub-sectors are not competent to carry out policy implementation drive (UNESCO, 2006). It is recommended in this report that the policy implementation problems need to be addressed aggressively, as they impact negatively on government budget because more resources are deployed on the change initiatives which are not effective (UNESCO, 2006). Prosci (2008) concurs with the UNESCO report that the problems of initiating change in any organization require leaders and managers to understand change management, able to build capabilities and competences that able them to be better prepared to manage the changes.

## **Responding to the Need to Close The Research Gap: An Investigation into School Leaders as Change Agents in the Implementation of PMS in Junior Secondary Schools in Botswana**

In this paper so far a rationale for the study has been established that there is a gap to explore school leaders' perspective as change agents in the implementation of the PMS in Botswana junior secondary schools. Since 1999 there has been a continuous decline of Junior Certificate (JC) final examinations results in Botswana. The Government assigned school leaders to be change agents to implement the PMS in the education sector. The Government stated that it will train school leaders on the PMS processes, and equip them with requisite knowledge and skills so that the school leaders cascade the PMS to teachers and students to improve student's results and redress issues of low productivity in junior secondary schools in Botswana (Republic of Botswana, 2002). It is not clear if that was done. However, 23 to 24 years since the implementation of the PMS as a change strategy in junior secondary schools, school leaders seem to have not effectively assisted their schools to improve their results because the overall JC results from merit to grade C had not improved but rather declined.

The problem seems to be that one of the major causes of poor performance of junior secondary schools in Botswana may be associated with the manner in which school leaders as change agents were prepared to implement a reform in form of the PMS. This could have been caused by factors as stated by Fullan (2011) that changes into the education sector are often more complex and very challenging, and require that change leaders are well prepared for the task of leading a change programme or initiative. Change agents preparation is often done pre and post implementation of the change programme in the form of continuous in-service training through workshops, induction, mentoring and coaching. Studies conducted on the PMS implementation in Botswana (Koruyezu, 2010; Bulawa, 2011; Nkwe, 2015; Molefhi, 2015) revealed that there was inadequate knowledge of the PMS processes and ineffective PMS implementation while junior secondary school results continue to decline year after year.

### **Conclusion**

Students' performance hasn't improved and this necessitates this study on an account to establish why did school leaders as change agents did not assist their schools to improve their students' results at junior secondary schools? In addition, the apparent scarcity of studies that focus on perceptions of school leaders as change agents in Botswana junior secondary schools have also necessitated this current study. Therefore, this study attempts to undertake a holistic investigation into how school leaders were prepared as change agents to implement a change programme in the form of the PMS in junior secondary schools in Botswana.

### **Recommendations**

Recommendations will be provided from the findings of the study, because this is a concept paper and the study is in progress.

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