Participants' perceptions of the implementation of the MASTEC project, a school improvement project in the Limpopo province of South Africa.

Molly Cynthia Nombulelo PHEWA (BSc, BEd, Dip. M. Proj, MEd.)

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ABSTRACT

The research reported in this thesis was an exploration of the perceptions and lived experiences of participants in the Mathematics, Science and Technology Education College (MASTEC) project, a school improvement project in the Limpopo province of South Africa. The MASTEC project was introduced with the aim of improving provision of both experienced teachers' in-service training (INSET) and potential teachers' pre-service training (PRESET). This study sought to examine teacher educators' and school teachers' perceptions of issues relating to the implementation of MASTEC in the different contexts of its participant schools.

A phenomenological methodological framework was employed and the research design comprised of multiple qualitative methods of data generation, namely focus group discussions, participant observation and document examination.

Amongst the key findings emerging from the study a number of benefits of MASTEC were identified for the participating schools and for individual participants. These related to the upgrading of some schools' infrastructure and teachers' development of more innovative teaching and planning skills.

However, the programme was reported to have worked better for some schools than others, and this may well speak to the different contexts in which it was implemented. This assertion is corroborated by what the participants reported as some of the main limitations of this project, namely:

- the manner in which the project was implemented led to its failure in some secondary schools as opposed to others;
- the programme was reported as being more successful in primary schools than in secondary schools.

This research has identified several implications for policy-making, further research and practice. For example, it is recommended that national guidelines for the development, implementation and evaluation of school improvement programmes, adaptable for specific contexts, be developed at policy level in an attempt to ensure that such programmes address the transformational needs of the South African education system.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my late brother, Bhut'Ndyebo (Bhidyope), with whom I have always had a healthy academic sibling rivalry. I am almost certain that, had you not been taken away from us so untimely, you would have completed your Masters Degree and would by now be pursuing (if not completed) your Doctoral Degree in Ethnomusicology. This one's for you Bro.

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