

**A STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK FOR  
SUSTAINABLE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE**

by

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## **DECLARATION**

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This is to declare that the study hereby submitted for the master's degree in the field of Education Research and Management in the Faculty of Education, University of the Free State, is my own independent work. Where help has been sought it has been acknowledged. I further declare that this work is submitted for the first time for a qualification at this university and that it was never submitted at any other university or another faculty at this university. I also hereby cede copyright of this work to the University of the Free State

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**MALEME MMATHULO BRENDA**

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**DATE**

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## **DEDICATION**

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**This study is dedicated to:  
my late grandmother, Mmatinkane and  
my family, especially my daughter, Bonolo**

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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**I give gratitude to:**

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## SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

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Improvement of academic performance in schools, especially among communities of low socio-economic status, has mostly been the responsibility of experts - teachers and learned officials. This notion perpetuates power relations where other crucial participants - parents and learners - are marginalised.

This study is about the design and implementation of a systemic strategy for a sustainable learning environment towards the enhancement of high learner academic performance at a school. The nature of this study necessitated the use of critical emancipatory research as a theoretical framework. The collaborative and participatory nature of the project guided it into participatory action research which coincides with critical emancipatory research at interrogation of power and emancipation of the powerless. Critical discourse analysis made it possible to understand and show reciprocity that exists between academic performance and community cultural wealth.

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# **CHAPTER 1**

## **ORIENTATION AND BACKGROUND OF A SYSTEMIC STRATEGY FOR ENHANCED LEARNER ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE**

### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

This study is about the design and implementation of a systemic strategy that can contribute towards enhanced learner academic performance at a school. This chapter discusses the background of the study and sheds light on the problem statement by discussing the aim and objectives that strive to respond to the research question. The chapter also highlights the theoretical framework, the research design and methodology, as well as the technique for data analysis and interpretation that the study adopts. A brief summary of the significance of the study and the layout of subsequent chapters are also presented.

### **1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

The improvement of academic performance in South African schools, especially in the poor regions of the country, is still a matter left solely in the hands of the education authorities and the school management teams (Mestry & Grobler, 2007: 176; Nnoli & Ajayi-Smith, 2012: 6). Parents, communities and even learners are not involved in decisions that concern improvement of learner academic performance. This happens in spite of the existence of legislation that devolves power to the parents and the communities (Mestry & Grobler, 2007: 176). As a result, learners who find themselves in this situation experience difficulty to perform on par with their counterparts who have full support at school, as well as from their families and their communities.

Kendall (2006: 62-63) points to this disparity as being the effect of the past where education was centralised and matters regarding education, including improvement

of academic performance, were left in the hands of 'experts', whose agenda was to maintain power and control in the hands of the privileged (Kendall, 2006: 63). The situation currently, even after two decades of democracy, is that parents, especially from the black working-class, still show reluctance to participate actively in the learning processes of their children (Blackmore & Hutchison, 2010:501; Boaduo, Milondzo & Adjei, 2009: 97). Levin (2000: 155) asserts that the past oppression did not end with parents, but was carried over into the learners who are subjected to control from all other stakeholders. The whole situation calls for a turn-around strategy that values collaboration of all affected and interested stakeholders towards enhancement and sustenance of quality teaching and learning.

Literature studies demonstrate a direct relationship between learner performance and parental involvement in their children's education (Mestry&Grobler, 2007:177; Nnoli & Ajayi-Smith, 2012: 1). It shows that learners whose parents are actively involved in their education develop a sense of well-being and perform well academically.

Bokgabane, the school that this study focuses on, has predominantly black learners who come from the surrounding farms. Most of these learners are the children of farm workers and domestic workers, who are mostly women. Because of the abnormal hours that parents work, their socio-economic status and the legacy of the past that instilled fear and alienation among parents, they (parents) demonstrate reluctance to support their children in their education (Blackmore & Hutchison, 2010:501; Boaduo et al, 2009: 97).

### **1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

The school that the study focuses on experienced fluctuating Grade 12 results for the past few years. Between 2010 and 2011, the results improved substantially and it was the first time that the school had a pass rate of between 80 and 100 percent for two consecutive years. The concern, however, was that the results might not be sustained if a strategy was not developed and implemented to maintain the school's academic reputation. Studies show that the improvement of academic performance has been on the agenda of international and local education departments for many

years and various strategies were developed to address the issue (Akyeampong, 2005: 3; Mintrop & Papazian, 2003: 3; Murtaza, 2010: 213; Sanders, 2010:2). However, some schools, including the school that this study focuses on, still experience poor academic performance. Studies further show that social issues such as education are better resolved if all stakeholders that are affected by this, are involved (Boaduo et al, 2009: 96; Nnoli & Ajayi-Smith, 2012: 6).

### **1.3.1 Research question**

Based on the background shared above, the question posed is: How to design a systemic strategy for sustainable learning environments towards enhanced learner academic performance?

### **1.3.2 Research aim**

The aim of this study is to design a systemic strategy for a sustainable learning environment aimed at enhancing learner academic performance at a Mangaung school. The attainment of this aim is considered as a response to the research question. It is, however, critical to fully understand this aim by unpacking it further into simple objectives.

### **1.3.3 Research objectives**

In order to address the research aim, the study pursued the following objectives:

1. To justify the need for the development and implementation of the systemic strategy towards the enhancement of learner academic performance. The purpose is to ensure that the problem is well-stated.
2. To identify the main components of the systemic strategy that would serve as possible solutions to the needs. These would be decisive elements of the strategy that would ascertain the successful attainment of the research aim and respond to the research question.

3. To explore the conditions that serve as requirements for the successful development and implementation of the systemic strategy towards the enhancement of academic performance.
4. To determine possible threats and risks that could hinder the development and implementation of the systemic strategy towards enhanced academic performance. This would enable the determination of extenuating factors that could be built into the strategy in order to ensure continuity.
5. To explore and test the effectiveness of the systemic strategy towards enhanced academic performance. This is done to determine what works and what does not work, so that the strategy can be enhanced. Monitoring becomes therefore an integral part of the implementation process.

## **1.4 LITERATURE REVIEW**

The literature review was done with the purpose of finding an appropriate theoretical framework to guide the study, as well as learning from best practices regarding a collaborative strategy for enhancing academic performance. This was also done to ensure that the study does not re-invent the wheel, but contributes to knowledge creation. Furthermore, a review of existing and relevant literature would make the researcher aware of the mistakes and problems experienced by other researchers of similar studies. The literature review is discussed in detail in Chapter two.

### **1.4.1 Theoretical framework**

It is evident from the information presented in the previous section that this study examines issues that are pertinent to the redress of the past imbalances in order to create social justice. Thus, critical emancipatory research (CER) becomes an appropriate theoretical framework to couch the study (Mahlomaholo & Netshandama, 2012: 41) since it relates to the aim of the study. In Chapter 2, section 2.2, the study discusses, in detail, the historical background and objectives of CER in order to motivate the choice. It further discusses the relationship between the

researcher and the participants, values, and language use. The following discussion indicates the relevance of CER to this study.

CER is a research paradigm that acknowledges transformation and is aimed at enhancing social justice through collaborative action of those involved. It amplifies the voices of the marginalised and promotes peace, hope and equity (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000: 282; Ledwith, 2007: 597; Piper et al, 2009:13). The situation at the school under investigation was demoralising as the school operated in isolation from its community. Because of cultural and socioeconomic segregation, parents at this school did not get involved in their children's education and this manifested in the weak performance of learners.

The study wished to restore faith that the situation could be changed, resulting in feelings of peace and calmness in those affected, as well as creating social justice. Through the collaborative efforts of parents, teachers, learners and community members, equity in terms of academic performance was attained. The results corroborated the direct relationship between the parent-community collaboration and the academic performance of learners, despite the social status of parents or the community. The disparities which existed undermined the principles of democracy in this country, thus the need to confront and deal with it.

CER enabled the smooth collaboration between the various stakeholders because it allows the researcher and the participants to interact as equal partners (Mahlomaholo, 2009: 13). It also facilitated harmonious interactions among participants since it opened the communicative space in which diverse people co-create knowledge within an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000: 595). In CER, people are seen as having the potential to free themselves from situations that entangle them, such as self-doubt, fear and perceptions that education issues should be left to the school and education officials.

#### **1.4.2 The operational concepts**

The concepts that are fundamental to this study, namely systemic strategy, sustainable learning environment and enhanced learner performance, are defined and discussed in the context of the study and within the principles of critical



emancipatory research. Defining and discussing these concepts were necessary in order to establish common understanding to the readership as these concepts can have different meanings under different circumstances (Silva, 2007: 172).

A systemic strategy, as one of the concepts, refers to coordinated activities that involve all stakeholders and are aimed at attaining a desired goal, namely improved performance in schools. (Mintrop and Papazian (2003: 1-2). Collaboration of various stakeholders creates a sustainable learning environment, which is described as the kind of setting that promotes learning that last (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006:17). The improvement of learner academic performance therefore requires all stakeholders to work together towards lasting improvements that will change lives, add value and liberate people's minds.

### **1.4.3 Related literature**

From the literature reviewed it became evident that improvement of learner academic performance is a challenge, both internationally and locally (Mintrop & Papazian, 2003: 3; Murtaza, 2010: 213; Sanders, 2010: 2). Strategies were designed and implemented to address the issue, but it seemed that poor performance remained a problem. Literature further demonstrated that the involvement of parents and communities in all the levels of decision-making around matters of their children's education could significantly benefit teaching and learning and improve academic performance (Mmotlane, Winnaar & Kivilu, 2009:2; Mestry & Grobler, 2007:178; Smith, 2006:46).

In order to discover more about the research problem, the strategies employed in Australia, Kenya, Botswana and the North West Province of South Africa were studied. The information gathered was used to advise the envisaged strategy. This literature review was done against the backdrop of the objectives of the study.

#### **1.4.3.1 The need to develop and implement a systemic strategy**

In all the countries and the province mentioned above, poor academic performance motivated the development of academic improvement strategies. Literature has confirmed that the school alone, without the involvement of parents and

communities, is unable to achieve academic enhancement (Boaduo et al, 2009: 96; Nnoli & Ajayi-Smith, 2012: 1; Van Wyk & Lemmer, 2008: 7). Governments in the developing and developed countries have also tried to make education a social responsibility by instituting legislative imperatives that mandate schools to work together with parents and communities as partners (Mestry&Grobler, 2007: 177). It was in the light of the above that the countries mentioned earlier, as well as the school in this study, saw the need to develop and implement collaborative academic enhancement strategies to respond to their academic performance challenges.

#### **1.4.3.2 Determining the components of a systemic strategy**

The challenges that hindered the maintaining of good academic performance were identified for the development of a systemic strategy. In order to address those challenges, it was essential to establish the structure that would coordinate and guide the whole process. Establishing the coordinating team, developing a shared vision, completing a SWOT analysis, prioritizing, collaborative development of the action plan and strategies for monitoring and evaluation became critical components of a systemic strategy for a sustainable learning environment towards enhanced learner academic performance.

The academic enhancement strategies employed in the North West Province, Botswana and Kenya, for example, were led by structures composed of individuals who represented the interests of those affected, who understood the aim of such strategies, who were prepared to participate meaningfully towards addressing the identified problem of poor academic performance and who shared a common vision (Aga Khan Foundation, 2010: 2; Boaduo et al, 2009: 97; Mahlomaholo, 2010b: 2). These structures were charged with the responsibility of guiding the processes of the SWOT analysis, prioritising, drawing up the action plan and monitoring its implementation.

#### **1.4.3.3 Favourable conditions for the development and implementation of a systemic strategy**

The conditions favourable for the development and implementation of a systemic strategy towards enhanced performance were: circumstances that fostered the effectual establishment of the team, an environment that promoted a shared vision,

an atmosphere that facilitated the development of SWOT analysis, appropriate conditions that enabled prioritisation, planning, and an environment that promoted the performance of monitoring and reflection (Aga Khan Foundation, 2010: 3; Blackmore & Hutchison, 2010: 504).

#### **1.4.3.4 Threats to the development and implementation of a systemic strategy**

Socio-economic circumstances of the communities seemed to pose a threat to the successful development and implementation of learner performance improvement strategies in Australia, Kenya and Botswana (Aga Khan Foundation, 2010; Boaduo et al, 2009:104). Sanders (2010:3) showed that low income, poverty, immigration and limited language proficiency can be limiting factors in the school improvement. The possible risks with regard to this study were identified based on the components of the study, namely team establishment, common vision, SWOT analysis, collaborative planning and implementation, as well as monitoring and evaluation.

#### **1.4.3.5 Evidence of success of a systemic strategy**

The strategies employed in different countries yielded positive results that led to the achievement of the aspired goal. The successes achieved by those strategies are attributed to the efficiency of the coordinating structures which were established and operated towards a shared vision, a successful SWOT analysis, relevant prioritization, and effective collaborative planning and implementation (Aga Khan Foundation, 2010:3; Blackmore & Hutchison, 2010: 511; Boaduo et al, 2009:104; Mahlomaholo, 2010b: 11).

### **1.5 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

The research design and methodology had to be consistent with the theoretical framework discussed earlier. Thus, the same principles of social justice, peace, respect, trust and hope had to be upheld. This section highlights the aspects of the

research design and methodology which are elaborated on in greater detail in Chapter three.

### **1.5.1 Research design**

The nature of the study required collaboration of various stakeholders, therefore the study was designed in a manner that accommodated diversity (Castells, 2007: 242; Nkoane, 2009: 22). This study was coordinated by a team consisting of ten members, who represented parents, teachers, learners and other members of the community. The study coordinator, who was also a teacher at the school, conducted the research together with other members of the team. The role of this team was to coordinate and direct the activities of all participants towards the shared vision of a systemic framework (Mertens, 2010: 250; Thompson & Perry, 2006: 25). The team was also established to facilitate a social process that was collaborative, participatory, emancipatory, critical and reflexive, as advocated by Participatory Action Research (PAR) (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000: 597). Since the purpose of the study was to create collaboration of parents, teachers and learners for enhancement of academic performance, this coordinating team facilitated peaceful interactions of the participants who came from diverse backgrounds (Levin & Greenwood, 2011: 29; Mertens, 2010: 250).

Other participants included about 120 Grade 10 – 12 learners and their parents, twelve Grade 10-12 teachers, and other community members who showed interest in the project. The selection of the participants was based on the fact that they were directly affected by the problem and they would also benefit from the outcome of their contributions (Boaduo et al, 2009: 100). These participants actively participated in the activities which advised the development of the strategy, and the implementation of the action plan.

### **1.5.2 Research methodology**

The study adopted Participatory Action Research (PAR) as a research method to collect data during the development and implementation of a systemic strategy towards enhanced learner performance. The method focuses on solving problems through inquiry into human problems in real life (Curry, 2005: 2). Poor academic performance is a reality and a problem facing many schools (Mintrop & Papazian,

2003: 3; Murtaza, 2010: 213), including the school concerned in this study. The participatory nature of PAR opened communicative space that created a favorable climate for participants to participate optimally in open communications and have a say in the decision-making processes (Dworski-Riggs & Langhout, 2010: 216; Sarason, 2003: 86). It (PAR) also developed critical understanding, among participants of their problem and made them aware that they had the potential to solve it by themselves.

The principles of PAR assisted in the advancement of the study objectives. They facilitated justification of the need to develop a systemic strategy towards enhanced learner performance; established the components of the strategy; and identified favourable conditions for, as well as threats to the development and implementation of such.

PAR is not about conducting research on people, but together with them (Jordan, 2003: 190; Ledwith, 2007: 599). Power relation is thus a critical concept in PAR, with the purpose of levelling power barriers among participants in a manner that promotes equity. The power differences among the various members of the school community in this study (parents, teachers and learners) necessitated a workshop on PAR as soon as the coordinating team was established.

#### **1.5.2.1 Instrumentation**

A voice recorder was used to record the discussions in various sessions and later transcribed verbatim. The instrument was chosen because of its versatility to be used over and over as necessary. Minutes of the meetings with the broader forum of participants were also used to gather data. A comments book for each group of participants was created to capture thoughts, feelings and other useful data as the study unfolded. Data from casual conversations, as well as observations were recorded in the journal that was kept throughout the study. Free attitude interview techniques were used to generate data (Meulenberg-Buskens, 1997: 3).

#### **1.5.2.2 Data collection procedure**

The study coordinator obtained permission from the Education department to conduct research at the school after the ethical clearance had been issued by the University of the Free State. Permission was also sought from the participants.

Parents of the participating learners signed consent letters that permitted their children to participate in the study. All other participants also gave written consent to participate in the study.

## **1.6 DATA ANALYSIS**

The data generated was analysed and interpreted through critical discourse analysis (Van Dijk, 2008: 85). The technique involves the examination of text and considers the meaning of words in the contexts of situations within which they were expressed. Spoken and written words were further interpreted at cognitive level since spoken words are often the reflection of the thoughts and the social setup of the person by whom it was uttered. Analysis was done and structured according to the five study objectives so as to maintain synergy with the objectives, the aim and the research question. CDA coincides well with CER and PAR because its intention is to expose and resist social inequality embedded in words and actions (Van Dijk, 2008: 85). Data analysis is presented in detail in Chapter 4.

## **1.7 FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STRATEGY**

Chapter five discusses in detail the systemic strategy for the enhancement of learner academic performance and presents the findings for each objective, as well as the activities for which data was analysed. The discussion first elaborates on preparation processes – such as establishing and building a team to facilitate the collaborative development and implementation of the strategy, based on the five key objectives. Finally, the findings are discussed, conclusions drawn and recommendations made.

## **1.8 VALUE OF THE STUDY**

The systemic strategy for a sustainable learning environment towards enhanced learner academic performance stimulated the collaboration of various stakeholders - fostering positive relationship between the school and the community towards enhancing quality education. The success of this strategy could therefore be

measured against the extent to which it developed unity among parents, teachers and learners, as well as the general community, in bringing about a culture of learning that would result in enhanced academic performance.

## **1.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The ethics committee of the University of the Free State approved my proposal to conduct research on a systemic strategy for sustainable learning environment towards enhanced learner academic performance (see Annexure A.1). Permission to conduct research at the school was sought from the Free State Department of Basic Education and permission was granted (see Annexure A.2 and A.3). At the level of the school, permission was also sought and granted (Annexure A.4). Subsequently, free and informed consent was obtained in writing (Annexure A.5) from the participants, who were assured of confidentiality during and after the study. Data generated was solely used for the purpose of the study and no other purpose.

## **1.10 STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION**

### Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter one gives an overview of the study, highlighting the research question, aim and objectives of the study and how literature in response thereto was reviewed to inform the methodology.

### Chapter 2: Literature Review

Chapter two presents the theoretical framework (Critical Emancipator Research) that underpins the study, as well as defines and discusses the operational concepts. Related literature is reviewed so as to develop constructs necessary for the design of the anticipated strategy.

### Chapter 3: Methodology and design

Chapter three discusses the methodologies used to generate data. Participatory Action Research was considered to be appropriate for the study since it

acknowledges that people have the ability to solve their own problems. The discussions around the development and implementation of a systemic strategy for enhanced academic performance were initiated through the use of Free Attitude Interview techniques.

#### Chapter 4: Data analysis, presentation and interpretation of results

Chapter four presents the data that were generated, and interprets and analyses it based on the objectives of the study. The findings from each objective are explained and discussed on the basis of literature: theory, policies, previous research findings and extracts from empirical data.

#### Chapter 5: Summary, findings, conclusions and recommendations

This chapter reports on the implementation of a systemic strategy for a sustainable learning environment towards enhanced learner academic performance, using analysed data. It also shows how the findings in chapter four responded to the research question and the objectives of the study. Conclusions are drawn and recommendations for similar studies are made.

### **1.11 CONCLUSION**

This chapter introduced the study by providing the background and establishing the nature and degree of the problem. Subsequently, the chapter decided on a theoretical framework suitable to locate the study. It then briefly defined the operational concepts of the study within critical emancipator research framework. The purpose and objectives of the research were also stated. Furthermore, the chapter explained the methodology and design of the study to illustrate how it would be conducted, as well as the participants who were to take part in this research study.

The subsequent chapter is the literature review, where the theoretical framework is developed for conceptualization of the study.



## **CHAPTER 2**

# **REVIEWING LITERATURE ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SYSTEMIC STRATEGY FOR ENHANCED LEARNER ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

The main aim of this study is to develop a systemic strategy that will enhance learner academic performance. This chapter therefore seeks to explore, through a study of literature, suggested systemic strategies by local, regional, continental and international studies to enhance learner academic performance. First of all, the theoretical framework that couches this study is defined and discussed. This is done to orientate the readership on the research approach that the study takes and its appropriateness in this case.

Secondly, the operational concepts are defined and discussed. These are the central concepts that need to be clarified to provide the readership with a common understanding of the meaning of the operational concepts with regard to this study. Thirdly, a review of literature on systemic strategies for enhancing learner academic performance is done in line with the objectives of the study as explained in Chapter one section 1.2. The evidence gathered from the best practices explored is used to design a systemic strategy for enhancing learner academic performance in a school in South Africa.

### **2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This study adopts Critical Emancipatory Research (CER) as a theoretical framework to couch it. As in any research initiative, choosing an appropriate theoretical framework is crucial and is influenced by the researcher's view about the nature of reality, the nature of knowledge as well as the human nature (Bawden, 2006: 38). The demarcation of the study is also, to a great extent, determined by the research

question, the aim and the objectives of that study (Mahlomaholo, 2010a: 9; Mertens, 2009; 51). Choosing the theoretical framework needs to be done carefully since the successful attainment of the research goal depends on the theoretical framework (Mertens, 2009: 44; Piper & Piper 2009: 99). This section demonstrates why CER is deemed relevant to this study by looking at its historical background and objectives, its stance on researcher-participant relationship, the values and language it promotes and the steps involved in operationalizing its principles.

### **2.2.1 Historical background**

Critical Emancipatory Research developed from Critical Theory (CT). Critical Theory is a theoretical tradition that was developed as a result of the movement established by Frankfurt School thinkers and scholars, such as Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse and others (Kinchoeloe & McLaren, 2000: 279; Kellner, 2003:3; Silva, 2007:171). Their political views were influenced by the devastations which were brought about by the First World War that left the economy in depression and the world in need of reinterpretation (Kinchoeloe & McLaren, 2000: 279-280; Snyman, 1993: 159). The main focus of researchers within CT was to respond to the challenges that society faced, inter alia, oppression in different forms – class, gender and race. They also wanted to challenge an empirical way of approaching human inquiry, which meant objectivity and formulation of general laws that resulted in control and manipulation of people (Esposito & Evans-Winters, 2007: 228; Leonardo, 2004:14; Mahlomaholo, 2009:13).

Critical Emancipatory Research was therefore adopted by critical theorists as a research approach that disrupts and challenges the status quo, is geared towards social justice, transformation, and enhances the principles of democracy (Bohman, 2005: 2; Kinchoeloe & McLaren, 2000: 279; Mahlomaholo, 2009:13). Critical emancipatory research was therefore meant not only to make people aware of distorted ideologies that resulted in subservience and abuse, but also to engage them in actions that would emancipate them from oppression that manifested in many ways (Mahlomaholo & Netshandama, 2012: 5; Watson & Watson, 2011, 69).

### **2.2.2 Why Critical Emancipatory Research is a preferred theoretical framework**

School matters, especially the improvement of learners' academic performance, still seem to be left in the hands of 'education experts' such as school administrators, especially among communities with low socioeconomic status (Boaduo, Milondzo & Adjei, 2009:97; Mmotlane, Winnaar & Kivilu, 2009:2; Smith 2006:43). Although many governments in both the developed and developing countries are supporting the decentralisation of power in education, parental involvement still raises issues of equity since parental involvement is significantly higher among middle and upper class parents than in low-income families (Smith, 2006: 44). This is also the case at the school that the study focuses on, where parents (mostly farm and domestic workers) are aloof from the school and their children's education in general.

Mmotlane *et al* (2009:2) as well as Blackmore and Hutchison (2010:503) suggest that most of the time it is not out of lack of interest that parents are not involved in their children's education, but due to problems such as poverty, single parenthood, non-English literacy, lack of proper formal education because of teenage pregnancy, the effects of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, as well as cultural and socioeconomic isolation. Parents from the poorest section of society find themselves entangled in a daily struggle to survive as they live under difficult circumstances, are subjected to inadequate housing facilities, receive very low wages, work long hours and/ or are unemployed (Mestry & Grobler, 2007:177; Smith, 2006: 45). These parents are under a lot of pressure to find ways to support their families and they are unable to help their children with their school work. Fear, alienation and negative communication from schools are also encountered as obstacles with regard to parental involvement in children's education (Blackmore & Hutchison, 2010:506).

CER, however, opens up the communicative space (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000: 595) by bringing together people from diverse backgrounds (Levin & Greenwood, 2011:29; Mertens, 2010: 250). Research shows evidence of a beneficial relationship between parent involvement and learner variables such as higher academic achievement, a sense of well-being, a learner attitude of school attendance, good social and interpersonal relations, and homework and educational aspirations (Blackmore & Hutchison, 2010:502; Boaduo, Milondzo&Adjei, 2009:98; Mestry&Grobler, 2007:177; Nnoli&Ajayi-Smith, 2012: 1). According to Smith (2006:

44), learners from families of low socioeconomic standing, and with little parental involvement, often perform poorly in these variables, but are still expected to perform at the same level as their counterparts.

In South Africa, the issue of little parental involvement flows from the history of unequal education and economic opportunities (Mmotlane et al. 2009:2), asymmetric power relations and marginalisation. These are challenged and disputed by CER (Kinchoeloe, McLaren & Steinberg, 2011:164; Mertens, 2009: 48).

CER was hence conducted as an attempt to bring about transformation aimed at social justice through the collaborative action of parents, learners and teachers, since it (CER) privileges praxis (Mahlomaholo, 2009:13). It is an approach that provided the researcher with a platform to interact with participants on an equal basis as partners in order to find solutions regarding the matter at hand namely, how to design a systemic strategy to enhance the academic performance of learners.

### **2.2.3 Objectives of Critical Emancipatory Research**

The primary objective of CER is to find the root source of oppression and change it through praxis (Creswell, 2013: 30; Nkoane & Lavia, 2012:58; Ledwith, 2007: 599). In the past, education in South Africa was used to perpetuate oppression in all its forms and to protect the legacy of white supremacy (Kendall, 2006: 62-63; Mertens, 2009: 57). To attain that goal in schools, education was centralised, and matters regarding education, including the improvement of academic performance, were left in the hands of 'experts', whose agenda was to maintain power and control in the hands of the privileged (Kendall, 2006: 63). This manifested as psychological oppression where even long after apartheid there are still parents, largely from the black working-class, portraying reluctance to support their children in their learning (Blackmore & Hutchison, 2010:501; Boaduo et al, 2009: 97). Levin (2000: 155) asserts that this oppression does not end with parents, but continues in learners themselves who are subjected to control from all other stakeholders. He further argues that schools are said to exist for learners, but learners are still treated as objects of reform (Levin, 2000:155).

Research shows that school matters, such as the improvement of academic performance in particular, cannot be attained by teachers and school administrators alone but calls for shifts in power and influence, thus making parents and learners important stakeholders in any effort of education reform (Boaduo et al, 2009: 97-98; Levin, 2000: 156; Nnoli & Ajayi-Smith, 2012: 6). The intention of a research study of this kind is to mobilise parents and the general community to become more involved in their children's day-to-day school activities and in their school life in general, and to motivate learners to be more active as well as take charge of their own learning in order to counteract this negative legacy. This could be achieved by inviting parents, the general community and the school to forums in which together they could address the issue of the academic performance of learners while at the same time challenge the issue of power and oppression discussed above.

Another intention of CER is to create a platform for the marginalised to free themselves from bonds of oppression (Mertens, 2009: 3). CER examines processes and relationships of domination and oppression (Esposito & Evans-Winters, 2007: 224), assesses who benefits and who loses and takes the side of the oppressed (Steinberg & Kincheloe, 2010: 143). As such, CER challenges the 'taken-for-granted assumptions of daily life and presents truths that are relative, conditional, and situational and based on previous experience' (Mill, 2003: 6). The voice of the marginalised is thus given independence so that multiple truths can be told rather than one universal truth (Ledwith, 2007: 599). This makes them active participants in the construction of their own lives and they can therefore stand opposed to any negative agenda intended towards them (Watson & Watson, 2011: 4).

Collaborative interventions of this nature draw participants who have been silent (parent community and learners) to the centre as co-researchers in the whole process. Their contributions are respected and taken seriously because they informed the research project from the beginning to the end.

CER, thus, promotes social justice, peace and hope (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000: 282; Ledwith, 2007: 597; Mahlomaholo & Netshandama, 2012: 35; Piper et al. 2009: 13) since it is founded on principles of democracy (Esposito & Evans-Winters, 2007: 226; Mills, 2003: 8). In the light of this study, CER was a vehicle for active involvement of parents and learners in school matters, which has the potential of

assisting them to be on par with their counterparts and allow learners to compete favourably in their future studies and in the corporate market. CER would also elicit harmony among these key stakeholders and address the blame game that sometimes exists between parents and the school (Boaduo et al, 2009:97). The use of CER was also aimed at addressing the hopelessness that was brought about by the unsatisfactory academic performance of the school and to bring about hope for the future. Critical Emancipatory Research as social research thus values the relationship that exists between the researcher and participants as a platform for changes that further social justice (Mertens, 2009: 230).

#### **2.2.4 The researcher–participants relationship**

In CER, understanding the culture and building a relationship that is based on mutual respect, openness and trust between the researcher and the participants is deemed paramount (Cheek, 2005: 401; Mertens, 2009: 57). Since people are often sceptical and suspicious of hidden agendas, they need to be assured that interactions would be non-exploitative in nature (Wilson, 2012: 5). This could be achieved through open communication that created space for participants to voice their opinions and suggestions, which means no total control by the researcher (Mertens, 2009:52–53). Participants engage as equal partners who have a lot to contribute and are treated with respect (Kemmis & McTaggart 2000:595). Together, the researcher and the co-researchers conduct research because the participants are the sole custodians of culture in their communities and therefore possess what Yosso (2005: 76) refers to as ‘cultural wealth’. In so doing, attention is paid to the use of language and important values that need to be upheld.

#### **2.2.5 Value, rhetoric and steps in CER**

CER values collaboration, team spirit and systemic thinking (Zuber-Skerritt, 2002:148). For the purpose of this study, it means that the researcher did not study the participants as objects, but worked with them as a team. This team cooperates and collaborates and together they co-created and constructed knowledge to help improve performance at the school (Creswell, 2013: 25–26; Kemmis & McTaggart,

2007: 277). This synergy – willingness to share knowledge, information and skills-brings the value that comes when the whole adds up to more than just a sum of its parts (Zuber-Skerritt, 2002:148).It is therefore aimed at allowing parents, the community and the learners to emancipate themselves from distorted ideologies by exposing and addressing issues of injustice such as unequal power relations, to facilitate social justice (Kincheloe& McLaren, 2000: 281–282; Parker & Lynn, 2002:10). Hence communication is central in the use of CER (Palmer &De Klerk, 2012:67)

This communication relies on verbal and non-verbal language (Mahlomaholo, 2012: 6) and can be used to persuade individuals and groups of people to give their best (Moloi, Grobler, Van Der Walt, Potgieter & Wolhuter, 2012:119). However, communication and dialogue can also be employed to problematise and thematise the power structures found in the school structure (Moloi et al, 2012:119). CER, for the purpose of this study, necessitated the use of language that is respectful to the indigenous people and their language (Dworski-Riggs & Langhout, 2010:216). This implied the use of non-discriminatory language, for example, the researched must be referred to as ‘participants’, ‘partners’ and ‘co-researchers’, and not as ‘sample’, and the use of accommodative pronouns and descriptions such as ‘us’, ‘we’, and ‘together’ to unify diverse participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:370).

In CER, language is fundamentally important because it generates interactions throughout the research process that unfolds in three phases, namely the interpretative, the analytic and the educative phase (Mahlomaholo & Netshandama, 2012:43).

The *interpretative* phase establishes bonds between the researcher and the community that the research focuses on (Mahlomaholo & Netshandama, 2012:43). Interactions with the community allow the researcher to gain access into the community’s cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005:76) and understand their aspirations, ethos and fears (Mahlomaholo & Netshandama, 2012: 43; Mertens, 2009: 48). This phase establishes ties between the researcher and participants that will confirm if there is a social issue to be pursued (Yosso, 2005: 75) or allow the researcher to ethically gain the information needed to answer the research question (Maxwell, 2005:83).

The *analytic* phase entails digging deeper into information that emerged from the interactions and the discourses of the research study in order to establish possible links between the current situation and historical factors (Kemmis, 2008:124; Mertens, 2009: 183). The use of critical discourse analysis (CDA) can come in handy in this kind of analysis since it (CDA) analyses at different levels, viz, textually, contextually and socially (Van Dijk, 2006:160; Wodak, 2007: 210). The *educative* phase involves engaging participants in discussions of knowledge generated as the research develops, in order to establish common understanding of their social reality (Hertz-Lazarowits, Zelniker & Azaiza, 2010: 271). Participants learn from the process and engage with the research report for their own empowerment and transformation (Mahlomaholo & Netshandama, 2012: 43).

Participatory Action Research (PAR), which is primarily characterised by active involvement of participants, is instrumental in operationalising CER (Dworski-Riggs & Langhout, 2010: 216; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000: 567). The research process therefore calls for a specific type of relationship between the participants and the researcher that is shaped and regulated by certain values and the process itself following a set of logical steps.

## **2.3. DEFINITION OF OPERATIONAL CONCEPTS**

The operational concepts: **systemic strategy**, **sustainable learning environment** and **enhanced learner performance** are the key concepts that emerge from the title of this study. Therefore, they need to be thoroughly defined and discussed in order to create a common understanding by the readership.

### **2.3.1 Systemic strategy**

Systemic strategy is divided into its two components and discussed separately.



### **2.3.1.1 Systemic**

The Collins English Dictionary and Thesaurus (2005: 275) defines *systemic* as “affecting the entire animal or body”. The South African Oxford Secondary School Dictionary (2006:638) defines it as “to do with or affecting the body or a system as a whole”. The two definitions seem to agree on the issue of an entity that operates or functions as a unit. This is based on “entire” and “body or system as a whole”. This is argued from the biological or anatomical perspective which stresses that the body of an organism consists of different parts, synchronised to work together for the benefit of the (whole) organism. While Zuber-Skerritt (2002: 148) emphasised the holistic approach in her definition of systemic, Mintrop and Papazian (2003:3) emphasised collaboration of the different components of a system.

Taking these definitions into consideration, systemic, in the light of this research seems to refer to a condition or situation in which parents, teachers, learners and officials from the Department of Education (DoE) need to work together or align their activities in pursuit of a common vision of improved learner performance.

### **2.3.1.2 Strategy**

*Strategy* is defined by the Collins English Dictionary and Thesaurus (2005: 267) as an “overall plan”. The New Choice English Dictionary (1999:326) defines it as “the planning and conduct of war; a political, economic, or business policy”. The two definitions seem to converge at the point of a thoroughly thought and skilfully designed idea in pursuit of objectives. This is derived from “plan” or “planning”. However, there seems to be tension between the two definitions as well. On the one hand, there is a difference in emphasis where the concept is defined in the context of war, politics and business with the presence of opposition and the success of the strategy could be measured by the victory of one party, while the other definition may be interpreted as minimising hurdles to achieve the goal. On the other hand, the one definition seems to be limiting the strategy to just an idea or an intention while the other seems to emphasise execution or operationalization of that idea.

This lack of clarity seems to suggest that different strategies would be employed in different situations to attain different objectives (Umukoro, Kuye & Sulaimon, 2009: 262). Umukoro *et al* (2009:262) further argued that the success of a strategy relies

on how well it is implemented in order to attain the set objectives more than how well it is formulated. This tallies well with what this study aims to achieve: a systemic framework that will enhance academic performance for a sustainable learning environment. McKeown (2011) pointed out that strategy is about shaping the future and is a human attempt to get to “desirable ends with available means”. This thought is complemented by Yager (2006: 6) who indicated that “strategy assumes that while the future cannot be predicted, the strategic environment can be studied, assessed, and, to a varying degree, anticipated and manipulated.”

A strategy can therefore be understood as to enable those involved to critically consider the advantages and disadvantages, benefits and risks of their plan. It thus provides a framework from which the present realities can be used to design the aspired future through lateral thinking (Yager, 2006: 5)

A *systemic strategy*, in the light of the preceding discussions, seems to refer to the condition in which people work together as a unit to analyse their situation by considering their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in planning to attain a desired future. This is supported by Mintrop and Papazian (2003: 1-2) who articulates systemic strategy as coordinated activities that involve all stakeholders aimed at attaining a desired goal, namely improved performance in schools in the case of this study.

Based on all the definitions advanced so far, systemic strategy for the purpose of this study is used to refer to collaboration, community-school partnership, and whole school approach (Aga Khan Foundation report, 2010; Blackmore & Hutchison, 2010; Boaduo et al, 2009; Mestry & Grobler, 2007). These concepts have in common the aspect that more than one person (entity) is needed to achieve a predetermined goal or vision. Improved learner academic performance should be a joined effort by all stakeholders with an interest in education. This kind of collaboration is believed to have the potential of creating sustainable learning (Sumner, 2003: 24).

### **2.3.2 Sustainable learning environment**

Sustainable learning environment is divided into the following components:

### **2.3.2.1 Sustain**

The Collins English Dictionary and Thesaurus (2005: 273) defines *sustain* as “to maintain or prolong” or “to keep up the vitality or strength”, while The New Choice English Dictionary (1999:331) defines it as “to hold up or to maintain”. The two definitions agree that sustainability has to do with the ability to endure or carry out an activity for a period of time without becoming weak. Kates (2001: 1) advanced a similar line of thought in the field of science by defining sustainability as “maintenance of all life supporting factors”, a notion supported by Sumner (2003: 23) who asserted that sustainability centres around co-operative human construction that protects and / or enables universal access to life goods. Nidumolu, Prahalad and Rangaswami (2009: 9-10) pointed out that in an effort to become sustainable, institutions should not start from the present but rather from the future so that they can fold that future into the present, ensure that learning precedes investment, stay wedded to the goal while constantly adjusting tactics and build collaborative capacities.

From the discussions above, one can understand ‘sustainable’ as referring to a condition that is important for maintaining something useful so that a particular purpose can be achieved. This fits well with what this study seeks to achieve: the design of a systemic framework that will ensure enhanced learner performance in a sustainable manner.

### **2.3.2.2 Learning**

*Learning* is defined in both the Collins English Dictionary and Thesaurus (2005: 157) and The New Choice English Dictionary (1999: 187) as “gaining skills or knowledge by study, practice or teaching”. This agreement in meaning emphasises the need for certain action in order for knowledge to be acquired. It also stresses that what is acquire from the process of learning is not only theoretical, but can also be practical, as in skills.

According to Chance (2003: 24), knowledge acquired – theoretically or practically – should bring about change in the behaviour of learners. It should also create new values and build the capacity and power of people to confront the problems and change the present situation (Serrano, 2000:99). However, knowledge and its creation cannot be monopolised because it is always about different people providing different contributions towards solutions to real-life problems (Mahlomaholo, 2012: 7). Van Wyk and Lemmer (2008: 7) believed that the school, the family and the community play a pivotal role as contributors in education matters and as support structures in a child’s learning experience.

In the light of the preceding discussions, systemic strategy is comprehended to be a pillar from which learners can draw strength to approach academic challenges and successfully acquire knowledge and skills to fulfil their needs.

### **2.3.2.3 Environment**

*Environment* refers to “external conditions and surroundings in which people, animals or plants live” (Collins English Dictionary and Thesaurus, 2005: 92), and as “external conditions and surroundings, especially those that affect the quality of life of plants, animals and human beings (The New Choice English Dictionary, 1999: 109). While the two definitions agree that an environment includes both the physical space and its circumstances, the second definition emphasises the impact it can have on the quality of life of its inhabitants.

In the context of education, *environment* is described as ‘the atmosphere, climate, tone or aura that permeates a particular place’ (Dorman, Fishee & Waldrip, 2006: 2) and influences the kind of teaching and learning that takes place there (Earthman, 2004:18; McGregor, 2004: 4). Although an environment of learning includes a formalised classroom setting, this environment is extended to society because of the socio-cultural background that learners bring with them to the classroom, as well as social and societal context within which learning itself is encapsulated (Chance, 2003: 25; Mahlomaholo, 2012: 4). These contexts have a history of deprivation (Nkoane & Lavia, 2012: 53) that the study bears in mind in its endeavour to develop a collaborative strategy of enhancing learning.

A *sustainable learning environment* is described as the kind of setting that promotes learning that last in a way that creates positive development (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006:17). This is a public space where people cultivate, practice and share equity, social justice, freedom, peace and hopes, as well as showing respect towards one another (Mahlomaholo, 2012: 4–5). The building of alliance by involved parties, while staying wedded to the goal, seems to be at the centre of sustainable environments. In Van Der Westhuizen's (2012: 138) view, a sustainable learning environment is responsive to learner needs, and is designed to empower learners to reach their potential and overcome historical backlogs.

Given the above definition, a sustainable learning environment is a setting where all parties involved work together towards lasting improvements that will change lives, add value and liberate people's minds.

### **2.3.3 Enhanced learner performance**

Enhanced learner performance is divided into:

#### **2.3.3.1 Enhance**

*Enhance* means “to increase in value, importance or attractiveness”, according to The New Choice English Dictionary (1999: 108), or “increase in quality, value, or attractiveness” according to the Collins English Dictionary (2005: 92). The two definitions agree that to *enhance* something means adding value or worth to what already has value but seems not to be enough. This is supported by Ndimande (2005: 5) who defined *enhance* as “improving the value, quality and effectiveness” and by Setlalentoa (2012: 183) who interpreted enhancement as “betterment”.

#### **2.3.3.2 Learner**

The verb *learn* is defined in the Collins English Dictionary (2005: 157) and in the New Choice English Dictionary (1999:187) as “to gain skill or knowledge by study, practice or teaching; memorise, find out something or discover”. Based on this definition, a learner is someone who gains skills or knowledge by means of studying, practicing or being taught. The definition of a learner as given in the South African Schools Act (SASA, 84 of 1996) coincides with the precedent dictionary definition in

that learner means “any person receiving education”. These definitions therefore suggest that any person, irrespective of age, who gains skills and knowledge is a learner. However, Van Wyk and Lemmer (2008: 7), and Ndimande (2005: 5) seem to suggest that a learner is a “child”, someone young and immature who is in the process of accessing knowledge and skills. Their interpretation of a learner emphasises the role played by matured adults in ushering a learner into adulthood.

Therefore, in the light of this study, learners are young people who receive formal education at school, as well as informal education at home and in their community so that they can develop into adults who can fulfil the needs of the community.

### **2.3.3.3 Performance**

The dictionary definition of *performance* is “the act of fulfilling something (Collins English Dictionary, 2005: 201; The New Choice English Dictionary, 1999:239), while Ndimande defined it as “accomplishment of something”. The above definitions converge at the point of achievement of what has been pre-determined. As such, performance can be measured against pre-determined standards or goals. Based on this discussion, performance, for the purpose of this study implies a particular level that a learner should reach to determine success or failure.

On the basis of the discussion above, enhancing learner academic performance therefore means to engage in initiatives that aim at improving and adding value to teaching and learning so that learners can benefit and demonstrate better understanding. The impact of such initiatives is not only limited to achievement of better scores in various subjects, but can also be traced to a positive attitude towards one’s school work and life itself (Biggs, 2003:27; Van Wyk & Lemmer, 2008: 7).

## **2.4 RELATED LITERATURE**

A literature review was done to investigate the research question. Australia, Kenya, Botswana and Republic of South Africa (RSA) were countries selected in order to learn from the collaborative strategies they used to address the issue of poor

academic performance. Information sourced from related literature was used to inform the envisioned strategy.

#### **2.4.1 The need for a systemic strategy to enhance learner academic performance**

In this section, the need for a systemic strategy to enhance learner academic performance is discussed.

##### **2.4.1.1 Supporting legislative imperatives and policies**

The idea of a partnership in the education situation is of particular importance in the interrelationship between the family, the community and the school (Mestry & Grobler, 2007: 177). This is endorsed by the National Education Policy Act 27 (RSA, 1996), South African Schools Act 84 (RSA, 1996) and the South African Council of Educators Act 31 (RSA, 2000). In its Code of Professional Ethics, the South African Council of Educators (RSA, 2000: section 4) stipulates that teachers should recognise the parents as partners in education, as well as promote a harmonious relationship with them. They should keep parents adequately and timeously informed about the well-being and progress of their children. The National Education Policy Act (RSA,1996b: section 4) articulates that community participation should be realised as one of the guiding principles in education and all interested parties must be involved in all aspects of the education system.

The South African Schools Act 84 (RSA, 1996: section 6(a-b)) also mandates parents to support the school and take an active interest in the education of their children. The act also stipulates that, although education is compulsory for every learner, education and learning can only be successful if the learners are committed to self-development and teachers are dedicated to teaching and learning (RSA, 1996: section 4.7). These laws therefore mandate active collaboration among all the stakeholders in the educational process, viz teachers (including principals), parents, learners and district officials. Despite the presence of these legislative imperatives,

there is still limited parental participation and learner commitment at Bokgabane, the school that this study focuses on.

These legislative imperatives are further supported and operationalized by educational policies that advance the same notion of parents and community participation, such as: the Foundations for Learning Project (DoE, 2008), the Quality Learning and Teaching Campaign – QLTC (DoE, 2009) and the National Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement – NCAPS (DoE, 2011). All of the above create a platform that enables parents and the broader community to freely and actively participate in the school matters for enhanced learner performance. The importance of aligning the building of a partnership between the school and the community is also evident in reports from Australia, Kenya and Botswana.

In Australia, education reform policies such as Partnership 21 carried a mandate that looked at parents as partners in their children’s education (Blackmore & Hutchison, 2010:503). As a result of the legislative support many schools adopted parental involvement in school communities. Similarly, the Whole School Approach adopted in Kenya was implemented within the context of the Kenya Education Sector Support Programme (KESSP) which is an integral component of the School Empowerment Programme (SEP) of the Ministry of Education (Aga-Khan Foundation,2010:2). Parent-community involvement, as a strategy for the improvement of learner performance, was also informed by law in Botswana (Boaduo et al, 2009:97).

#### **2.4.1.2 Coordinating team**

In order to create successful collaboration between various stakeholders, their activities needed to be coordinated into a coherent plan. It therefore became necessary to have a team that would intercede. The team members thus needed to represent the interests of those affected, understand the purpose of such an endeavour and be willing to participate meaningfully towards addressing the problem, namely poor academic performance (Nnoli & Ajayi-Smith, 2012:3).

In the North West province of South Africa, a team of researchers from the North-West University under the theme “Sustainable Empowering Learning Environments”



(SELEN) interacted with the school community and facilitated the creation of sustainable and empowering learning environments (Mahlomaholo, 2010: 2). In Australia, the principal performed the coordination and mediation function among teachers, parents and learners since she initiated cooperation between these parties (Blackmore & Hutchison, 2010: 504).

The Kenya Ministry of Education and its partners assisted parents and communities to be more involved in supporting the efforts of the Government in improving the quality of education, learning environments and governance in public schools through the project, Education for Marginalised Children in Kenya (Aga Khan Foundation, 2010: 2). There was, however, no evidence from literature consulted that the collaboration of the various stakeholders was coordinated by a representative team of stakeholders (Boaduo et al, 2009:97).

#### **2.4.1.3 Shared vision**

Collaboration of teachers, parents and learners is envisioned to improve academic performance of learners in a more sustainable manner (Mmotlane et al., 2009:2) and every activity as well as every decision should articulate that vision (Sanders, 2010: 2). This notion is supported by reviewed literature from Australia, Kenya, Botswana and the Republic of South Africa (Aga Khan Foundation, 2010: 2; Blackmore & Hutchison, 2010: 499; Boaduo et al., 2009: 98; Mahlomaholo, 2010: 2). “It takes a village to raise a child” is an African proverb that carries a clear message, namely that the whole community plays an important role in the growth and development of a child (Ajayi-Smith and Nnoli, 2013: 3).

Having a shared goal, covenant, curriculum, social cause and vision appear to be predominant for collaboration aimed at academic improvement (Sanders, 2010: 1).

What appears to be common in collaboration initiatives in the selected countries is that there are high expectations set for learners to rise above challenges (Blackmore & Hutchison, 2010: 504; Sanders, 2010: 3). Studies seem to suggest that the involvement of parents and communities in education matters, not only help in improving academic performance, but also ensures sustainable learning

environments (Blackmore & Hutchison, 2010: 506; Sanders, 2010: 2; Mintrop & Papazian, 2003: 3).

#### **2.1.4.4 Situational analysis**

At a school in Australia, situation and context analysis revealed that, despite a relatively small enrolment of learners, it was still a struggle to maintain a strong academic reputation. Their analysis indicated their academic problem to be linked to a number of factors, namely the majority of students came from low-income families and which were mostly headed by women; a significant number of students were cared for by grandparents as a result of family breakdown, often due to parental drug addiction; a population of students who live independently, as they were refugees living without their parents; the close proximity of a shopping centre that was notorious for drug-related crimes, and a high level of cultural diversity (Blackmore & Hutchison, 2010: 503). This situation called for partnership between the school and the parent-community as advocated by law.

Further analysis revealed, however, that collaboration with parents was not as simple and smooth as was stated in legislations and policies. For instance, policies ignored the complexity of relations between schools and families; teachers and parents (Biddulph, Biddulph & Biddulph, 2003: 2). Multiple subject positions that exist among teachers and parents as a result of their different experiences, education and philosophical views seem to be denied in the way that teachers and parents are portrayed (Connell, 2004: 229). They also seem to ignore the economic, socio-cultural and racial circumstances as well as the material conditions that inform how parents and teachers relate to each other (Blackmore & Hutchison, 2010: 502). As a result, these factors, among others, lead to ambivalence among teachers and parents towards the involvement of parents in their children's education (Connell, 2004: 235).

In Kenya, school plans in many communities tend to focus mainly on infrastructure development and not on critical components such as quality learning, access and participation in education and governance (Aga Khan Foundation, 2010: 2). Those plans were usually developed through non-inclusive processes that marginalized the

communities from the school and its activities. Communities tend to look 'outside' for implementation of their development agenda, an aspect that fostered dependency on external support and aid. Even though communities may be poor, they still have assets (Yosso, 2005: 76), but in this case, the communities were not aware of how they could use those assets to address educational challenges (Aga Khan Foundation, 2010: 3). This analysis led to the adoption of the Whole School Approach that strived to engender accountability for the delivery of quality education for all children, particularly orphans and vulnerable children as well as children with special needs (Aga Khan Foundation, 2010: 3).

Similar collaboration was adopted in the North West province of **South Africa**. The school was located within a bracket of non-performing schools and because of poor academic performance, these schools were downgraded. In further analysing the situation, it was found that the school community was rich with capitals that they could build onto in order to access the privileges and rights denied to them because of their marginalised status that reflected in their previous academic performance (Mahlomaholo, 2010: 1; Yosso, 2005: 76) In dealing with this situation, the Whole School Improvement Programme (WSIP) was put in place (Mahlomaholo, 2010).

As Ajayi-Smith and Nnoli (2010: 6) pointed out, what happens before and after school is as important as what happens during the school day. Therefore, the success of the school needs and depends on the support from parents and community members. This was, however, found to be lacking in Botswana where the schools were traditionally regarded as environments exclusive for teachers, school administrators and learners (Boaduo et al., 2009: 97). This situation where the sole responsibility was placed on the teachers has been found prevalent in Botswana, as was reflected in parents' comments when children misbehave at home, for example: "Is this what you have been taught at school?" or "I am going to report you to your teachers." New developments in the education system, however, brought a shift towards the involvement of parents and communities hence the adoption collaborative approach (Boaduo et al., 2009: 97).

### **2.4.1.5 Collaborative planning**

In order for the school and its community to work together towards enhanced academic achievement, collaborative planning is the key aspect to allow everybody to have a sense of ownership in the project and its achievement (Mestry&Grobler, 2007:178).They further maintained that it is a process that allows people, teachers and parents in this case, with diverse expertise and experiences to work together to generate new solutions to mutually defined problems (Mestry & Grobler, 2007: 178). As Boadua and associates (2009: 98) put it, parents' expertise and experiences are largely untapped resources that possess the kind of assets essential for this partnership. Therefore, it becomes crucial that all participants should be engaged right from the beginning up to the end of the process (Boadua, 2009: 101; Mahlomaholo, 2010: 3).

At a school in South Africa, all the stakeholders – teachers, parents and learners- jointly engaged in the identification of common objectives and designing a plan of action. Direct involvement enabled them to take charge and own the process such that they would continue and sustain what would have been initiation even beyond the SELEN team's involvement in the school (Mahlomaholo, 2010: 3).Similarly, in Kenya, the entire community worked together to identify problems, find solutions and agree on roles and responsibilities to bring about the desired changes (Aga Khan Foundation, 2010: 2).Through mediation of an employed Community Liaison Officer in Australia, dialogues between teachers and parents are facilitated and inputs into the school policy invited. Although the Parent Association and the School Council membership are dominated by middle-class parents, the principal created open settings where all stakeholders, although diverse in cultures and social status, could meet and develop social connections (Blackmore & Hutchison, 2010: 510).

These kinds of parental involvement seems to be lacking in Botswana, where parents indicated that they need to be called upon and plan together with the school authorities, as well as given the opportunity to contribute their expertise (Boadua, 2009: 101).

#### **2.4.1.6 Implementation plan for a collaborative strategy**

The manner in which a collaboratively designed plan will be executed also needs to be considered and planned for (Zuber-Skerritt, 2002: 144). In Australia, as was also the case in Kenya and the RSA, planning the implementation involved prioritizing problems and needs (Aga Khan Foundation, 2010: 3; Blackmore & Hutchison, 2010: 510; Mahlomaholo, 2010: 6). For instance, in Australia, the relevant priorities included the development of programmes that would address social divisions and build social relationships; development of welfare and support programmes necessary in the community; as well as supporting teachers in their pedagogical work. These programmes would be the responsibility of the principal, additional employed staff and retired elders in the community who act as classroom volunteers (Blackmore & Hutchison, 2010: 510). The revenue that the principal raised from renting the teaching space made it possible to fund and sustain these programmes (Blackmore & Hutchison, 2010: 504).

In Kenya and the RSA, priorities involved community empowerment and support in implementing the school development plans (Aga Khan Foundation, 2010: 3; Mahlomaholo, 2010: 6). As was the case in Australia as well, these priorities had to be realized through planned activities. Each activity was allocated a responsible person to ensure that it was carried out within the period agreed upon.

Based on the discussion above, it becomes clear that for a plan to be executed successfully, planning and implementation are crucial. These are shaped by shared priorities, pertinent activities, resources, appointment of responsible people, and timeframes.

#### **2.4.2 Identifying main components of a collaborative strategy**

In this section, components that make up the systemic strategy are discussed.

#### **2.4.2.1 Supporting legislative structure**

As discussed in section 2.4.1.1, there are legislations in Australia, Kenya, Botswana and the RSA that support collaboration of parents, communities and the school (Aga Khan Foundation, 2010: 2; Blackmore & Hutchison, 2009: 503; Boaduo et al., 2009: 97; South African Schools Act no 84: 1996). In order for institutions to fulfill this broad mandate, they need to develop their own relevant policies that will regulate the actions of various participants, activities and processes (Stelmach & Preston, 2008:60). Development and implementation of such policies require consultation and engagement of all stakeholders in order to counterbalance any disputes that may arise among stakeholders (Poudel, 2009:60; Stelmach & Preston, 2008:60–61).

The participation of stakeholders in policy development processes should be in such a way that all participate as equals, despite their different positions within the institution as advocated in critical emancipatory research (Kemmis & McTaggart 2000:595). Participation in the discussions about aspects to be included in the policy ensures involvement and communication therefore becomes a pre-requisite for such discourses. Involvement in policy-making also develops, within participants, a sense of autonomy and understanding of what they are dealing with (Mahlomaholo & Netshandama, 2012: 42; Silva, 2007: 172). According to Boaduo and associates (2009: 98), people tend to value something more if they are part of it; therefore, this collaboration of parents, teachers and learners can be sustained when all feel that their contributions are respected and valued.

#### **2.4.2.2 Coordinating team**

Although the participants are regarded as equals, roles needed to be clearly defined to ensure agreement and understanding regarding leadership, as well as decision-making (Murtaza, 2010: 216). The SELEN team of researchers in the North West Province of South Africa, for instance, created a context for a sustainable empowering learning environment by providing broad parameters, while encouraging and allowing the school community to keep its local people who could sustain the effort beyond their intervention (Mahlomaholo, 2010: 3).

In Kenya, the Korosho community received training on the Whole School Approach (WSA) and they used the knowledge to develop a School Development Plan (SDP) to guide them in the improvement of education standards in their school (Aga Khan Foundation, 2010: 4). Although there was no team established in Australia to facilitate the collaboration of various stakeholders, the principal had the support of teachers, learners and some of the parents who valued this partnership (Blackmore & Hutchison, 2010: 504). These kinds of collaborative efforts towards the enhancement of academic performance were found to be lacking in Botswana, despite the prevalence of opportunities and platforms such as the Botswana participatory consultative meetings at the chief's kraal – “kgotla” (Boaduo et al., 2009: 97). Lack of coordinating and mediating structures would mean that the parent community, teachers and learners, all operate in isolation and have no shared vision, which can result in a ‘blame game’ when one group feels that its expectations are not met.

#### **2.4.2.3 Shared vision**

In order for an organization to operate efficiently, it needs to have a vision that is shared by all stakeholders (Wilson, 2012: 5). A shared vision ensures that all partners work together to attain the goal they have set, and that they are not easily derailed from their initial goal (Sanders, 2010: 2). A clearly defined vision is crucial because it clarifies the purpose and can be used as an evaluation criterion at any given moment (Sanders, 2010: 3). In Australia, as was the case in Kenya, Botswana and South Africa, the vision had been to get parents and the general community involved in school matters in order to enhance learners' academic performance (Blackmore & Hutchison, 2010: 504; Boaduo et al., 2009: 97; Aga Khan Foundation, 2010: 4; Mahlomaholo, 2010: 1). This vision was articulated in all the aspects of the various organizations (Sanders, 2010: 3).

Such a vision is crucial because it assists in formulating achievable goals and determining activities that will ensure successful attainment of a set goal. A shared vision should also make it possible for partners to join efforts and stay committed to the realization of the goal (Sanders, 2010: 3; Zuber-Skerritt, 2002: 149).

#### **2.4.2.4 Situation analysis**

The primary purpose of the school is the intellectual development of children to their greatest potential. In order for the acquired knowledge and skills to be useful, they need to benefit the whole society. It therefore becomes important that the school understands the history, values, norms, traditions and aspirations of the community it serves so that it can be faithful to what society aspires to be (Boaduo et al., 2009: 97; Nnoli&Ajayi-Smith, 2012: 3).

As such, the school cannot operate in isolation with regard to the development of a child of the nation, but must work together with all involved in the school community. The solitary existence of the school, as well as the non-recognition and non-involvement of parents, serves as barriers to quality education (Mestry & Grobler, 2007: 177; Smith, 2006: 44; Van Wyk & Lemmer, 2008: 7). This situation should, however, be seen as a positive factor in facilitating collaboration of parents, communities, teachers and learners as mandated by law (South African Schools Act 84, 1996).

These stakeholders come together to jointly reflect on their situation and unilaterally work on finding ways of freeing themselves from being helpless. Reflection thus becomes an integral part and continual aspect in such collaborations, in order to address any arising challenge that eventually can be incorporated into a plan of action.

#### **2.4.2.5 Collaborative planning**

In order for the partnership to be effective, collaborative planning is crucial. This does not only ensure that all partners buy into the process, but also strengthens their relationships and builds respect and mutual trust (Babacan, Gopakrishnan & Trad-Padhee, 2007:14). Since power asymmetries exist among partners, collaborative planning becomes critical in balancing such disparities (Dworski-Riggs & Langhout, 2010: 216).



In the planning process, partners decide on priorities, relevant activities, persons responsible for different activities, resources that would be necessary to carry out activities, as well as a timeframe for the attainment of such priorities (Zuber-Skerrit, 2002: 145). The schools that are mentioned in this study, also engaged in participatory processes that empowered the entire school community to undertake a critical analysis of the key challenges they were facing, identify workable solutions and agree on roles and responsibilities to bring about desirable change (Aga Khan Foundation, 2010: 2; Mahlomaholo, 2010: 6). Their priority areas were: improvement and promotion of quality teaching and learning in classrooms through child-centered methodologies; community participation in education delivery; teaching and learning competencies through school-based development strategies; and participatory planning (Aga Khan Foundation, 2010: 2; Blackmore & Hutchison, 2010: 510).

#### **2.4.2.6 Implementation**

The implementation of the plan, as discussed in the preceding paragraphs, should take into consideration the disparities that exist within the school communities as a result of socio-economic diversity (Blackmore & Hutchison, 2010: 504). In Australia, the implemented framework was multi-faceted because not only was it aimed at improving academic performance of learners, but also at improving adults' literacy levels and alleviate poverty. Because of the culturally and socio-economically diverse population of the school, a wide range of programmes was put in place to cater for multiple client groups: Adult English as Second Language Centre (for parents speaking Language Other Than English – LOTE); community gardens; intervention programmes for students 'at risk' and alternative classrooms where other educational philosophies were presented to provide the basis for learning parallel to mainstream programmes (Blackmore & Hutchison, 2010:504).

The implementation should also consider the cultural wealth and richness that each community has, despite the seemingly poor and marginalized status of their socio-economic base (Mahlomaholo, 2010: 1). Identified cultural wealth can be infused in programmes and activities to assist in the attainment of the desired goal. In Kenya, Botswana and the North West Province of South Africa, for instance, communities engaged in participatory processes that revealed an array of knowledge, skills and

abilities that the communities utilized to survive (Aga Khan Foundation, 2010: 4; Boaduo et al., 2009: 98; Mahlomaholo, 2010: 4). One such capital is aspirational capital, which refers to the ability to hold onto hope even in the face of structured marginalization and with no means to turn the situation around (Yosso, 2005: 77).

In order to assess progress in the attainment of the goal, reviews should be conducted at each step of the implementation process. These reflective processes are crucial as monitoring and evaluation tools to determine the extent to which the goal is achieved or not, as well as to make appropriate alterations to the implementation plan (Kemmis&McTaggart, 2007: 278).

### **2.4.3 Conditions conducive to the successful implementation of the strategy**

The successful implementation of a systemic strategy depends on the identification of enabling factors. These factors are important for collaboration purposes and create a positive environment within which the planned programmes and activities can be carried out (Aga Khan Foundation, 2010: 3; Blackmore & Hutchison, 2010: 504). An oversight of such factors may hinder the smooth running of any project and possibly impede the attainment of the desired goal.

The successful implementation of collaborative strategies employed by the countries mentioned in this study can be attributed to a number of factors. In Australia, for example, the principal was aware of the barriers to parental involvement and fostered a culture of inclusion that created an environment where parents felt welcome and comfortable, and the relationship between parents, teachers and learners could flourish (Blackmore & Hutchison, 2010:506). The teachers also understood that structural inequalities cannot be addressed by schools and teachers alone and that education is not the “savior” that popular discourses and government simplistically propose. Teachers were therefore united in their commitment to social justice, hence expressing their desire to create opportunities for their students to challenge the realities that poverty imposed on their lives (Blackmore & Hutchison, 2010:504). The willingness of parents to participate in school programmes also showed committed interest in their children’s education.

The same can be said about the situation in Kenya. The report by the Aga Khan Foundation (2010) shows that when the Kenya Cashew Nut Factory donated 20 acres of land for both a primary and secondary school, factory employees paid for half the cost of four classrooms through salary deductions. The school was officially opened and learners were enrolled, but when the factory closed, the continued financial support to the school also stopped. However, after receiving training on WSI, the Korosho community managed to construct five more classrooms for their school. This can be attributed to the commitment and determination of the Korosho community.

In the North West province, frequent communication among the parents, teachers and learners seems to be one of factors that contributed positively towards the successful implementation of the school's improvement strategy. This was evident in the overlap of what was expressed by all three groups which separately engaged in a SWOT analysis (Mahlomaholo, 2010:3). The wealth of capitals possessed by the community is another factor that enabled this school community to succeed in operationalizing its model of creating a sustainable empowering learning environment. Further evidence is that patience, willingness, motivation and commitment contributed to the positive progress that the school together with its community made. The fact that stakeholders at this school held monthly group meetings to rekindle their commitment shows that they were truly committed.

Above all, the presence of legislation and policy imperatives, as discussed in section 2.4.1.1, created an enabling context for these countries to establish systemic ventures for enhancement of academic performance and became the framework from which customized policies were created to address particular situations (Stelmach & Preston, 2008:60).

Murtaza (2010:215) recommended that to ensure sustainability, participants should understand the philosophy of a collaborative approach. This is well-supported in all the strategies mentioned above. It seems that enhanced collaboration among all stakeholders and constant monitoring of the implementation of planned activities are

other conditions that may ensure the successful implementation of a collaborative strategy.

#### **2.4.4 Possible hindrances implementation**

The process of school improvement is not free of constraints (Murtaza, 2010: 220), as is evident from the situation in Australia. The challenges in the Australian strategy, for example, were as a result of class and cultural constraints that constituted a significant barrier to direct involvement for some parents who were excluded from the school community due to social and economic circumstances. These circumstances included the following: minimal education, substance abuse, LOTE background or viewing the school as a domain best left to those with expertise in education, such as the teachers (Blackmore & Hutchison, 2010:505). The loss of social capital experienced by migrant and refugee parents and the extensive time and effort required for them to learn English excluded them from participation in the culture of schooling in Australia (Blackmore & Hutchison, 2010:506).

It was also noticed that it was problematic for parents who have a negative recollection of their own education and a misunderstanding of what learning entails, to contribute meaningfully (Blackmore & Hutchison, 2010:507).

Socio-economic elements such as low income, poverty and immigration appeared to be a threat to the successful implementation of other school improvement strategies as well (Aga Khan Foundation, 2010; Boaduo et al., 2009:104; Sanders, 2010:3).

#### **2.4.5 Evidence of success or failure**

In this section, challenges and successes of the models discussed above are highlighted to advise the envisioned systemic framework.

Generally, the strategies proved to have positive impact on learners' academic performance and the quality of teaching and learning. Although parental involvement, through the Australian framework, yielded positive results, it is acknowledged that family-school relationships are complex and policies advocating increased parental involvement appear to be based on normative assumptions about families and their resources (Blackmore & Hutchison, 2010:511). It was discovered

that most of the parents who participated and became involved in their children's education were from English backgrounds since they have the advantage of language and educational capitals over their immigrant counterparts (Blackmore & Hutchison, 2010: 504). Socio-economic factors are thus highlighted as the main hindrances to successful and sustained collaborations.

In Botswana, parental and community involvement also helped to improve discipline, punctuality of learners at school and learners' responsibility towards their school work. Despite the positives, some parents and communities, particularly those without proper employment, claimed that they could not take responsibility for something that they are not trained or paid for, and thus were skeptical about getting involved (Boaduo et al., 2009:101). This further supports the fact that socio-economic factors are serious impediments to the collaboration of parents, communities and the school.

In Kenya, the observation was made that in schools where strong relationships exist between the school and the local community, there is not only evidence of enhanced performance, but also of good retention and learners completing their education at school level (Aga Khan Foundation, 2010: 1). Mahlomaholo (2010b:11) also showed how the collaboration of parents, teachers and learners around academic matters yield improved academic results at a school in the North West Province of South Africa. Even though the results were only for the first term of the year, the school was emerging from the non-performing category.

In the light of these successes and challenges, the systemic framework will adopt participatory action research (PAR) as a research method. PAR is a method that allows stakeholders to participate in: problem definition, problem assessment, intervention planning, implementation, and evaluation (Hughes, 2003: 39; Ledwith, 2007: 599). This method is relevant since it is in line with the theoretical framework of critical emancipatory research that fosters empowerment (Dworski-Riggs & Langhout, 2010:216; Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit, 2004: 47). Through the use of PAR in this study, essential stakeholders, namely parents, community members, teachers and learners, who have been working in isolation although having a common desire, collaborated towards the attainment of the desired results.

## **2.5 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter, Critical Emancipatory Research (CER) as a theoretical framework was discussed and its relevance justified. The discussion began with an outline of its historic background and its attributes. A connection was then established between the research aim and objectives, as well as these attributes, namely language used in CER; the researcher-participant relationship; and values and steps involved in CER. Operational concepts were also defined and discussed to validate relevance of CER.

Furthermore, the chapter explored related literature in line with the objectives of the study, which are: the need for a systemic strategy for the enhancement of academic performance; identification of the components that make up such a strategy; determining factors towards the successful implementation of the strategy; and determining disabling factors so that alleviation mechanisms can be built into the plan.

The need for a systemic strategy at Bokgabane is demonstrated by presenting evidence of the solitary existence of the school from its communities, despite the prevalence of legislative acts that support collaboration, the non-existence of coordinating teams to facilitate this collaboration, as well as the absence of a shared vision, collaborative planning and implementation plan. The same aspects are then discussed in an effort to offer potential solutions to problems encountered.

The next chapter discusses the principles of PAR in detail to illustrate its suitability within CER.

# **CHAPTER 3**

## **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this study is to design a systemic strategy that would enhance academic performance in a school. This chapter focuses on the research design and methodology of the study. It discusses how Participatory Action Research (PAR) as a research method for data generation, was used within the parameters of critical emancipatory research (CER) to meet the research aim. The design section of the chapter discusses the participants who were identified as relevant to the study. The chapter further focuses on methods and techniques that were used to gather data. Data analysis is summarised, leaving details for the next chapter. Finally, the conclusion summarises the chapter and briefly indicates what the next chapter entails.

### **3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN**

This section discusses the identification of relevant stakeholders and the establishment of the study coordinating team. Distinction is made between the two categories of participants, namely the general participants who were parents, teachers, learners and former matriculates; as well as the coordinating team which was composed of members of the same groups who had leadership roles above their participation like others.

#### **3.2.1 The participants**

Boaduo and associates agreed that participants in a study should be people directly affected by the problem and who would also benefit from the outcome of their contributions (Boaduo et al., 2009: 100). The envisaged systemic strategy made it explicit that parents, teachers, learners and community members would have to be at the centre of the research process since they, as key stakeholders, all form part of

the academic development of children (Blackmore & Hutchison, 2010: 499; Nnoli & Ajayi-Smith, 2012: 1; Smith, 2006: 44). Engaging the participants included: professional sharing sessions and classroom support system for teachers, peer support teams where learners studied together and helped each other, as well as homework centers supervised by parents and former matriculates in order for learners to have space and time to do their homework after school. These engagements were activities that were planned and implemented through PAR.

### **3.2.2 The coordinating team**

In order to coordinate the activities of all participants towards a shared vision of a systemic framework, it was critical to establish a coordinating team that would direct their actions and engagements (Levin & Greenwood, 2011: 29; Mertens, 2010: 250; Thompson & Perry, 2006: 25). It was important to retain the same team for the duration of the project in order to maintain focus, continuity and consistency (Baring, 2005: 70; Crimson, 2010: 97). Therefore, members of the team were made aware in advance that the project might require their involvement over an extended period of time so that they could give informed consent (Baring, 2005: 77).

This team had to facilitate a social process that is collaborative, participatory, emancipatory, critical and reflexive, as advocated by PAR (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000: 597; Van Niekerk & Van Niekerk, 2009:13). With the purpose of the study being the collaboration of parents, teachers and learners for the enhancement of academic performance, this coordinating team facilitated peaceful interactions between these participants who came from diverse backgrounds (Levin & Greenwood, 2011: 29; Mertens, 2010: 250). It created a common space for participants to critically reflect on the progress of the project in order to affirm the reports on the study (Erickson, 2011: 46). It was therefore essential for this team to create suitable conditions for different participants to interact through effective communication (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2011:100; Mertens, 2010: 238).

The coordinating team in this study was comprised of the research leader, the principal, two teachers (a departmental head and a member of the school based support team – SBST), two parents (one being a member of the school governing



body), two former matric learners and two current learners. The principal, teachers, learners and the research leader were all from Bokgabane School; and parents as well as former matriculates were members of the community served by the school. The contributions of these local people are of high importance in PAR since they bring on board a wealth of knowledge, skills and abilities from their cultural capital (Taube, 2004: 32; Yosso, 2005: 76), and are relevant stakeholders to address the social issue raised in the research question (Boaduo et al., 2009: 100; DePalma, 2010: 216; Erickson, 2011: 46; Levin & Greenwood, 2011: 27).

### **3.3 PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH AS A RESEARCH METHOD**

This section discusses how the principles of PAR were used to advance the objectives of this study. PAR plays a liberating role in the learning process by providing the development of a critical understanding of the social problem under investigation, its structural causes and possibilities for overcoming them (Curry, 2005: 2; Mertens, 2010: 237). Instability and outright poor academic performance are real social challenges that require investigation by all stakeholders towards a more comprehensive undertaking to find possible solutions (Dworski-Riggs & Langhout, 2010: 218). The other critical element of PAR is maximum participation of all stakeholders (Dworski-Riggs & Langhout, 2010: 218; Zuber-Skerritt, 2002: 148). The participatory nature of PAR goes beyond mere collaboration of participants, which can only be understood as 'working together' (Dworski-Riggs & Langhout, 2010: 216). PAR opens a communicative space (Kemmis, 2008: 127), creating an environment conducive to engaging participants in open communications and have a voice in the process of decision making (Dworski-Riggs & Langhout, 2010: 216; Sarason, 2003: 86).

The section therefore discusses how Bokgabane and its community engaged in collaboration that took part in three phases, and mirrored PAR: identifying the problem (phase 1), determining the intervention (phase 2), and implementing the intervention (phase 3).

### **3.3.1 Phase 1: Problem identification**

According to PAR, the researcher or the community identifies the issue of concern (Curry, 2005: 2) and because of a motivation to act, the party that identified the challenge will approach the other party (Dworski-Riggs & Langhout, 2011: 218). Having identified the challenge, I took the initiative to engage the key stakeholders, namely parents, teachers, learners and community members.

Fluctuating academic results and outright poor performance were identified as problems that do not only affect Bokgabane, but other schools as well. Interventions such as: the Quality Improvement, Development, Support and Upliftment Programme (QIDS UP), the Learner Attainment Implementation Plan (LAIP), the National Protocol on Assessment – NPSA (Education Department, 2005), the Continuing Professional Teacher Development – CPTD (Education Department, 2008), the Quality Learning and Teaching Campaign – QLTC (Education Department, 2009) as well as the Integrated Quality Management System – IQMS (Education Department, 2009), to mention a few, were put in place by the education department to address this problem. Despite all the interventions, we still experience fluctuations; therefore the need for a more comprehensive strategy

Since this research was guided by the principles of critical emancipatory approach in designing a systemic framework for enhanced academic performance, the concern was how the project itself can portray aspects of social justice and empowerment of the powerless (Kinchoeloe, McLaren & Steinberg, 2011:164; Mahlomaholo & Netshandama, 2012:35 and McLean & Stahl, 2007: 6) in the true sense of emancipation and not just to justify a claim. It needs to be indicated that fluctuating academic performance of learners had been one of the concerns raised by learners themselves (in class and casually out of the classroom), parents (during parent meetings and in casual chats) and colleagues. This showed that the eagerness to see enhanced academic performance being sustained was shared by all stakeholders.

#### **3.3.1.1 Advocacy and elucidating issues with the constituency**

I first met with the principal of Bokgabane to present my observation regarding the school's fluctuating academic results and initiate discussions around the matter. The

discussion pointed to the necessity for collaboration of all affected stakeholders in order for the matter to be addressed. The meeting with the principal was necessary because by virtue of his position in the school organisational structure, he has the final say in certain matters that affect the school (SASA sec16A). Following the discussions, permission was sought to conduct research at the school.

We both agreed that interactions with other stakeholders would not interfere with the normal running of the school. I explained how his position as a principal and his leadership and management experience could add value to the study, and he agreed to be part of the coordinating team. We therefore agreed that the matter would form part of the agenda for the staff and parents meetings which were to follow soon thereafter. We also agreed that the learner components – only Grade 10 – 12- would also be invited to the parents meeting for this purpose. Since the academic performance of learners was on the agenda of every staff meeting, the matter was not farfetched and the platform was relevant to table my observation as well as share the idea behind the study with colleagues.

Collaboration with parents and learners in strategies aimed at enhanced academic performance and sustained learning environment was suggested in a staff meeting. That raised a discussion in which mixed feelings were presented. At the end it was agreed that improved academic performance cannot be attained by teachers and school administrators only (Mestry&Grobler, 2007:176; Smith, 2006: 44). Two teachers were therefore democratically elected to form part of the coordinating team for the research project.

PAR is based on a non-oppressive mode of operation (Ledwith, 2007: 599), therefore I was very cautious not to create the impression that I was imposing myself on teachers as I interacted with them (Kabi, 2013: 80). I also indicated and assured them that the only motive behind the venture was to improve learner academic performance and sustain a learning environment (Ross, 2009: 5). I also mentioned to the teachers that their participation is voluntary; therefore none of them was compelled to be included in the study (Christians, 2011: 65). The concern of learner academic achievement is not only limited to teachers, but is also the concern of parents (SASA sec 20, 1996), hence permission was sought from the school

governing body (SGB) to engage parents as well as learners into a discussion around the issue of enhanced academic performance.

Parents were engaged for a number of reasons. Firstly, because they are a crucial constituent of the triad – parent community, teachers and learners- and no one knows their children better than they do (Mestry & Grobler, 2007: 177; Nnoli & Ajayi, 2012: 1; Van Wyk & Lemmer, 2008: 7). Secondly, because the commitment of learners to schooling is primarily shaped by parents through what is taught at home and therefore parent involvement is a viable possibility that can be influenced by school and teacher practice (Boaduo et al., 2009: 98; Van Wyk & Lemmer, 2008: 7). Thirdly, many learners are minors still and the law requires that parents make decisions on their behalf if they are not yet eighteen years old (RSA Constitution, section 28 (1)).

The discussion raised a number of very serious and critical issues that impact on learners' academic performance. The forum therefore agreed that collaboration of parent community, teachers and learners was a possibility that could be explored. The need to constitute a coordinating team that would facilitate the processes was also explained and two democratically elected parents agreed to join the coordinating team. Two learners were also democratically chosen by their peers and their parents gave consent that they be part of the coordinating team.

### **3.3.1.2 Team orientation**

The first meeting of the coordinating team was an information session where the aim and objectives of the study were explained. It was also first time that the members met as a team. The boundaries of power that exist among the participants could not be overlooked (Dworski-Riggs & Langhout, 2010: 215; Silva, 2007: 169; Van Dijk, 2008: 88), therefore, to address the issue of power relations, the team was inducted on PAR and how it operates. Emphasis was placed on the need for members to build relationships of trust and respect among each other as well as other participants that the team would be engaging with, since they would be coming from different backgrounds (Levin & Greenwood, 2011: 29; Mertens, 2010: 250). The team was also introduced to Free Attitude Interview (FAI) principles which would be adopted to direct the discussions and discourses throughout the study, as well as the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach for analysis and interpretation of data.

To establish a common understanding of the aim of the research study, the team reflected on the academic performance of the school, particularly in the Further Education and Training (FET) band, for the past few years. That led to vigorous discussions around the fluctuating results of the school, especially the Grade 12 results. The vigour in those discussions made everyone reflect on their contribution towards quality teaching and learning and confirmed a common understanding among the team members (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2007: 308). It was agreed that the role of the team would be to collaboratively design a strategy to be implemented in order to sustain high academic performance and quality teaching and learning. The team would also monitor the implementation of all suggested interventions by frequently meeting to report their observations, challenges and progress, as well as mapping the way forward.

The conditions for conducting research as stipulated by the Free State Education Department (see Annexure C) as well as the ethical clearance committee from the university (see Annexure A), were thoroughly discussed with the team members. They were also reminded about conditions for their participation in the study, including their right to give or not to give consent (Christians, 2011: 65; Hooley, 2005: 77); and their right to withdraw from participation should conditions dictate differently, without fear of being ill-judged. Members therefore gave their free and informed consent and exhibited eagerness to participate in the study.

Participation of members in the coordinating team implied that they had a management responsibility adding to their usual daily programmes (Poudel, 2009: 52). It was therefore crucial to consider issues that could affect group cohesion in order to keep the same group for the entire duration of the study. For instance, the activities of members had to be planned in such a way that it would allow them to execute their roles in the coordinating team.

Due to logistical challenges such as the dispersed areas from which all participants come, inefficient transportation and financial implications involved, the team agreed that it would meet at least once per month. The team however, realising the urgency to start with the project, decided that the next meeting would take place in two weeks' time. Since it was difficult to decide on the most convenient venue for the next meeting as the participants did not all live close-by, it was decided that the

school would be the venue for that meeting. Due to some parents working over weekends, and learners and teachers attending extra classes on Saturdays, it was decided that meetings would be held on Saturday afternoons. It was decided that the next meeting would be chaired by another team member. With this in place, the next phase commenced.

### **3.3.2 Phase 2 – Determining the intervention**

This is the phase in PAR where participants of the constituency work out mechanisms to address an identified problem (Dworski-Riggs &Langhout, 2010:218). The team agreed on the need to develop guiding principles that would direct engagements, ensure focus and determine the progress of the study (Stelmach& Preston, 2008: 60). Those guidelines included a schedule of meetings which were planned considering participants' normal work and school programmes.

The team also agreed on mechanisms that would be employed to assist in the reflective analysis and planning processes (Eruera, 2010: 3). The engagements in this phase therefore resulted in the drawing of terms of reference to collaborate actions of all stakeholders towards enhanced learner academic performance. They also resulted in a plan of action that included priority areas as well as actual activities which were carried out to address the issue of learner academic performance.

In order to ensure team cohesion and to attain social justice which was the team's main goal, it was critical for the team to adopt principles and values of mutual trust, respect and humility (Ledwith, 2007: 608). Adoption of this set of principles and values would assist the team in addressing issues of power that were brought about by the diverse backgrounds from which the members came (Prilleltensky, 2008:118; Watters & Comeau, 2010: 11). Moreover, the team also agreed that their role in levelling power relations extended beyond the team itself, thus making them arbitrators who sought to address the problem of academic performance through a collaborative strategy. As part of their problem-solving process, participants had to engage in meetings where possible strategies were suggested (Nikols, 2010: 4) and implemented.

### 3.3.2.1 Reflective analysis

A collective analysis is conducted to develop a better understanding of the possible cause of the problem (Boaduo, 2006: 46). It requires analysis into both internal and external situations, in terms of what the organisation has and/or does not have (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2010: 109). "By stimulating reflection among members of the community, a collective understanding of their 'social reality' is produced which is then used to inform and mobilise action" (Estacio & Marks, 2010: 549).

In order for the team to establish their own social reality that would be indicative of the action to be taken, they reflected on the school's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT). The outcome of their analysis indicated the following aspects as **strengths** for a collaborative strategy. The school had positive teachers who were always willing to go the extra mile and work together as a team. For instance, teachers would voluntarily offer support to learners in need in terms of hosting them in their homes during examinations and giving them moral as well as academic support throughout the year. Their attendance of workshops and training sessions for professional development demonstrated an interest and willingness to do better in their practices. The teachers' preparedness to participate in this kind of research study was also a positive indication of the strength towards a collaborative strategy.

Parents and learners also showed interest to participate in the study that aimed at enhancing learners' academic performance. Availability of willing former matriculates who would assist where necessary was another strength identified. The team agreed that discipline among learners was also adding to strengths for the envisaged collaborative strategy.

In view of the diverse backgrounds of participants, possible conflict was to be expected. It was therefore crucial to deliberate on that matter as it might present itself as a **weakness**. Since the school and its stakeholders had never engaged in this kind of venture before, their engagements were based on trial-and-error (Wilson, 2012: 8), therefore possible flaws and challenges were to be expected. Failure to deal with these aspects eventually would also articulate itself as a weakness that would impede the progress of the project. It was thus necessary for the team to have mechanisms in place to deal with arising challenges.

One of the **opportunities** created by the study was building confidence among participants through shared leadership. It promoted openness among participants to talk about their fears and share their expertise without any judgement. Another opportunity identified was connectedness with the community. The relationship of trust that the study created between the school and its community fostered a sense of belonging and ownership that in turn promoted the need to be part of the team that seeks solutions to the problems (Sanders, 2010: 2).

Possible **threats** that could arise were identified so that they would be considered in the drawing of an action plan. Former matriculates, who were still unemployed at the time, might secure employment and would then no longer be able to participate in the study. This would ultimately lead to a situation where replacements would be needed to fulfill their roles. Another potential threat was the possibility of family relocation that could affect team membership, as well as the other participants. The freedom to withdraw from the study at any point when participants felt that conditions under which they agreed to participate have changed was another threat that had to be taken into consideration as well. Long distances that learners travel to school, dispersed areas and unreliable transport, were other possible threats to consider as well.

Over and above these human factors, there were threats such as vague policies that guided the collaboration between schools and their communities. It was therefore crucial to develop a clear policy that would enhance collaboration between the school and its community.

The outcome of the SWOT analysis set priorities for the envisaged systemic framework, which served as basis for the design and operationalisation of the framework. In order to operationalise those priorities, specific activities were linked to identified priorities, responsible people were identified and allocated timeframes, and mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation were also put in place (Nikols, 2008: 5).

The coordinating team therefore agreed on a number of aspects, including a convenient time and place for subsequent meetings (Krishnaswamy, 2004: 18). From the SWOT analysis, the team had to engage in a planning process for the development of a systemic strategy for enhanced academic performance.



### **3.3.2.2 Implementation planning**

In order to realise the priorities that were identified during the reflective analysis, specific activities were developed to address each priority (Du Toit, Erasmus & Strydom, 2010: 177). Priorities identified included teacher support, learner support and parental and community involvement. Those priorities were set with the shared vision (Erasmus, Loedolff, Mda & Nel, 2006: 62) of enhanced academic performance for a sustainable learning environment in mind.

Activities developed for each priority were time-bound and responsible people allocated to oversee the attainment thereof. Resources, human and/or material, were also planned for. The development of activities also took into consideration the conditions stipulated by the Education Department for approval of the research. Therefore, all activities were planned to take place after normal tuition time (Dworski-Riggs & Langhout, 2010: 221; Keast & Mandel, 2009: 2) and there were no activities planned for the fourth term of the school year.

The plan outlined collaborated activities as follows: teachers of the same subject would meet biweekly to discuss the challenges they experience in their specific subject, share expertise as well as best practices and plan their lessons together. This would allow teachers to expand their subject knowledge, prepare thoroughly for their lessons and have various and better methods of approaching each topic, which would in turn contribute to enhancing the performance of the learners.

Subject teachers would also facilitate team learning among learners by assisting them to form study groups which would meet every afternoon from Monday to Thursday. The reason was to open communicative space (Kemmis & McTaggart, 200: 595) in which they would reflect on their own learning and share expertise and learning skills. The risk of exposing learners to being mocked and laughed at was considered, and the team agreed that it would be necessary to conduct an advocacy session with learners on the principles of mutual trust, humanity and respect (Ledwith, 2007: 599).

The plan also made provision for learners to access space, resources and the necessary support close to their homes during weekends and holidays. In this regard, parents and the general community would organise a venue where learners

would gather to study or do their homework or assignments under the supervision of parents, former matriculates or an interested community member. These opportunities would allow for more meaningful learning and make learners accountable for their own learning.

That plan was to be executed in collaboration by all stakeholders – parents, teachers and learners.

### **3.3.3. Phase 3 – Implementation**

The focus in this stage is on the implementation of the intervention agreed to in phase 2. The execution of the plan designed in the previous phase had to be thought through well and all activities well-coordinated to achieve the intended goal (Van Niekerk & Van Niekerk, 2009: 137) The implementation process was not an isolated activity, but formed part of the self-reflective cycles of planning, implementation, observation, evaluation and re-planning that are presented in PAR (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2007: 278; Van Niekerk & Van Niekerk, 2009: 134).

#### **3.3.3.1 Implementation**

To realise the planned activities, Grade 10 – 12 learners and their parents were invited to a meeting where the complete plan was explained to them and they were mobilised to adopt it. It was necessary to indicate to parents as well as learners that although the school's academic performance is often evaluated against Grade 12 results, it was important and beneficial for learners' performance to be enhanced as early as possible. A separate meeting was also held with affected teachers who bought into the plan.

An hour of group discussions, reflections and peer support was set from Monday to Thursday, after school. In order to maintain focus and order, a time-table was drawn to accommodate all critical subjects, and respective teachers were allocated for supervision and possible consultation needs. Teachers also facilitated the forming of groups to ensure diversity in terms of abilities. An attendance register was also kept for control purposes and for feedback to parents in subsequent parent meetings. The afternoon sessions soon yielded positive results.

To ensure that learners continue active learning at home, homework centres were established in the vicinity of learners' homes. The focus was on learners who lived in remote areas without access to resources such as libraries or resource centres where they could complete their homework, assignments, projects and other educational activities. This demanded reliable venues that everybody in the neighbourhood would be aware of, and as such, involvement of parents as well as community members was crucial. Parents therefore played a significant role in negotiating and securing an appropriate space in nearby primary and pre-primary schools. They also ensured that the venues were left in good working condition for use by regular users and nothing was to be removed. Parents, together with former matriculates in their areas, supervised the sessions in the homework centres, which were scheduled over weekends and school holidays, for four hours per session.

Another activity was the establishment of teacher professional support groups. The rationale behind the activity was again to open communicative space for teachers who teach the same subjects, where they could talk about their challenges and share best practices with each other in an environment of trust, respect and love (Mertens, 2009: 60). The activity was also planned to foster team teaching and joint-planning among the teachers. These professional support activities were extended to the classroom. The group would assist a particular teacher in an identified topic, plan a lesson together with the teacher, visit the teacher in class to observe teaching methods, and thereafter reflect on the lesson and suggest future recommendations if necessary.

In order to see these activities through, and to prevent conflicts that would hinder the progress of the study, a policy for a systemic strategy was drawn. The coordinating team agreed that the two teachers would draft the policy, based on deliberations between team and the larger forum, and circulate it among other team members and the broader forum for ratification. The policy was implemented throughout the study.

Monthly meetings were also held to reflect on the impact of actions taken.

### **3.3.3.2 Observation process**

This is a continuous process that extends throughout the research project. It involves monitoring and evaluation from the beginning, during and at the end of the project

(Van Niekerk & Van Niekerk, 2009: 138). Participants were urged from the beginning of the study, to note anything that they might find positive, negative or worrying regarding the study. Those observations should be reported to the team members who would in turn report it to other members of the coordinating team. That would ensure that nothing was taken for granted.

One observation during sessions held by the **teacher professional support groups** was the good spirit with which teachers welcomed the idea. Unlike in their normal meetings, they felt that those sessions addressed their immediate distresses. Although in the beginning some of them found it weird to open up to their colleagues about topics that posed a challenge to them, as time went by they discovered that their colleagues also experience problems and challenges. They soon realized that a single challenge could have more than one solution and as many alternatives.

Teachers took turns to facilitate a two to three hour session every second Friday. The sessions focused on one person at a time. The process involved an explanation of the nature of a problem encountered, suggestions from participants and designing a lesson plan that would be presented the following week. This would be followed by a feedback session with one or two teachers who observed the lesson. Comments by the participants gave an indication that those sessions were successful.

Observation of learner engagements within their **peer support groups** reflected apathy in the beginning but that improved with time. Learners, as their teachers, indicated that it was not easy to open up when they were afraid of being laughed at. Teachers who were allocated to facilitate and supervise those sessions reported that there was an improvement in terms of discipline. They indicated that as soon as learners were used to those sessions, it was not necessary for them to call them to order since they understood the necessity of keeping focus and not disturbing other groups. The same teachers, who were mostly subject teachers, even reported on an improvement among shy learners. They showed that those learners gathered confidence with time, not only to talk to their peers about their subject-related problems, but also to talk to them. Teachers further reported on improvement in the general performance in different subjects. In essence, those sessions were viewed to be a positive venture.

Parents, learners and volunteers (former matriculates) all welcomed the **homework centres**. Facilitators, who were parents and volunteers, indicated that attendance was satisfactory most of the time with the exception at the end of the month, where some learners were expected to run family errands and could not attend. Activities in various centres were reported to be smooth, especially after the donation of stationery and other resources by the university and other donors. Learners also reported that those centres were affording them a space to work, but most importantly, uninterrupted time to concentrate on their school work. Parents at one of the centres felt the need to provide food to learners after three hours of hard work. The teachers made the positive observation that there was an improvement in the completion of tasks by the learners involved. This activity was hence carried out successfully.

The drawing of a policy for the systemic strategy for enhanced academic performance was done with care. Since there were no existing policies, particularly in this regard, to learn from, the two teachers who were assigned the duty had to consult broadly in order to come up with a policy of acceptable standard. The policy had to embrace relevant sections in the existing school policies; therefore the team had to visit those policies as well. The ultimate policy encompassed the systemic strategy for enhanced academic performance.

In order to make sense of these observations, reflection was necessary. Reflection was also essential to establish the extent to which the study was achieving its objectives.

### **3.3.3.3 Reflecting and Re-planning**

Reflection involves critical evaluation on experiences for a deeper awareness of the concrete reality that people face (Boaduoet al., 2009: 100). It allows participants to make sense of experiences by discovering connections between events, actions and feelings (Van Niekerk & Van Niekerk, 2009: 138). During reflection, outcomes are conversed to participants and they are given time to evaluate and reflect.

Scheduled reflection meetings allowed participants in the coordinating team as well as in the broader forum to review the progress of the study. Identified constructs

became the guide posts of the discussions for the purpose of focus as well as determination of the extent to which the study's objectives were achieved. The subsequent section discusses how reflection was achieved based on the constructs developed in each objective.

#### **a) The need for a systemic strategy for enhanced academic performance**

Reflection shed some light on a number of issues. The teacher professional support groups did not only empower teachers in their professional work, but also helped to address issues of distress that could have easily lowered the morale of teachers, affected their health and be detrimental to the future of the school as well as the performance of the learners. Collaboration of teachers, parents and learners in this initiative created a public space from which all could cultivate respect for one another, equity, social justice, freedom, peace and hope; but moreover, practice and share for the purpose of sustainability (Kreber, 2005: 394; Mahlomaholo, 2012:5; Steinberg & Kencheloe, 2010: 142). It also assisted to address the blame game among stakeholders when the desired academic results were not achieved. Parents were empowered to assume an active role in their children's disciplined learning through homework centres (Tennyson, 2010: 2). The experience gained from this initiative would be valuable to all in other engagements of this nature (Msila, 2012: 310; Xaba, 2011: 201).

Reflection on homework centres deemed it necessary to adjust the initial plan. Reports that indicated a significant drop in attendance during the weekend at the end of the month were addressed to ensure continuity without any inconvenience to anybody. In consultation with parents, they explained that because of the remote area they live in and inefficient transport, it was difficult to visit the city for groceries and other errands. They pointed out that the weekends at the end of month became the only time they have to do that, but since most of them work over weekends as well, they depend on their children to run errands for them. In order to accommodate that situation, the plan was adjusted accordingly. It was then reported that the new arrangements yielded better results in as far as attendance was concerned.

### **b) Components of the strategy**

The role played by the coordinating team was also reflected upon. It was agreed that the team played a vital role in harmonizing the engagements of participants from diverse backgrounds (Levin & Greenwood, 2011:29; Mertens, 2010: 250). The mediatory role played by the coordinating team created communicative space that allowed participants to interact and agree on the common vision for the tripartite (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2007: 296; Wicks & Reason, 2009: 247; Writer, 2008: 5). The team also engaged in the process of situational analysis that identified priorities and produced a policy that would direct all the actions.

### **c) Conditions for the strategy**

The zeal displayed by all participants demonstrated their belief and trust in the intentions of the initiative. This vehemence was to a great extent influenced by the arbitration of the coordinating team that championed the whole process. The coordinating team held regular meetings and also regularly met with the broader forum of participants as means of ensuring continuity in the project.

### **d) Threats that could hinder proper execution of the strategy**

The concern that volunteering former matriculates might find employment and leave the study was addressed. It was decided that as many community members as possible would be encouraged to participate so that there would always be enough people to facilitate the homework centres and supervise the learners. The volunteers also vouched to relay their skills to those who would be replacing them to ensure that the initiative is sustained. It was accepted that the relocation of families was beyond the control of the team and the study itself. It was therefore agreed that relocation of one household would not pose danger to the initiative, unless it was the only household in the area, as was the case in one instance, as the centre would then sadly have to be closed and its resources distributed among other centres.

### **3.3.4 Profiling the participants**

In this section, a brief background of the participants is given to shed light on the role they played in the study.

#### **3.3.4.1 The research coordinator**

The research coordinator is a teacher in the capacity of a departmental head (HOD) at the school where the research study is conducted. An HOD's core duties include, among others, participating in processes that regularly review teachers' professional practice with the aim of improving teaching and learning; and meeting parents to discuss with them the progress and conduct of their children (Employment Equity Act 76, 1998). These and other duties are carried out to ensure that effective and quality teaching and learning takes place at the school. The research coordinator assumed the role of organising the team and acquainting the team members with the concepts of CER, PAR, FAI and CDA; initiating the research; coordinating the research together with the team as they participate in meetings, generate and analyse data, as well as engaging other participants.

#### **3.3.4.2 The principal**

The core duties of the principal are, inter alia, professional management of a public school in administrative matters, and provision of professional leadership to the staff members of the school (Employment Equity Act 76, 1998). These are supposed to be done to ascertain that teaching and learning take place as per the rules and regulations of the Education Department. The principal was a member of the coordinating team. He also conducted research together with other members and participated in activities that included meetings, generation and analysis of data, as well as engaging with other participants. The study benefited from his experience in education-related matters. He also provided guidance to ensure that the study did not step beyond the rules and regulations that govern the school.

#### **3.3.4.3 Teachers**

Two elected teachers, the one being an HOD and the other a member of the SBST, were members of the coordinating team as well. Their role in the coordinating team was the same as the other members. Their positions in the school structure benefited the study significantly since they were able to oversee the execution of activities of the study and report on the impact in the reflection sessions. Twelve more teachers were also part of the study. These were teachers in various subjects



in Grades 10 – 12, however, from time to time also working with five other Grade 8 and 9 teachers. All teachers were qualified in the subjects they were teaching and had at least three years teaching experience.

#### **3.3.4.4 Parents**

Participating parents were specifically parents of learners who were benefiting from homework centres. Most of them were farm and domestic workers residing on their employees' property, with the highest education level being junior secondary. The parent population was dominated by women who in many cases were the family heads. Two parents, one SGB member and a prominent member of the community who ran a care centre for orphans, were elected as members of the coordinating team. Their role in the team was not different from that of the other members and their positions in the community and in the school were also beneficial to the study.

#### **3.3.4.5 Learners**

All 120 learners in Grades 10 – 12 participated. Although they were all registered learners of the school, some of them stayed in the vicinity of the school and others stayed in the city. Although all of them participated in the afternoon learner peer support sessions, only those who came from the farms participated in and subsequently benefited from the homework centres. Two learners, one in Grade 11 and the other in Grade 12, were elected as members of the coordinating team and had the same roles as the rest of the team.

#### **3.3.4.6 Volunteering former matriculates**

Two former matriculates were co-opted into the coordinating team. They had been well-performing learners when they were still at school and had shown interest in various community structures. They were unemployed at the time of the research study and were quite willing to participate in the study.

### **3.4 DATA GENERATION PROCEDURES AND PROCESSES**

In order to respond to the research question and meet the objectives of the study, it is important to generate data that is relevant to the study. It is critical that raw data

generated be captured as raw as it is, organised and processed so that the meaning derived from it can be used to clarify, support or critic statements made within the parameters of the research.

### **3.4 1 Procedures for data generation**

Data was generated from interactions with the general participants and with the coordinating team. In order to gain access to different stakeholders, permission had to be solicited from institutions and / or individuals.

#### **3.4.1.1 Free State Department of Education**

The Free State Department of Education granted permission to conduct research at the identified school, stipulating that participation should be voluntary; the identity of the school kept confidential; research not be conducted during the fourth term of the academic year and / or interfere with the normal tuition; and a bound copy of the complete dissertation be donated to the Free State Department of Education on completion of the study.

#### **3.4.1.2 The school**

The principal granted permission for the study to be conducted at the school. Access to the school premises would enable convenient assembly of various stakeholders, parents, learners and teachers.

#### **3.4.1.3 Parents**

Parents of Grade 10 -12 learners were asked to give informed written consent for their children to participate in the study. The parents of the two learners who would also form part of the coordinating team were also requested to give consent for their children to do so. This was necessary since most of them were still minors and their participation would expose them to other activities beyond their normal routine.

The two parents who were members of the coordinating team were asked to give their informed consent to participate in the study as well, with an understanding of the commitment that comes with their involvement. For instance, they would have to attend meetings and remain members until the end of the study, in order to ensure consistency.

#### **3.4.1.4 Learners**

Grade 10 – 12 learners, including the two who were part of the coordinating team, also gave their consent to participate in the study. Their parents, however, had to consent to their participation as well. The participation of the learners would generate relevant data that would assist in achieving the aim of the study.

#### **3.4.1.5 Teachers**

Participating teachers also gave their consent to participate in the study. Their engagements with other stakeholders and other members of the team would also produce data that would serve the purpose of the study.

#### **3.4.1.6 Former matriculates**

It was necessary to also solicit informed consent from involved former matriculates for their participation. Their inputs would also assist in generating data that would fulfill the purpose of the study.

### **3.4.2 Data generation processes**

This section discusses the processes employed and the devices used in generating data.

#### **3.4.2.1 Instruments and tools**

The discussions from different sessions were captured on a voice recorder. This instrument was chosen because it can be replayed as often as necessary, thus assisting in transcription. It also captures essential discursive practices that can be useful in contextual and sociological analysis. In CER, discourses are taken seriously; therefore it is important that what is implied in discourses be clearly understood. The voice recorder thus became a useful instrument in a paradigm that is sensitive to the spoken word.

The minutes from meetings and sessions were used to give feedback to the bigger forum of participants. A comments book was also created for each group of participants, to assess the impact of the intervention strategies and to advise the team on the need to re-strategise. A research journal was kept to record observations and casual conversations which would be crucial when data is analysed.

#### **3.4.2.2 The Free Attitude Interview principles**

The Free Attitude Interview (FAI) is a non-directive, person-to-person technique of obtaining information concerning an opinion (Meulenberg-Buskens, 1997: 2). It is characterised by a pose of only one opening question within which the interviewees explore their own ideas and suggest new topics, thus opening space for the participants to intervene and for the interviewer to respond flexibly (Meulenberg-Buskens, 1997: 2). It grants participants the freedom to give their own interpretation and perception of the question. The nature of FAI discussed above makes it appropriate within the CER framework because it does not distance participants from the researcher nor undermine their integrity (Mahlomaholo & Netshandama, 2012: 45).

The principles of FAI were used in all the meetings and informal discussions that the coordinating team members had among themselves and with other participants. Those principles made provision for participants to use the language that they prefer. Since all participants were free to express their thoughts and feelings in their home language, everybody participated in the discussions. The FAI principles also allowed for reciprocal dialogue between participants, which made it possible for the study to generate reliable data that could help in analysis.

### **3.5 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

In order to contribute towards the creation of knowledge, analysis and interpretation were done of the data generated through the course of the study.

### **3.5.1 Critical Discourse Analysis**

Critical Discourse Analysis is a discourse analytical research that brings about transparency into how social power abuse, dominance and inequality are underpinned in text and talk within a social and political context (Fairclough, 2003: 209; Van Dijk, 2008: 85). Because its intention is to expose and resist social inequality embedded in words and actions (Van Dijk, 2008: 85), CDA coincides well with CER and PAR. Based on this, the words and actions of participants should not be taken for granted as it has the potential to influence minds and manipulate actions of others (Van Dijk, 2008: 89). The principles of humanity, mutual trust and respect (Levin & Greenwood, 2011: 29; Mertens, 2010: 250) which formed the corner stone of all interactions, curtailed possible manipulation among participants which might have given false results. The CDA approach goes beyond words in language and includes historical, political, sociological and/or psychological dimensions that shed more light on the deeper meaning of what has been said (Wodak, 2007: 210). The use of CDA in the study makes it possible to analyse generated data at three levels, namely textual, contextual and sociological levels (Ruiz, 2009: 5).

#### **3.5.1.1 Textual level of analysis**

According to Ruiz (2009: 7), textual analysis “considers discourse as an object, giving it the objectivity and making it especially interesting for those who approach discourse analysis from positivist science position” The implication here is that there is no interpretation beyond the obvious meaning. What is expressed in speech and in writing therefore means just that at the textual level of analysis. For the purpose of textual analysis, all the discussions from meetings were recorded and transcriptions prepared. Care was taken to include in transcriptions all the non-verbal incidents such as moments of silence, pauses, meaningful gestures and expressions, etc. (Ruiz, 2009: 7). The notes that members of the coordinating team made from different engagements were also used to verify the recordings. This level of analysis formed part of the other two levels, namely contextual and sociological analysis.

### **3.5.1.2 Contextual level of analysis**

Contextual analysis appreciates that discourses do not take place in isolation, but are always influenced by the conditions and circumstances from which they arise. According to Ruiz (2009: 12),

Context is understood as the space in which the discourse has emerged and in which it acquires meaning. Discourse, on this level is understood to be a particular event created by subjects who are engrossed in a specific time and place within a given symbolic universe and who have their own discursive intentions. For that reason, a distinction can be made between two types of contexts, which are: situational contexts and intertextual contexts, giving rise to situational analysis and intertextual analysis.

In order to conduct situational analysis, one needs to be clear about the circumstances within which the discourse was created. One realised the patterns displayed by participants during the interactions. For example, in the sessions facilitated by the principal, participants were willing to divulge information. The assumption made was that participants trusted him.

The notion of intertextual analysis stems from people being socialised into discourses in the social space in order to produce their own (Ruiz, 2009:15). This indicates that discourse gains significance from other discourses similar or different to it. It was thus essential during interactions, to be aware of and guard against generalisation. For instance, the homework centres were not planned with the idea in mind that some will not support it, since it would mean sacrificing other important matters. Similarly, the introduction of professional support groups was done without fear that teachers would find it time-consuming. The participants were prepared to explore whatever initiative would enhance and sustain academic performance.

### **3.5.1.3 Sociological analysis**

According to Hernandez (2008:227), CDA “is based on the view that language, as social practices, is a central element in social life, and hence it analyses discourse in relation to the social context in which it occurs. CDA is mainly aimed at making certain social situations more transparent based on linguistic evidence”. The sociological interpretation of discourse thus involves making connections between

the discourse analysed and the social space in which the discourse was produced (Ruiz, 2009: 16).

Analysis of discourse at this level requires one to look at it from different perspectives in order to attach appropriate meaning to it. For instance, a parent who feels that academic matters have nothing to do with parents, might have had bad experiences with the school in the past or feels that one needs special kind of training to deal with such matters. It was therefore essential to consider discourse as social information and social product during various interactions with the participants.

### **3.6 CONCLUSION**

The chapter discussed how PAR was operationalized in the context of the study. It sketched the design, drawing a distinction between the different types of participants, namely general participants and participants who were members of the coordinating team. PAR as a research method was discussed and its relevance to the study demonstrated. Furthermore the elements of PAR cycles were reflected upon, showing how they were implemented to create actions that made data generation possible. The profiles of the different participants were summarised to illustrate the roles they played in the study. Procedures and processes employed to generate data were also highlighted. Finally, the chapter showed how the strategies of FAI and CDA assisted in data generation and analysis.

The next chapter presents, analyse and interprets data in order to better understand the data.

## **CHAPTER 4**

# **DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS ON DESIGNING A SYSTEMIC STRATEGY TOWARDS THE CREATION OF SUSTAINABLE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS FOR ENHANCED LEARNER ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

The study designs a systemic strategy for sustainable learning environments towards enhanced learner academic performance. In order to realize the aim of the study, this chapter analyses and interprets data as well as presents and discusses results with reference to the design and implementation of the developing strategy. For maintenance of consistency, focus and logic of argument made in this study, data are categorized and interpreted on the basis of the five objectives of the study.

The chapter first analyses and discusses data which indicated the need to develop the aforementioned strategy. This includes making transparent the challenges faced by the school in this study, regarding the enhancement of academic performance and sustenance thereof. Each challenge is explored separately and in detail. The process involves identifying the challenge, then, based on literature, discussing how that particular aspect is a challenge to the enhancement and sustenance of academic performance at that school. Literature here refers to theory, legislative imperatives and previous research findings that corroborates with the study. The challenge is then illustrated from empirical data by quoting relevant extracts. These extracts are interpreted from both the discursive and social structural levels through the use of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Ruiz, 2009:5; Wodak, 2007:206). Analysis of the extracts is done against the background of literature and in line with the context of critical emancipatory research (CER) as the theoretical framework of the study, to demonstrate the role of power differentials therein



(Watson & Watson, 2011:64). Analysis of this particular challenge ends with justification of the need for the evolving strategy against the findings of literature.

This process is followed by the analysis and interpretation of data, as well as the presentation and discussion of findings regarding the components of the developing strategy. Each one of the components of this strategy is presented and discussed as a response to respective corresponding challenge. A similar procedure to the one followed in the presentation of challenges is also followed here. Thus, an illustration is made of how each component constitutes a solution to an identified challenge. Analysis and discussion is also done in the context of CER, as a theoretical framework, CDA as the tool of analysis and the literature as foundation for drawing conclusions as to what constitutes the evolving strategy.

In the same way, the chapter on the one hand discusses the conditions conducive to the successful implementation of the evolving strategy, and on the other hand the threats experienced and overcome by this strategy. Evaluation is made by identifying disagreements, contradictions and gaps that exist between literature and empirical data. To conclude, indicators of the successes that the evolving strategy attained in countering the identified challenges are presented and discussed. The data used in all illustrations were generated during the designing phase of the strategy and implemented for collaborative enhancement of academic performance at a school.

## **4.2 DEMONSTRATION OF THE NEED FOR THE STRATEGY**

Improvement of academic performance is a global issue (Akyeampong, 2005: 3; Mintrop & Papazian, 2003: 3; Murtaza, 2010: 213; Sanders, 2010: 2). Literature has shown that there have been efforts in many countries, including South Africa, to improve academic performance of learners and sustain it (Mmotlane, 2009:2; Mestry & Grobler, 2007: 178; Smith, 2006:46). Strategies employed, however, proved not to be completely successful since some schools, such as the one this study focuses on, are still experiencing performance deficit. Among the challenges faced was the absence of **designated structure(s)** to facilitate collaborative design and implementation of programmes towards enhanced academic performance (Boaduo et al., 2009: 96; Blackmore & Hutchison, 2010: 505). If an academic improvement

strategy is not organised collaboratively by a designated structure that includes parents, other community members and the learners themselves, the effect of the effort becomes short-lived (Aga Khan Foundation, 2010: 3). In order for learning experiences to be meaningful to the child, they have to be related to the child's immediate community and society (Nnoli&Ajayi-Smith, 2012: 3-4),as the child's custodians are his parents and other community members. Lack of coalition of these interest groups often results in deficit of learner variables such as academic achievement, sense of well-being and educational aspirations (Boaduo et al., 2009: 104; Mestry & Grobler, 2007: 176–177).

Such deficits decode **lack of shared vision** that should unify the actions of diverse stakeholders (Steinberg & Kincheloe, 2008: 141; Van Wyk & Lemmer, 2008: 7). Without a shared vision, it becomes difficult to implement programmes that are meant to improve academic performance (Boaduo et al., 2009: 104; Van Wyk & Lemmer, 2008: 23). For instance, when learners are given homework parents will not ensure that learners attend to it. Moreover, without a devoted team that has a clear vision towards the enhancement of academic performance, an analytical reflection of the **strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT)** would be nearly impossible. A SWOT analysis is critical in planning the implementation of a strategy. Lack of SWOT analysis becomes damaging to the implementation because possible hindrances are not identified and planned for, thus they remain impediments towards the effective implementation of programmes (David, 2013: 94; Ehlers & Lazenby, 2010: 111). It is from SWOT analysis that the participants can prioritise activities which could enable attainment of enhanced academic performance (David, 2013: 126; Ehlers & Lazenby, 2010: 111), but this was another limitation in this case.

Another limiting factor in the improvement of academic performance is **lack of collaborative planning** (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2010: 111). Proper and collaborative planning directs implementation of priorities (Department of Basic Education & Department of Higher Education and Training, 2011: 6; Mertens, 2010: 238). Finally, **lack of continuous monitoring** of the implementation process became a barrier in the successful implementation of enhancement initiatives. These factors are explained in detail in the following sections.

#### 4.2.1 Lack of a coordinating structure

A coordinating team is crucial to facilitate and coordinate the activities of parents, teachers and learners towards improved academic performance (Aga Khan Foundation, 2010: 2; Boaduo et al., 2009: 96; Mertens, 2009: 200). This was evident in the Whole School Approach that was adopted in Kenya, where initiatives employed were organised and directed by a designated structure (Aga Khan Foundation, 2010: 2). A similar situation transpired in Botswana during parent-community involvement in school governance for the improvement of learner performance (Boaduo et al., 2009: 96). This was the case in the North West Province in South Africa as well (refer to paragraph 2.4.1.2). In all the instances mentioned above, the team composed of individuals who represented all stakeholders, namely parents, teachers, learners and other community members. Such a structure did not exist at the school that this study focuses on. This implies that there was no team to organise forums in which parents, teachers and learners could meet to deliberate on the causes of fluctuating results and find a solution to the problem. This was obvious from what Sello (the principal) said when he was approached about the concern of fluctuating matric results:

*Ntlafatso ya tshebetso ya bana ke taba e batlang e le mararane ka ha ha re na tshehetso ya batswadi mme le bana le bona ha ba bontshe boitelo. Re bona batswadi feela ha ba tlo ngodisa bana le ha ba qobelleha ho tla sekolong hobane bana ba ile ba itshwara hampe kapa ha ba tlo lata diripoto tsa bana. (Improvement of academic performance is a complicated matter because we don't have parents' support and learners are not committed either. The only time we see parents, is when they come to register their children and when they are compelled to come to school because their children had misbehaved or are collecting children's progress reports).*

The use of the pronoun *re* (we) in the clause '*ha re na tshehetso*' (*we do not have the support*) reflects lack of unity among the teachers, parents and learners. This expression seems to imply that the efforts and decisions concerning the improvement of learner performance are unilaterally from the teachers' side even though they affect parents and learners as well. The fact that parents were aloof

from school and learners were passively involved could have been inherited from the legacy of the past that was intended to foster segregation (Kendall, 2006: 62), where the schools perpetuated oppression through centralised education (Kendall, 2006: 63). The supposed absence of parents and learners' support was despite the existence of legislation that mandates parents to support and assume an active role in their children's education, and learners to be committed to self-development (SASA 84 section 6(a-b) & section 4.7).

This limitation emphasises the fact that there was no dedicated structure to oversee collaboration of parents, teachers and learners towards the enhancement of academic performance. Due to this, the school's efforts missed on valuable and meaningful contributions of parents and learners that could have given them (efforts) better direction. This scrutiny is emphasised by the comments made by Mmateboho (parent) and Phaello (learner) during the parents meeting where the aim of research was outlined:

*Mmateboho: Re ka etsang? Matitjhere ke bona ba tsebang dintho tsena. Seo rona re ka se etsang feela ke ho netefatsa hore bana bat la sekolong, mme ho sallane le matitjhere hobane ke bona diprofeshenale tabeng tsa thuto. (What can we do? Teachers are the ones who know these things. All we can do is to make sure that children come to school, and the rest is up to the teachers because they are professionals in education matters).*

*Phaello: Rona re latela feela seo re se bolellwang ke matitjhere. Empa ka nako tse ding ho thata hobane se lebelletsweng ho rona ke sekolo, se thulana le se lebelletsweng ho rona ho tswa malapeng. Mohlala, re fuwa asaenamente, mosebetsi wa hae kapa porojeke ho e etsa hae re ntse re lebelletswe ho phetha mesebetsi ya ka malapeng. (We can only follow what we are told by the teachers. But, sometimes it is difficult because what is expected from us by the school clashes with what our families expect from us. For example, we are given assignments, homework and projects to do at home while we are also expected to do chores at home).*

Mmateboho's question "What can we do?" reflects the feeling of hopelessness. She believes that there is nothing that they, as parents, can contribute towards the improvement of learner performance. This is negated by the findings in Botswana,

Kenya and the North West province in South Africa where learner success and improvement of academic performance were proven to be a function of attitudes and practices of a triad – parents, teachers and learners (Aga Khan Foundation, 2010: 4; Boaduo et al., 2009: 98; Mahlomaholo, 2010: 11). Findings from the good practices in these countries indicate that by breaking through the boundaries of power that exist between schools and parent communities, a wealth of capital that may be crucial in the improvement of learner performance is revealed (Yosso, 2005: 76 ). According to The Aga Khan Foundation (2010: 3), taking a child to school is only the first step, and parents’ involvement in all aspects of education development is a key element.

The same feeling of helplessness is also expressed by Phaello in the clause “*we only follow*”. This kind of feeling translates lack of confidence in the ability to do school work. Fullan (2001: 200), however, demonstrates that learners derive confidence to do their school work, succeed and value the importance of school when they are part of the triad. Phaello’s problem is worsened by the *clash* that exists between the school and home. The clash can only occur if there is no collaboration between the school and the parent community (Nnoli & Ajayi-Smith, 2012: 1; Van Wyk & Lemmer, 2008: 7). The comments by Mateboho and Phaello therefore emphasise lack of a coordinating structure that could ensure cooperation among the parents, teachers and learners.

According to Wilson (2012: 16), collaboration and cooperation are factors that assist to bridge the silos across organisational units. The implication in Sello’s statement was that the gap could be bridged by all parties coming together, which would mean making provision for working together (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2011: 100; Mertens, 2010: 238). Collaboration would thus bring parents, teachers and learners together (Silva, 2007: 179), contributing positively towards the educational needs of learners and giving them hope for the future.

#### **4.2.2 Lack of a shared vision**

The significance of a shared vision is the collaboration of participants’ varied views, backgrounds and experiences to produce a combined effect that is greater than the sum of their separate effects (Keast & Mandel, 2009: 1; Steinberg & Kincheloe, 2008: 141; Wright, 2004: 3). Furthermore, a shared vision makes it possible to plan

relevant and focused activities that would ensure attainment of the desired goal (Keast& Mandel, 2009: 2; Wilson, 2012: 16). Therefore, resources and energy are focused towards the realization of the set vision. Improvement of academic performance requires that the activities of parents, teachers and learners articulate a jointly-formulated vision (Mestry & Grobler, 2007: 178; Sanders, 2010: 2). In Kenya, for instance, all the stakeholders worked together to find workable solutions to the identified challenges and agreed on roles and responsibilities to bring about the desirable change (Aga Khan Foundation, 2010: 2). Success stories in Australia, Kenya, Botswana and the North West Province of South Africa point to the importance of a shared vision in uniting the efforts of the parents, teachers and learners towards improved academic performance (see paragraph 2.4.2.3). The vision therefore serves as a guidepost from which the stakeholders can determine if they are achieving the goal or not (Sanders, 2010: 3).

Lack of a coordinating structure to facilitate collaboration of various stakeholders at Bokgabane implied that there was no shared vision among stakeholders (Keast& Mandel, 2009: 2; Wilson, 2012: 16). Without a shared vision it was impossible for stakeholders to be committed and feel part of the collaboration. This was evident in Sello's remarks in a meeting where the purpose was to find solutions to the issue of fluctuating results:

*Re bile le ditelaseka tsa tlatseso mafelong a beke le di holideyi. Re adoptile bana ra ya le bona maheng a rona ho ba fa tshetso ka dihlahlobo, empa bana ba bang ha ba tle, le batswadi ba bang ba hana ho re lokollela bana. (We had extra classes during weekends and holidays. We adopted learners and took them to our homes to offer them support during the exams, but some learners did not come and some parents refused to release their children.)*

Data in the text reflects initiatives that the teachers developed in efforts to improve academic performance of learners, such as extra classes and 'adoption' of learners by taking them to their homes for support. The staying-away of learners from those strategies and the refusal of parents to release children seem to indicate that neither parents nor learners bought into the idea and thus did not feel part of it. The vision that the school had, which was going to be realised through those activities, was apparently not shared by other stakeholders, hence the lack of cooperation. This led

to the maintaining the status quo. However, if there was a common vision, there would have been negotiations and agreements among stakeholders concerning the unfolding of the initiative and various roles to be played by different stakeholders (Aga Khan Foundation, 2010: 2; Boaduo et al., 2009: 98; Mahlomaholo, 2010: 11).

What was said by Sello was confirmed by Patricia (a teacher) in the same meeting:

*Ho bolelwang ke Sello ke nnete. Le ha re kopa batswadi ho rekela bana dithusathuto jwalo ka didikshinari le khalkhuleitara, ha ho etsahale. Se teng o ka mpa wa bona ngwana ba tla ka diselefono tse turang. (What is said by Sello is true. Even when we ask parents to buy learning support materials such as dictionaries and calculators, it does not happen. Instead you would rather see a child coming with an expensive cell phone. )*

Patricia mentions that parents instead of buying their children learning support materials such as dictionaries and calculators; they buy cell phones that in her view are not helpful in enhancing learners' academic performance. However, a cell phone, which is a technological device, can also be used to improve learners' performance if its use is controlled. If there had been a common vision shared among parents, teachers and learners, there would have been consensus regarding acceptable and unacceptable learning support materials. Literature shows that stakeholders in Australia, Kenya, Botswana and North West Province of South Africa shared a common vision and therefore agreed on how the implementation of planned activities would unfold (Aga Khan Foundation, 2010: 2; Blackmore & Hutchison, 2010: 502; Boaduo et al., 2009: 98; Mahlomaholo, 2010: 11).

The absence of a shared vision was also made explicit by the comments by Thembi and Tshepo (Grade 12 learners) during a casual conversation with them after that meeting:

*Thembi: Empa ditlase tsena le dihomuweke tsa mehlena ka nako enngwe di a tena. Ha re sa na phomolo hohang. Le ka diholidei ke mosebetsi feela. (But these extra classes and daily homework are sometime a nuisance. When no longer have rest. Even during the holidays, it is just work).*

Tshepo: *Ke a tseba, empa ke hobane feela re sa utlwisise seo matitjhere a lehang ho se etsa. Ha ke nahane hore le bona ba batla ho dula ba tla sekolong, sholi le bona ba na le mabaka a bona. (I know, but it is only because we don't understand what the teachers are trying to do. I don't think that they also want to always be at school, surely they have their own businesses).*

The use of expressions such as “a nuisance” and “we don't understand” reflects the challenge that is brought about by lack of a shared vision. Thembi and Tshepo express what possibly could be the feeling of most learners who do not share the same vision as teachers concerning their performance. It is clear from their comments that they were not involved in the decisions that led to these actions, therefore they feel obliged to do something that they did not bargain for. Although Tshepo seems to believe that there is a worthy cause for the sacrifices that teachers make by leaving their businesses in order to attend to them (learners), he is not sure of what the cause is. If learners like Thembi and Tshepo had been part of the structure alluded to in section 4.2.1, they would have understood and contributed towards the shared vision.

A common vision that should be shared among different stakeholders in the school is in the core of the Quality Learning and Teaching Campaign (QLTC) (DBE, 2009) and the Provincial Strategy on Learner Attainment (PSLA) (DBE, 2012). This fits well with the primary objective of CER which is to find the root source of oppression and change it through the involvement of all affected stakeholders (Creswell, 2013: 30; Lavia & Mahlomaholo, 2012:58; Ledwith, 2007: 599).

#### **4.2.3 Lack of a SWOT analysis**

Failure to reflect on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) was another challenge that contributed to the fluctuating results at Bokgabane. A SWOT analysis helps an organisation to understand its strengths, weaknesses and opportunities so that it can draw from its strengths to achieve and operationalise its vision (Amin & Mohammad 2012:136; Kim, 2005:120). Bokgabane had never attempted to analyse its internal and external state of affairs (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2010:109) in order to have a better understanding of the problem, unlike in the



international countries that had the best improvement strategies (refer to section 2.1.4.4). In Australia, for instance, a SWOT analysis helped the school to review and scrutinize the situation beforehand so that they could prioritise activities and plan accordingly (Blackmore & Hutchison, 2010: 502 - 503). This was the same with Kenya, Botswana and the North West Province of South Africa (Aga Khan Foundation, 2010: 3; Boaduo et al, 2009: 97; Mahlomaholo, 2010: 6).

Lack of joint analysis also prohibited the identification of available skills, knowledge and opportunities that could be used to enhance learner performance, as well as identifying possible threats to the achievement of the desired goal, so that mechanisms could be put in place to deal with them. An implied reference to the lack of a SWOT analysis by the school and its stakeholders was made by Pholo (a parent and member of the coordinating team) in the first meeting of the coordinating team:

*Kamehla mosuwehloho o re fa tlaleho ka sephetho sa bana se sa kgotsofatseng mmere etsang? Re ye re kgotse feela hoba re re ke ntho tsa barutehi. Ke nthwa mehlena. (The principal always gives a report on learners' results that are not good, and what do we do? We often just become astonished and do nothing because we say it is something for the educated. This happens every time.)*

By using the word *kamehla* (always) Pholo demonstrates that nothing was done to determine the root cause of what had appeared to be a regular practice of unsatisfactory performance. The reaction by the parents, as mentioned by Pholo, clearly indicates that they were not happy with the results, but felt hopeless and powerless since they considered academic matters to be the responsibility of the teachers (Van Wyk & Lemmer, 2008: 23).

The pattern also shows no evidence of teachers ever attempting to analyse their own teaching practices either (Waghid, 2002: 97). This was reflected in what Patricia said at a strategic planning session:

*Hangata ke kgutla ke ferekane diwekshopong and ke lebelletswe ho presenta seo ke tlang ka sona tlelaseng. Ka lebaka la kगतello ya ho qeta silabase, ke ye ke iphumane ke se ke petelletsa feela and ka nako tse ding ke sena le*

*bonnete ba hore ke etsa tsona. Ho batla ho le thata ho batla thuso ho dikholiki hobane emong le emong o kgannwa ke nako hore a qete mosebetsi. (I often come back confused from workshops and I am expected to implement whatever that was presented there, in my class. Due to pressure to complete the syllabus, I often find myself just pressing on and at times not even sure of what I am teaching. It is difficult to have a colleague to help as everyone is racing against time to complete his work.)*

Lack of support as articulated by Patricia's concern seemed to have a negative impact hence her confusion. This confusion is translated in her teaching only to get the work done in time and not considering the effect of this practice on learners. Tshego (a relatively new teacher at the school) agreed with Patricia and remarked as follows:

Being a new teacher, there are areas in my subject that are a big challenge for me. With these being my areas of weakness, I find myself only teaching them to have an account of work done. There isn't enough support because everyone has work to do and there is no time to really sit down and be guided. Although there are subject meetings to lay platform for support, they often take place once or twice a term and there is often a lot to talk about within a limited time. The whole situation leaves me confused and feeling helpless.

This suggests that although the school has a powerful base, in the form of other more experienced teachers, and a platform, in the form of meetings, for teachers to come together, there was no support system for teachers. It seemed as if the available time was not fully utilised or individual support was neglected. This reflected the need for a strategy to empower teachers and support them in class. The absence of a joint analysis of the situation resulted in failure to reveal possible causes of the fluctuating results from learners' perspective. The frustrations expressed by Moliehi and Thabo (Grade 10 and 11 learners respectively) in the first meeting between parents, teachers and learners highlighted what they believed to be contributing factors to fluctuating results:

Moliehi: *Ha re na di laaborari moo re dulang teng jwalo ka bana ba hlahang*

*makeisheneng. Batswadi ba rona ba itshebelletsa polasing, ha ba kgone ho re thusa jwalo ka bana ba bang bao batswadi ba bona e leng matijere, ho etsa mohlala. (We don't have libraries where we live like other children who come from the townships. Our parents work in the farms, they are unable to help us like other children whose parents are teachers, for example.)*

Moliehi's mentioning of "like other children who are from townships", denotes the disparities that exist among learners at Bokgabane. On the one hand there are those who come from the township and are exposed to opportunities such as libraries and supportive parents; and on the other hand, there are those who are from the farms, where such opportunities do not exist. Lack of a SWOT analysis made it impossible to identify social injustices of this kind although they could be exposed and addressed through CER (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000: 281-282; Parker & Lynn, 2002:10). Moliehi's frustrations were shared by Thabo who said:

*Ke dula Klipdraai, dikilomitara tse mashome a madedi le metso e mehlano ho tloha mona sekolong. Lemo se fetileng ke ile ka qeta kgwedi kaofela ke sa tle sekolong hobane bese e re tsamaisang e ne e le siyo, le batswadi ba sena tjhelete ya teransepoto. Ke ile ka feila hobane ke ne ke tlotswe ke ntho tse ngata. (I live at Klipdraai, twenty-five kilometres from here at school. Last year I became absent from school for the whole month because the bus that transported us was not there, and parents did not have transport money. I failed because I missed a lot of things.)*

Thabo, like Moliehi, is venting the frustrations that are experienced by learners who live in farm areas: firstly, concerning the long distances that they have to travel to school, and unreliable transport, and secondly, the poor financial standing of their families that prevents them to find alternative transport should the need arise. The issues raised above, could have been valuable contributions to the school in terms of setting priorities, deciding on actions and activities, as well as allocating resources for the improvement of academic performance, as was the case in Australia, Kenya, Botswana and the North West Province in South Africa (refer to section 2.1.4.4). During the strategic planning session held by the members of the coordinating team, Sello and Keth seemed to agree in this regard:

Sello: *Dintlha tse hlahileng kopanong e fetileng e bile tsa bohlokwa haholo. Ha re ne re ile ra tseba ka tse ding tsa tsona, re ka be re ile ra fihlella tumellano mabapi le maano a ka sebetsang e bile a di akaretsa. (The points raised in the previous meeting were very important. If we had known of some of them we would have reached a consensus concerning working initiatives that accommodate them.)*

Keth: *Ha ho so be lata, re ka hla ra qala hona moo. (It's not yet late, we can start there.)*

This conversation between Sello and Keth shows that they had realised the value that a SWOT analysis would have had if it had been done prior to implementation of the previous strategies. The spirit of wanting to do something in order to come up with a solution, as expressed by Keth, fits well in PAR (Dworski-Riggs & Langhout, 2010: 218; Zuber-Skerritt, 2002: 148) and is essential for any organisation that needs to change.

#### **4.2.4 Lack of prioritisation**

Prioritisation is crucial because it helps to manage resources such as time, human effort, money and more (Hall, 2005: 11; Yarger, 2006: 1). When actions and activities are prioritised, it becomes possible to appropriately allocate relevant resources. One of the priorities in Australia was, for instance, to offer welfare and support aspects that were necessary in the community in order to boost the performance of the learners (Blackmore & Hutchison, 2010: 510). Seeing that her staff would be overloaded from an extra workload, the principal employed additional staff to ensure the effective running of the programme (Blackmore & Hutchison, 2010: 510). Kenya prioritised equitable access to quality basic education (Aga Khan Foundation, 2010: 2) through the Education for Marginalised Children in Kenya programme (EMACK). Botswana also set priorities to achieve improved learner performance. At both the national and provincial level, The Department of Education in South Africa set targets for learner attainment at national and provincial levels as informed by the Action Plan 2014 towards schooling 2025 (DBE, 2012). Mathematics and Physical

Science were set as priorities. The situation at Bokgabane seems to have prevented the school to prioritise properly and to stick to these priorities as planned.

Lack of prioritisation was evident from a reflection made by Sello during a meeting between him and the research leader:

*Sello: At times the SMT - School Management Team - is forced to explore desperate measures such as reshuffling and redirecting the funds in order to find more support from outside to help prepare the Grade 12s for final examination – at a cost of course. The result would often be failure to deliver in other areas of the school.*

What Sello said reflects a lack of proper planning that would have motivated the prioritisation of activities and adequate allocation of resources such as manpower and funds, in this case. The use of phrases such as "desperate measures" as well as "reshuffling and redirecting of funds" indicates that there had not been adequate allocation of funds which led to funds that were meant for a particular course being diverted to another course. This can also mean that some activities such as finding external support had initially not been planned for, but spontaneously explored out of desperation to see learners doing well in their final examination.

Like Bokgabane, Kenya had been dependent on external assistance, however, training in Whole School Approach helped them to engage in prioritisation and make optimal use of the resources they had (Aga Khan Foundation, 2010: 2). Australia and the North West Province also gave account on how prioritisation kept a focus on aspects that mattered most and made it possible to use available resources in the best possible way (Blackmore & Hutchison, 2010: 509; Mahlomaholo, 2010: 6).

#### **4.2.5 Lack of collaborative planning and implementation**

Collaborative planning makes it possible for stakeholders to take unified decisions regarding actions to be prioritised, activities, allocation of responsibilities and resources necessary for activities, as well as timeframes for implementation (Mertens, 2010: 238). Absence of collaboration prevents stakeholders with diverse

expertise and experience to work together to generate new solutions to mutually defined problems (Mestry&Grobler, 2007: 178). In Botswana, for example, it was realised that excluding parents with the argument that a professional skill such as teaching must not be interfered with, prohibited necessary and crucial expertise and special experiences of parents (Boaduo et al., 2009: 97-98; Van Wyk, 2008: 7). Thus, collaborative planning in Kenya, Botswana and the North West Province resulted in the design of an action plan that was implemented by all stakeholders (Aga Khan Foundation, 2010: 2; Boaduo et al., 2009: 100; Mahlomaholo, 2010: 6). However, this was not the case at Bokgabane. From Sello's expression in paragraph 4.2.2, it is apparent that parents and learners had not been part of the plans made by the teachers to help improve learners' performance, hence the initiatives seemed unsupported. This implies that planning was not done collaboratively, despite the legislative mandate that parents, teachers and learners should work together towards attainment of the core business – quality teaching and learning (SASA 84, 1996). The comments made by Ralewa and Baleseng during a meeting with all the stakeholders point to this lack of collaborative planning and implementation:

*Ralewa: Matitjhere ha ba re rerise. Re utlwa feela ho se ho thwe bana ba tle sekolong ka Moqebelo le ka matsatsi a phomolo. Ka nako eo, re lokela ho ba le tjhelete ya teransepoto homme e be le siyo ka nako tse ding. Ekare matitjhere ha a re nahanele.(Teachers do not plan with us. We only hear them saying children should come to school on Saturday and during the holidays. At that time we are suppose to have transport money and at times it is not available. It seems that teachers do not think for us.)*

*Baleseng: Ho tshwana le dikhempe le yunifomo ya matrike tseo matitjhere a qetang a le mang hore ke bokae le hore ba lebelletse tjhelete neng ba sa leke le ho utlwa maikutlo a rona.(Like the camps and matric uniform that teachers decide on their own on how much it will be and when they would be expecting the money, without trying to get our opinions.)*

From what Ralewa said, there seems to be no collaboration between teachers and parents. This is denoted in “ha ba re rerisi”, which implies that they (teachers) do not plan with them (parents) when decisions concerning academic improvement

strategies, such as supplementary tuition, are made. This is further supported by Baleseng who indicated that teachers do not even try to hear their opinions regarding the decisions that affect them financially. If they had been involved, Ralewa and Baleseng's concerns would have been tabled and together, the stakeholders would have found amicable solutions. The remark that teachers are making decisions, which affect parents and learners, propagates domination and oppression that is challenged by CER (Creswell, 2013: 30; Esposito & Evans-Winters, 2007: 224; Lavia & Mahlomaholo, 2012: 58; Ledwith, 2007: 599). Ralewa and Baleseng's comments seem to suggest that the teachers should open the communicative space (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000: 595) by bringing together parents, teachers and learners when decisions are made (Levin & Greenwood, 2011: 29; Mertens, 2010: 250).

It did not seem that there was collaboration among teachers either. What Patricia and Tshogo said show that teachers worked individually; there is no support from each other. As a result areas that pose a challenge in different subjects are not dealt with and remain a problem, with effects showing in the performance of learners. In the staff meeting where the project was first introduced to the teachers, Thuli (the research leader) commented to this effect when she said:

*We often talk about working together and planning together, but it has actually never materialised. Even with IQMS, there is always a hurry to get the process done and the development part of it is neglected.*

There seemed to be an understanding of the value of collaborative planning among teachers, however, it was an idea that was never explored. With systems like IQMS in place, it was supposed to be easier for teachers to identify their professional challenges and together with their development support teams (DSGs), work towards their professional development that would in turn enhance learner academic performance. This, according to Thuli, was not happening, hence the status quo.

The dismay that is brought about by lack of collaborative planning is evident in the question posed by Ntswaki during the strategic planning session:

*Potso ke hore na jwale re etsa jwang ho thusana hore bana ba pase?* (The question is: What do we do to assist each other in making the learners pass?)

The use of the pronoun *re* (we) and the clause *ho thusana* (to assist each other) supports and admits the necessity of a joint effort. This is aligned with the spirit of PAR (Dworski-Riggs & Langhout, 2010: 218; Zuber-Skerritt, 2002: 148). The text indicates that parents understood and admitted that they were not really aloof from their children's education, but were uncertain of how to get actively involved (What do we do...). The question also appealed for a structured joint plan that was clearly non-existing. It allowed the participants to agree on a strategy that they would implement.

#### **4.2.6 Lack of monitoring**

Monitoring provides feedback that sheds light on the progress and impact of the strategy. It is a critical evaluation of the successes and/or failures of action that deepens awareness of the concrete reality that people face (Boaduo et al., 2009: 100). Lack of a monitoring plan hinders proper assessment of effective and ineffective aspects of the strategy so that adjustments can be made timeously. Without proper reflection and monitoring, members cannot review their experiences against the vision agreed upon (Freedman, 2006: 88; Lincoln, 2011: 20), therefore it becomes difficult to gain evidence of progress or be cautioned of possible drawbacks. In the North West Province, monitoring was done on a monthly basis where parents, teachers and learners met to reflect on the progress and rekindle their commitment (Mahlomaholo, 2010: 11). Similar processes took place in Australia, Kenya and Botswana. At national level as well, there are systems in place to monitor the implementation of academic improvement strategies such as the QLTC (DBE, 2012: 24). However, this was not the case at Bokgabane.

An implied reference to the absence of a monitoring system was made by Keth during the strategic planning session:



*Ho tla hlokahala hore re shebisisise seo re neng re se etse dilemong tseo re sebeditseng hantle hore re hahelle ho sona, le ho bona hore keng seo re se entseng kapa re sa se etsang moo re sa sebetsang hantle. (We will need to look carefully at what we had done during the years when we performed well so that we can build on it, and see what we did or did not do where we did not perform well.)*

The use of 're shebisisise' (look carefully) implies reflecting on 'seo re neng re se etse' (what we had done). This could imply that the fluctuating results were a result of the lack of a monitoring strategy that could have been used to identify contributing factors to both high and low performances in respective years. The collective was therefore being made aware of the necessity to review rolled out activities in monitoring their impact. The activities, however, need to be those carried out collectively by stakeholders and not only by a few individuals. This was supported by Pholo during the same meeting, when he remarked as follows:

*Pholo: Ha o lemme, ho hlokahala hore o nne o hlwele hore na ho ntse ho ya jwang. Hona ho o thusa hore o bone ha lehola le hlaha hore o tsebe ho hlaola. (When you have sown, it is necessary to constantly check how things are. This helps you to see when the weed grows so that you can remove it.)*

The analogy reiterates that when constant reflections are made, "weed" (*lehola*), which simply refers to hitches, could be recognised in time and be dealt with in order to grow healthy crops, in this case, academic success.

he process of monitoring needs critical reflection where there are elements of power struggles that radiate from differences in knowledge, experience and expertise among the participants (Hooley, 2005: 69). Thus monitoring and reflection have to be done through processes that privilege moral and ethical dimensions of related decisions. In the process of continual monitoring, gaps and challenges are identified and possible solutions are investigated. This creates an opportunity to rethink and re-plan the processes towards closing the gaps in the form of accountability (Kemmis, 2008:14).

The discourses above justify the need for the development of a systemic strategy towards the enhancement of learners' academic performance at Bokgabane. The solutions to the challenges as highlighted in this section are addressed by the components of the strategy.

### **4.3 COMPONENTS OF THE SYSTEMIC STRATEGY**

This section explores the responses to the challenges that emanated from the empirical data as identified in the previous section (paragraph 4.2). The solutions which respond to the challenges identified are: **the establishment of the coordinating team; the development of a shared vision among the stakeholders; conducting a SWOT analysis; determining the priorities; collaborative planning; and instituting systems regarding monitoring and reflection.** Each of these solutions will be thoroughly outlined in the sections to come. References will be made from various policies, legislative imperatives and literature reviewed that support the enhancement of academic performance. These suggested good practices will be looked at against the practical evidence provided by research participants to overcome the identified problems. In finding the deeper meaning of the extracts, CDA (critical discourse analysis) will be used to analyse and interpret the data. As the study is underpinned by critical emancipatory research, the evidence will further be analysed and interpreted within the context of the theory. Finally, a conclusion will be drawn against the literature reviewed.

#### **4.3.1 Establishing the coordinating team**

The literature indicates that in order for collaborative strategy to succeed, there should be a clear structure (Mertens, 2009: 200; Wilson, 2012: 3) in which participants' roles are clearly defined to ensure successful implementation of such strategy. This section illustrates that the coordinating team is an important component of the strategy.

In Chapter 2, reference was made to the teams which were established in Botswana, Kenya and the North West Province of South Africa. The diversity in these teams allowed for an array of opinions from parents, teachers and learners, which were

beneficial to enhance the process and to avoid domination and abuse of power (Hills, 2001:127). Paragraph 2.4.2.2 further emphasises that the team should represent members of an affected population and be accommodative of their diversity and varied backgrounds (Levin & Greenwood, 2011: 29; Mertens, 2010: 250). In the case of this study, the established team was comprised of ten members consisting of parents, teachers, former matriculates and current learners. The formation of this structure was discussed in Chapter 3, section 3.2.2. The establishment of this coordinating team was confirmed by Thuli:

*Kahoo he, re le leshome tjena re bopa lekoko le tataisang projekeena. Mosebetsiwa lekoko lenakeho elahloko horetsohle di tsamayahantle kahoyaka moo di rerilweng. Hona re hoetsakatshwarisano re le dithotsamafaphaa re aemetseng. (So, the ten of us constitute a team that guides this project. The duty of this team is to ensure that all goes as planned. That we do in collaboration with the bigger of stakeholders that we represent.)*

The element of team effort is captured in the word '*lekoko*' which means 'a team'. The coordinating team played a vital in leading the study (Thompson & Perry, 2006: 25; Wilson, 2012: 3). The expression *le tataisang* attests to the leadership role that was played by the team. That is buttressed by the use of the phrase *hoelahloko*, which carries meaning of being cautious to details that would ensure the attainment of the goal. Thuli's statement was corroborated in the same meeting by Ntswaki and Pulane (former matriculate):

*Ntswaki: Ditherisano di tla ba teng pakeng tsa rona bohle. Re tla tshwarisana mmoho joko ena re le batswadi, bana le matitjhere – re nke boikarabelo bohle. Jwale ka ha ba tjho "Ntjapedi ha e hlolwe ke sebata". (There will be shared planning amongst us all. We will together as parents, children and teachers carry this yoke – be all responsible. Like they say, "Two dogs don't get defeated by predator".)*

*Pulane: Ke nnete, mme le rona re re, ho tseba tsietsi ke ho feta ho yona. Hobane re kile ra ba boemong ba baithuti haufinyana tje, re ka re re utlwisisa seo ba tobaneng le sona, ka hoo re ka arolelanang maele ka ho hlola tse ding*

*tsa diphephetso tseo ba tobanang le tsona. (It is true, we also say that to know a difficulty is to experience it. Because we were once in the learners' position not so long ago, we understand what they are faced with, so we can share advices on how to overcome some of the huddles facing them.)*

The two alluded to the power of united forces brought about by the team, in their use of words such as “*Re tla tshwarisana mmoho joko ena*” (we will together carry this yoke) and “*re ka arolelana maele*” (we can share advices). In this way the presence of the coordinating team would create a communicative space for participants to voice their opinions (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000: 595; Mertens, 2009: 3). Ntswaki also used a Sesotho proverb, “*Ntjapedi ha e hlolwe ke sebata*” to denote that the team as diverse as it was, would unite and not fail to find a solution to the problem at hand, namely the fluctuation of results. This would be possible because the more diverse the team is, the higher the likelihood that the team would be effective (Miles & Watkins, 2007: 92). For example, Pulane indicated that she has an understanding of the challenges facing current learners since she was also a learner at one stage. Her contribution to the team would bring a unique perception to the table. The establishment of the coordinating team empowered the community of Bokgabane to find solutions to the problems that affect them, thus promoting social justice, peace and hope (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000: 282; Ledwith, 2007: 597; Mahlomaholo & Netshandama, 2012:35; Piper et al., 2009:13). As a result, this would break the generational cycle of perceiving the matters of teaching and learning to be the sole responsibility of the school and in particular, the teachers.

This structure was useful in coordinating the research activities. The composition of various stakeholders was helpful in pursuit of a research that takes interest in addressing issues embedded in diversity and strives to level unequal power relations (Keast & Mandel, 2009: 2; Mertens, 2009: 200).

#### **4.3.2 Development of a vision**

In this section I justify the significance of a shared vision as a vital component of the systemic strategy. The passion to enhance learner academic performance shared by participants necessitated the development of a common vision that would synergise

their views and efforts (Keast & Mandel, 2009:1; Steinberg & Kincheloe, 2008:141). The vision enables the participants to keep focus of the goal and therefore guide their actions (Sanders, 2010: 3; Zuber-Skerritt, 2002: 149). It also neutralises unavoidable disparities such as power differentials (Dworski-Riggs & Langhout, 2010: 215; Silver, 2007: 169; Van Dijk, 2008: 88) and ideological differences (Levin & Greenwood, 2011: 29; Mertens, 2010: 250) that exist among the participants. In this way, social transformation is achieved through peaceful decision-making processes (Miles & Watkins, 2007:94).

The significance of a shared vision was evident in Kenya where the overall goal was equitable access to quality basic education (Aga Khan Foundation, 2010: 2). In Australia, maintaining a strong academic reputation was envisioned (Blackmore & Hutchison, 2010: 503). From the success stories of Botswana as well as the North West Province (refer to 2.4.1.3) the crucial role played by a shared vision in the implementation of a strategy is highlighted as well. It thus became clear that in this study, as was the case in Botswana, Kenya and the North West province, it was necessary that the participants shared the vision towards enhancing learners' academic performance. This was gathered from data generated from a forum with all the participants, where the aim was to discuss the vision for this study. The intention here was to open a communicative space (Mertens, 2009: 3; Nkoane, 2011: 119) for all participants to contribute towards the development of a vision which they could relate to and be devoted to with regard to the realisation thereof.

As a result of the inputs of various participants the forum decided on the vision that committed the participants to 'creating a sustainable learning environment that would foster enhanced learner academic performance'. The following concern was raised by one of the participants in the teacher component:

*Ke a tshepa hore vishene ena ha e na fella feela pampiring, empa e tla fihlellwa. (I hope that this vision will not only end on paper, but it will be attained.)*

This concern seems to be coming from the knowledge or suspicion that decisions made by the collective are often not followed up or attained. The hope was thus

expressed that this vision would be different. This was supported by a parent participant who said:

*Ha re a tshwanela ho fella feela mona. Re lokela ho phethahatsa vishene ena ka diketso. (We are not supposed to stop here. We are supposed to implement this vision through actions.)*

Here, the understanding is that without planned actions, the vision would not be actualised. It was thus suggested that the vision should advise the kind of actions that would see to its attainment. Thuli commented as follows on the vision:

*Ho sohle seo re se etsang, re hopole seo re labalabelang ho se fihlela e leng tshebetso e ntlafetseng ya bana le boleng bo ntlafetseng ba thuto ka kakaretso. (In everything we do, we should remember what we wish to accomplish, which is enhanced performance of learners and improved quality of education in general.)*

Thuli seems to suggest that the participants should maintain focus of their vision (*re hopole seo re labalabelang ho se fihlela*) by staying committed to its realisation and that it should be articulated in everything they do. In order to realise the achievement of this vision, the values of respect, humility, transparency and trust (Ledwith, 2007: 599) should be key in all interactions. A shared vision was therefore a crucial component of the systemic strategy (Thomson & Perry, 2006: 25; Wilson, 2012:2).

### **4.3.3 SWOT analysis**

This section focuses on the analysis of the school's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in relation to the enhancement of the academic performance of the learners. The ultimate goal was to weigh the identified strengths and opportunities against the weaknesses and threats in order to find mechanisms through which to minimise the impact of the weaknesses and to devise possible extenuating strategies with regard to the threats (Finley & Esposito, 2011:104). On the other hand, the analysis also sought to investigate how the strengths and opportunities could be reinforced towards the enhancement of academic

performance (Steinberg & Kincheloe, 2010: 148). The focus was both on internal and external aspects. In Chapter 2, the value of a SWOT analysis was outlined in relation to what happened in Australia, Kenya and the North West Province (refer to section 2.1.4.4). Lessons learnt from these cases motivated the inclusion of a SWOT analysis as one of the important components of the systemic strategy. During the SWOT analysis session, Tshepo (a Grade 11 learner) expressed his challenge as follows:

*Ke fumana ho le thata ho nna ho dula, ke re ke a bala. Nka dula hantle ke re ke a bala, empa ka mora metsotso e kabang e leshome ke re nke ke nke kgefutso. Ho tloha moo ha ke sa kgutletse dibukeng. (I find it difficult to sit and study. I can sit and get ready to study, but after about 10 minutes I would take a break. From there, I don't go back.)*

In order to combat something that is difficult (thata ho nna) one needs to put in some effort and energy. The situation (lack of focus) as expressed by Tshepo requires “psychological” energy to fight and/or defeat it, or what Yosso (2005:77) referred to as aspirational capital. This seems to be lacking in Tshepo, as is evident from the phrase “I keep on postponing”. This suggests that he studies for a short time and takes a break. It does not really seem like a break because he does not go back and continue with his studies. It thus suggests that Tshepo attends to other “more important things” than studying. Whatever it is, it does not seem to be related to what he is studying. This discursive practice translates in him abandoning studying for what appears to be favourable social arrangement. This did not seem to be affecting Tshepo alone. As is corroborated by Thembi (a Grade 12 learner):

*Nna ke na le bothata ba ho bala ke le mong. Ke ya bala, empa ke be ke sa utlwe na ke ntse ke bala eng – ha ke utlwisise. Ka nako tse ding ha ke bala le motswalle wa ka hoba betere, jwalo ka nakong ya dihlahlobo. O a ntjhakela kapa nna ke ya ho yena, re be re bala mmoho. (I have a problem of studying alone. I study, but without understanding what I'm studying – I don't understand. It is at times better when I study with my friend, like during examinations. She visits me or I go over to her place and then we study together.)*

'Kena le bothata', (I have a problem), reiterates 'thata ho nna' (difficult for me) which was also expressed by Tshepo. With Thembi, the problem, however, was to understand what she was studying, which was expressed in the clause, 'ha ke utlwisise' (I don't understand). This 'problem', none the less, seems to have a solution because she (Thembi) indicated that she understood better when she studied together with her friend, like they did during exam time. Like Tshepo, Thembi did seem to have space, time and reading material (even better, a friend to study with) in at her disposal to study effectively, but did not seem to be using them effectively to enhance her studies.

Unfortunately, the luxury of space, time and a friend to study with was not available to all the learners. In a meeting held between the coordinating team, learners and parents, Naledi demonstrated this when she said:

*Ha ke kgone ho fumana sebaka se hantle sa ho bala hobane re dula re le bangata. Ha ke bala, ke sitiswa ke batho ba etsang nthwena le yane, ba etsa lerata. Ha ke emela hore ba robale le teng ke be ke kgathetse kapa ke lokela ho robala ho boloka dikerese. Nkabe ke ya laeborari empa jwale ha re na yona haufi, ke tshwanela ho palama tekesi, hape tjehelete ha e yo. Ho sebedisa nako ya setadisi sekolong le teng ha ho thuse hobane ha ho na suphavishine, ke lerata feela. (I am unable to find a proper place to study because I live with many other people. When I study I get disturbed by people who would be doing this and that, they make noise. When I decide to wait until they are asleep, by that time I am either too tired or I have to sleep in order to save the candle. I could go to the library but we don't have libraries nearby, I have to board a taxi and there is no money. To use study time at school is also not helping because there is no supervision, it's just noisy).*

*Ha ke kgone ho fumana sebaka se hantle sa ho bala,* (I am unable to find a proper place to study) contrasts the assumption made earlier that learners have appropriate spaces to study. Unlike the two other learners, Naledi reveals a challenge that was brought about by the social setting as there was no support from home on academic matters. This was captured in the statement that implied that her efforts to study



were disturbed by the high level of noise when everyone in the house did their own business (*ke sitiswa ke batho ba etsang nthwena le yane, ba etsa lerata*). Nobody seemed to care that she needed a quiet place to study.

Overcrowded households, which often are the result of an increasing rate of orphans due to various social issues, such as HIV and AIDS and substance abuse (Blackmore & Hutchison, 2010: 503), seem to have an impact on the size of families since some families are obliged to adopt orphans after the passing of their parents. As a result of these huge families often living in limited spaces, it becomes difficult for children to have an appropriate space at home to study. These conditions often escalate to a point where important resources, such as lighting (candles in Naledi's case), have to be used sparingly because of financial constraints.

Naledi demonstrated a great sense of responsibility towards her studies when she considered all possibilities in search of an appropriate learning space, such as going to the library or using the afternoon study time that the school affords them. Her efforts to manoeuvre through her social circumstance articulates what Yosso (2005:80) called navigational capital. Her efforts, however, met a dead end because of the cost implications for her to get to a library and the seemingly unsupervised afternoon study at school. The latter seems to be posing a challenge to the school for providing an opportunity for learners such as Naledi to study, but not monitoring that the time is well spent.

#### **4.3.4 Setting the priorities for implementation**

A SWOT analysis often produces a mass of data that could be muddled as a result of participants' multiple and varied experiences and knowledge (Boaduo et al., 2009: 98). The coordinating team therefore has to prepare and prioritise information and data gathered (Erasmus, Loedolff, Mda & Nel, 2006: 62). The process helps to identify data that may be relevant and valuable for the implementation of an academic enhancement strategy, as well as eliminate that which may not be relevant and important. Prioritisation also assists participants to spot the gaps that exist between the strengths and weaknesses, and focus on matters that have significant impact on the improvement of academic performance (Du Toit, Erasmus & Strydom,

2010: 177; Erasmus et al., 2006: 62). Furthermore, prioritisation enables participants to make informed decisions concerning the allocation of resources. In the case of this study, the issues raised during the analytic process were categorised into strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. They were further categorised into broad priorities, namely learner support, teacher development and support as well as parental involvement. The setting of priorities was done with the guidance from Sello and Pholo who mentioned the following:

*Sello: Ho hlakile he hore dintlha tse ka hodimo-dimo mme di hloka ho tsepamisetswa maikutlo ke ho tshehetsa bana ka hohlehohle mmoho le ho tsepamaisa maikutlo boitjhorisong le tshehetsong ya matitjhere. (It is therefore clear that the main points that also need focus are the total support of learners as well as focus on teacher development and support.)*

*Pholo: Ho feela ho le jwalo monghadi, mme ntlha enngwe e hlileng ya totobala ke ho hlokahala ha tshehetso ya batswadi le setjhaba ka kakaretso. Jwale ke nahana hore ho kenyelletswa ha batswadi mererong le maanong ohle e hle e be enngwe ya dintlha tsa sehlooho. (That is so, Sir, and the other thing that was clear was lack of parental and community support. So, I think that parental involvement in all the plans and initiatives should be one of the priorities.)*

As a result of these counsels, the coordinating team agreed to prioritise learner support, teacher development and support, as well as parents and community involvement. Priorities identified were set with the shared vision (Erasmus, Loedolff, Mda&Nel, 2006: 62) of an enhanced academic performance for a sustainable learning environment in mind. These were, however, broad themes that had to be actualised through actions.

#### **4.3.5 Collaborative planning**

Collaborative planning is crucial because it goes beyond the mere working together of participants. It maximises their participation (Dworski-Riggs &Langhout, 2010: 218; Zuber-Skerritt, 2002: 148) through open communication, while at the same time strengthens the bonds between them and enroots the sense of ownership and

commitment (Kemmis, 2008: 127). To facilitate the realisation of the priorities which were identified during the SWOT analysis, specific activities were developed to address each priority (Du Toit, Erasmus & Strydom, 2010: 177). The activities developed for each priority were time-bound and responsible people were allocated to oversee the attainment. Resources, human and/or material, were also planned for. The development of activities also took into consideration the conditions stipulated by the Department of Education for approval of the research. Therefore, all activities were planned to take place after the normal tuition time (Dworski-Riggs & Langhout, 2010: 221; Keast& Mandel, 2009: 2).

#### 4.3.5.1 Learner support

In order to support learners in their learning, the team agreed that the focus would have to be on the two issues that strongly surfaced during the SWOT analysis, namely lack of motivation and concentration (as implied in Tshepo and Thembi's contributions) as well as lack of adequate space and resources (as alluded to by Naledi). The first issue was addressed by the restructuring of the afternoon study sessions into more focused peer support sessions. Teachers were to assist learners in establishing peer support groups. These teams would then meet every afternoon to reflect on the day's work or attend to individual challenges. In this way the learning process would not be lonely and boring. For control, a time table would be drawn up and sessions would be supervised by the respective subject teachers, who would also be the resource persons if need be. This kind of restructuring first had to be discussed between the teachers and the learners to ascertain that the idea was co-owned by both. In the meeting where the restructuring of afternoon study sessions was discussed, one learner had the following to say:

*Hono ho tla re thusa ha feela dihlopha tsa rona di tswakantse bokgoni. Ho tla re thusang ho ba sehlopheng se le seng re sa tsebe kaofela? (That will help us only if the groups mix the abilities. What help will it be if we all do not know in a group?)*

The use of *ho tla re thusa* (will help us) is a positive remark that indicates that this learner accepted the idea. However, this learner also suggests that the groups would

only be helpful if they could learn from each other and perhaps draw inspiration from those who have a better understanding. It was therefore crucial that teachers assisted learners when they formulated the groups since they (the teachers) know their learners' abilities. The idea was also supported by Naledi:

*Eya, jwale ho tla ba le boitshwaro hobane motho e mong le e mong o tla be a tseba hore o etsa eng neng, hape ho tla be ho na le titjhere ho bona hore se tshwanetseng ho etswa se a etswa, eseng ho hong. (Yes, now there will be order because everyone would know what to do and when to do it, and there would be teachers to see to it that what is supposed to be done is done.)*

What Naledi implies by *ho tla ba le order*, reiterates what she had said earlier about the high level of noise during the afternoon studies that prevented her from studying. The feeling that the new structure of the afternoon sessions would be beneficial seemed to have been shared by both the teachers and the learners because even though some did not say a word, they nodded and one could even hear them whispering "Yes".

The second issue, namely lack of space and resources, was also addressed. Looking at the thin dispersion of learners' homes over long distances and the non-availability of libraries and/or similar resources, it was decided that places in their neighbourhoods should be identified where learners could be accommodated for a few hours during the weekends and holidays to do their school work. Places such as churches and schools were targeted for this purpose. In this regard, some members of the coordinating team took the initiative to talk to the principals of targeted primary or pre-primary schools and the church councils for space. For instance, Ntswaki and Moliehi volunteered in the strategic planning meeting:

*Ntswaki: Ho na le keretjhe moo re dulang teng e seng maphathephathe mafelong a beke. Ke tla bua le mme a e tsamaisang, ke e mong wa batswadi mona mme ke na le tshepo ya hore o tla tshehetsa taba ena. (There is a crèche in our neighbourhood which is not busy during the weekends. I will discuss this with the lady who runs it, she is one of the parents here and I have hope that she will support the idea.)*

Moliehi: *Rona kwana Kippiesdal re na le kereke e ka tshehetsa morero ona. Ke tla e hahlahahla le ntate Moruti hore a re buele le lekgotla la kereke.(At Kippiesdal we have a church that can support this plan. I will discuss this with the Reverend so that he can put a word for us at the church council.)*

This is in line with the values of systemic thinking, where all stakeholders co-create and construct solutions to the problem at hand (Creswell, 2013: 25-26; Kemmis & McTaggard, 2007: 277; Zuber-Skerrit, 2002: 148). The effort to find space for learners to study and do their homework was supported by the teacher component of the team.

Sello: *Then re tla hlophisa disebediswa tseo bana ba ka di sebedisang disenthareng tsena, jwalo ka dibuka tsa ho bala le ho ngolla. (Then we will prepare material that children will use in those centres, like reading and writing books.)*

Patricial: *Eya ntate, ke tla hlophisa dikopo tsa donation ho ya ho balekane le rona bakeng sa thuso ya diensaetlopidia le dibuka tse ding tse ka thusang bana hore ba etse diriseche ntle le ho ya library. (Yes, sir, I will prepare donation requests to our partners for assistance with encyclopaedias and other books that can help children to do research without going to the library.)*

The willingness to share knowledge, skills and ideas in this manner brought the value that comes only when the whole adds up to more than just a sum of its parts (Zuber-Skerritt, 2002:148). Securing space and providing necessary resources to the learners in destitute communities was going to fulfill one the objectives of CER, namely promoting social justice, peace and hope (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000: 282; Ledwith, 2007: 597; Mahlomaholo & Netshandama, 2012:35; Piper et al., 2009:13).

Although learner support was a priority, it was necessary to also prioritise teacher development since, according to Murtaza (2010:213), teacher development and support are key elements if academic enhancement is to be achieved.

#### 4.3.5.2 Teacher support and development

The team agreed that the issue of support that was raised by Patricia and Tshego in paragraph 4.2.3 had to be addressed. That led to the establishment of teacher

professional support groups which created an opportunity for teachers to grow in their profession and improve their subject content knowledge. This was crucial because they had been working in isolation while the achievement of enhanced learner academic performance required teachers to work together (Akyeampong, 2005: 4; Murtaza, 2010: 218). The significance of teacher collaboration was buttressed in the following conversation during the strategic planning session:

*Keth: Re na le matitjhere a nang le boiphihlelo dithutong tse fapaneng, re boele re be le matitjhere a matjha a tlang ka tsela tse ntjha tsa ho ruta empa ba sena boiphihlelo bo bokalo ba tlelase. Mmoho bobedi bona bo ka arolelana maele ho fihlella ditsela tsa ho ruta tse tla etsa bana ba natefelwe ke thuto tsa bona le ho sebetsa hantle. Hona ho tla re thusa le rona ho hola profesheneng ena ya rona. (We have teachers who have experience in different subjects, and we also have new teachers who come with new approaches but without enough classroom experience. Together both can share advices to attain teaching practices that will make children enjoy their education and perform well. This will also help us to grow in this profession of ours.)*

*Patricia: Hono ke hona hoo IQMS e leng ka hona Keth. E mong le e mong wa rona matitjhere o lokela ho hlwaya phephetso tseo a hloakang ntlafatso ho tsona, ebe DSG mmoho le titjhere ba dula fatshe ho thusa titjhere. Hape re na le subject advisors bao re ka ba memang ho tla thusa ho ntshetsa matitjhere pele ha matsapa a rona a haelletswe. (Each one of us has to identify challenges that they need development in, then the DSG together with the teacher sit down to assist the teacher. We also have subject advisors who we can invite to assist in the development of teachers where our efforts were limited.)*

Keth is referring to the strengths that the school has in terms of experienced teachers who have acquired knowledge and skills over the years, as well as new teachers who come to the classroom with new teaching methods. Keth further shows how the two could be synergised through teacher development and support initiatives to come up with best classroom practices. The expression of “growth in this profession of ours” highlights the hope that this initiative would bring to teaching

and learning. The reference to the IQMS made by Patricia shows that teacher development and support as planned by the team was in line with the education policies that aim at quality teaching and learning, such as the IQMS (DoE, 2009). Teacher support and development was also highlighted as the contributing factor towards enhanced academic performance in the international countries that showed signs of best practices (Aga Khan Foundation, 2010: 4; Boaduo et al., 2009: 98; Mahlomaholo, 2010: 11).

In one of the English sessions where the teacher was assisted to improve learners' marks in comprehension test, the following transpired:

*Leeto: Get learners to skim and scan the passage for a general picture before reading the whole passage. Let the learners respond to the who, what, where, when, why and how questions about the passage. This will allow them to think of the characters, main idea or theme, the setting and time, the writer's intention and the language devices used. Go through the comprehension questions with them, bearing the passage in mind. Alternatively, you can go through the questions with the learners before reading the passage. That will also allow them to get the general idea of the passage. Now read the passage again with questions in mind. Assist learners to be able to identify the main idea in each paragraph. Make learners aware of different types of questions such as factual, inferential as well as analytic questions and assist them to respond to them appropriately.*

*Betty: It really makes sense. If I approach it this way, learners will not just look at the word used in the question and write the sentence in which it appears as it is without even thinking of whether it answers the question or not.*

Interaction of this kind took place among teachers in different subjects. The extract above is just a snapshot of what happened during those interactions. Sometimes different groups would share a session where there is an integration of subjects. For example, Victoria (a Computer Applications Technology teacher) was invited to an English session where she presented a workshop on how teachers can use the *Readers are Leaders* programme to improve their learners' reading skills. She demonstrated how the teacher and learners log into the programme and register,

how grade-appropriate text can be chosen for learners and how their performance scores can be kept for follow up purposes.

#### 4.3.5.3 Parental involvement

The team agreed that the education of the child is a social responsibility and not only that of the education officials. The role that parents can play to promote enhanced learner performance was therefore discussed. The discussion revealed a wealth of expertise and skills that parents and the general community possessed that could tremendously benefit the process of enhancing learner academic performance. For example, during the meeting with the larger forum of participants, parents were encouraged to avail themselves and contribute in the education process on whatever basis they chose. Disebo (a parent) indicated her willingness to contribute towards improving performance of learners in Sesotho:

*Disebo: Ke hlokometse hore bana ba ithuta ka meetlo le setso sa Basotho mme ha ba na tsebo e kalo, esita le bona batswadi boholo ba nako. Ke na le tsebo e batsi eo nka e arolelanang le bana le matijhere a Sesotho ho leka ho phahamisa matshwao a bana. (I have realised that children learn about the culture and traditions of the Basotho people and they don't have that much knowledge, even parents most of the time. I have extensive knowledge that I can share with learners and Sesotho teachers in trying to improve learners' marks.)*

Disebo willingly volunteered to assist in the improvement of learners' marks in a particular section of Sesotho. She uses the words *ke hlokometse* (I am aware), which gives the understanding that she had been observing and following learners' performance in Sotho and in particular the section that assess their knowledge of culture and traditions. She realized that learners had not been doing well in that section, since she mentions that *ha ban a tsebo e kalo* (they don't have much knowledge). The platform that was created specifically to generate solutions to the problem, gave Disebo an opportunity to share expertise that could possibly contribute towards the achievement of the desired goal. Her contribution would be fulfilling a legislative mandate that parents should support the school and take an active interest in the education of their children (South African Schools Act 84 (RSA,



1996: section 6(a-b). In support of the active involvement of parents, Pholo also suggested the following, during the strategic planning session:

*Ke nahana ho ka ba molemo haholo, mme ho ka bontsha tshehetso le thahasello ha rona batswadi, ka thuso ya bana ba rona ba entseng metrike, re ka tsamaisa homework centre tseena. Hona ho tla re fa le monyetla wa ho bea bana leihlo hore ehlile ba etsa mosebetsi, ho thusa matitjhere. (I think it would be very important, and it would show support and interest, if as parents, with the help of our former matriculates, we run these homework centres. This would give us an opportunity to keep an eye on learners that they are really doing their work, to help the teachers.)*

The suggestion made by Pholo is evident of emancipation and empowerment, where parents feel that they have the power to take charge and actively participate in activities that seek solutions to their own problems (Creswell, 2013: 30; Ledwith, 2007: 599; Mertens, 2009: 3). Pholo's suggestion seems to put parents in the centre, whereby on one hand they support and encourage learners (*bontsha tshehetso le thahasello*) and on the other hand they assist teachers by seeing to it that learners do their work. The idea was supported, and following Sello's advice, an arrangement was made with a subject advisor to present a workshop to parents and volunteers on how they can help the children with homework. Another contribution, by Patricia, was that the school should have the assessment programme ready and available to the parents right at the beginning of the term, so that they can help learners with timeous submission of tasks.

#### **4.3.6 Monitoring and reflection**

The process of monitoring and reflection was critical because it helped to gather evidence concerning the progress and the impact of the study. The monthly meetings held throughout the study provided opportunities for participants to review their experiences and to critically question their observations of the practices and processes involved in the implementation of various activities (Flouris&Yilmaz, 2010: 31; Lincoln, 2011: 20). This was done through feedback given with regard to each item and aspect of the plan. In those meetings, discrepancies identified were used to make alterations to the plan in order to ensure the attainment of the pre-determined

goal. This process thus ensured that the plan for the improvement of academic performance was properly executed (Zerfu & Kebede, 2013: 2).

The need for a reflection and monitoring process, as implied and suggested by Keth and Pholo in section 4.2.6, was supported by Sello in the strategic planning meeting when he remarked as follows:

*Ho netefatsa hore re fela re fihlela sepheo sa rona, re tla lokela ho dula re lekola ka moo dintho di tsamayang ka teng. Hona re tla lokela ho ho etsa ka dinako tsohle, pele re qala, nakong ya phethahatso le kamorao ha ho phethahatsa diketsahalo tseo re di polanneng, ho qoba ho phoqeha qetellong. Ke nahana hore sena se tshwanela ho etswa re shebile seo re labalabelang ho se fihlela. (To ensure that we reach our purpose, we will have to constantly monitor how things go. This we will have to do at all times before we start, during implementation and after implementation of activity that we have planned, to avoid disappointment. I think this is supposed to be done looking at what we would like to achieve.)*

The phrase, *Ho dula re lekola*, which means constant monitoring, is seen as crucial in order to avoid 'disappointment'. The disappointment could perhaps be failure to achieve what the collective had set to achieve. Sello seems to be suggesting that the monitoring process be structured in terms of timeframes and focus. This is depicted in the following sentence: *Hona re tla lokela ho ho etsa ka nako tsohle, pele re qala, nakong ya phethahatso le kamorao ha ho phethahatsa diketsahalo tseo re di polanneng* (This we will have to do at all times, before we start, during implementation and after implementation of activity that we have planned), and *re shebile seo re labalabelang ho se fihlela* (looking at what we would like to achieve). Therefore the collective would know exactly when to monitor and what to focus on, so that the process itself was not a futile exercise.

The monitoring process revealed that initially there was a feeling of apathy in the roll out of various activities. Patricia, for instance, had this to report during the reflection session:

*Ke bone qalong ho sena sehlahlo ho bana jwalo ka hare ne re hopotse. Bana ba ne ba nka nako e telele ho ya dihlopheng tsa bona mme le ha ba le moo*

*ba ne ba sa kene hanghang ho se ba kopantseng. (In the beginning I saw lack of enthusiasm among children as opposed to how we had imagined. The children took a long time to go to their groups and when they were there they would not immediately get into what they had convened about.)*

Patricia here indicated that things were not going as planned. This is implied by *jwalo ka ha re ne re hopotse*. She is pointing at indicators to this effect as the long time taken by learners to convene and delaying to start with what they had planned. The expectation could have been that learners would quickly assemble in their groups and immediately start working. But, this was new to the learners and it is possible that they were not quite sure what they were supposed to do. This was confirmed by Keth, who also commented:

*Feela ha morao, ha ba se ba tlwaetse, ho ne ho se ho sa hlokahale hore ba kgalengwe. Ba ne ba potlakela ho ya dihlopheng tsa bona ebe ba qala hanghang ka seo ba lokelang ho se etsa. (But later on, once they were used to that, there was no need to call them to order. They would swiftly go to their groups and immediately get on with what they had to do.)*

“But later on...” indicates a lapse of time in which learners began to understand what they were supposed to do. Since learners had never ventured into these kinds of interactions before, they might have found them weird and maybe unimportant in the beginning. The change in attitude that was demonstrated by “swift” assembly and prompt engagement with the work could be an indication of the value that learners saw in those engagements once they had started with them.

The process also made it possible for participants to reflect on their own experiences, like Tshepo, who mentioned:

*Ho ne ho se bonolo ho phuthuloha ka ntho eo e leng bofokodi ba ka. Empa ka bona hore bana ba bang ba utlwisisa. Mohlala, Dineo ha a bona hore ha re bue hobane re tseba hore yena o na le tsebo e ngata, o ile a re re qale ka yena, A re bolella hore yena o na le bothata ba ho arola dependent le independent variables ha a etsa kerafo. Boholo ba rona re a e tseba ntho eo, ka hoo re ile ra mmontsha tsela e bobebe e leng ya mohlala wa ntlo. Mabota a ntlo a diphendile ho foundeishine, ka hoo lebota ke dependent variable*

*mme fondeishene ke independent. Mabota a tsepame, kahoo mola o tsepameng kerafong ke dependent variables mme mola o tshekalletseng ke independent variable. Hona jwale ha re sa tshabana. (It was not easy to open up with something that is my weakness. But I realised that some learners understand. For example, when Dineo realised that we were not saying anything because we knew that she had better knowledge than us, she said we could start with her. She told us that she had a problem of differentiating between dependent and independent variables when she drew a graph. Most of us we know that, so we showed her an easy way which is an example of a house. Walls of a house depend on the foundation, so a wall is a dependent variable and foundation is an independent variable. Walls are vertical, so vertical line from a graph is dependent variable and horizontal line is independent variable. Now we are not afraid of each other anymore.)*

Tshepo mentions that it was not easy to open up (Ho ne ho se bonolo ho phuthuloha) about his problems to his peers. The fear could have perhaps been as a result of unpleasant experiences or hostile reaction of others. However, this could have prompted him to keep his problems to himself, making it impossible for him to get the help that would enable him to perform well. This fear of embarrassment seems to have been defeated by the interactions with other learners who understand the dilemma. Dineo, for example, could have probably seen that her fellow learners were in a predicament when she volunteered to start. By doing so, she created a communicative space that influenced group members and persuaded them to give their best (Moloi, Grobler, Van der Walt, Potgieter & Wolhuter, 2012:119). This is evident in *re ile ra mmontsha tsela e bobebe* (we showed her an easy way). The use of the pronoun “we” suggests that not only Tshepo, but other group members as well, contributed to assisting Dineo with her problem. This had a positive return since Tshepo and his group-mates were not afraid of each other anymore when they had to voice their problems. Dineo’s approach fostered a relationship that was based on mutual respect, openness and trust (Cheek, 2005: 401; Mertens, 2009: 57) which form the corner stone in CER. Tshepo’s reflection is one example of personal reflections which were done by participants during the monitoring and reflection session.

Feedback of this kind assisted the coordinating team to gauge the progress of the study and evaluate the extent to which the study was achieving its objectives. It was therefore critical to understand the conditions contributing positively towards enhanced learner performance.

#### **4.4 CONDITIONS CONDUCIVE TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A SYSTEMIC STRATEGY**

The conditions favourable for the implementation of a systemic strategy towards enhanced performance discussed in this section are circumstances that foster the effectual establishment of the team, an environment promoting a shared vision, an atmosphere for the development of a SWOT analysis, appropriate conditions for prioritisation, planning, and an environment appropriate to perform monitoring and reflection.

##### **4.4.1 Circumstances for effectual establishment of the coordinating team**

The coordinating team is critically important to ensure the attainment of the set goal. This team consists of designated members who represent different components and who bring to the team diverse expertise, skills, interests and values (Kemmis, 2011: 9). The successful establishment of such a team therefore requires that the diversity of the participants be appreciated as a positive factor that can be harnessed towards the achievement of enhanced learner performance. This can be realised by among others open communication that motivates participants to freely share their diverse interest in relation to academic improvement (Kemmis, 2011: 9). In order to encourage this voluntary contribution, the values of mutual respect and trust become important (Cheek, 2005: 401; Mertens, 2009: 57). Furthermore, this can be achieved through equitable consideration and integration of their individual opinions in the development of the academic enhancement strategy.

In Australia, the principal became aware of the barriers to parental involvement, which mostly sprang from a range of class and culturally imposed constraints (Blackmore & Hutchison, 2010: 505). As a result, she fostered a culture of inclusion

with the aim of creating an environment where parents could feel welcome and comfortable and the relationship between parents, teachers and learners could flourish (Blackmore & Hutchison, 2010: 506). A similar kind of environment was necessary in Kenya, Botswana and the North West Province in order to let the participants co-operate and collaborate in a team where they together co-created and constructed knowledge to help improve academic performance at their school (Creswell, 2013: 25-26; Kemmis & McTaggard, 2007: 277).

The coordinating team was established to enhance the relationships among the stakeholders as well as between the school and the community. Fair representation of affected stakeholders in the coordinating team contributed positively to building and promoting harmonious relationships among stakeholders, and balanced issues of inherent power struggles (Prilleltensky, 2008: 118; Watters & Comeau, 2010: 1). By giving equal consideration to participants' views and perceptions, the coordinating team sessions displayed principles of equity (Watson & Watson, 2011: 68).

The coordinating team also facilitated the process of collaboration by creating a platform where parents, teachers and learners felt that their opinion mattered. This was suggested in the following casual conversation that I had with some of the coordinating team members after one of our meetings:

*Sello: Hobaneng re sa be le kopano tse behang ditholwana jwalo ka ena, moo batho ba tshwaelang le ho etsa ditshitshinyo? (Why don't we have productive meetings like this one where people contribute and make suggestions?)*

*Ntswaki: Ha ho thusi ntate hobane ha re le dikopanong re itlatlarietsa feela ebe ha ho nko ho tswa lamina. (It does not help, Sir, because when we are at the meeting we only make a lot of noise and nothing else happens.)*

Sello felt that the meeting we had as a coordinating team was productive because members participated and suggested solutions, unlike in the usual meetings that were held. He was probably referring to parents meetings, staff meetings and meetings with learners. In response to his question, Ntswaki shows that it is to no avail to talk in the meeting (*ha ho thusi*) because they are not taken seriously. This is implied in the words *re itlatlarietsa feela ebe ha ho nko ho tswa lamina*, which means that whatever they suggest is not considered or implemented at all. However, this is

contrary to what is happening under the facilitation of our team. Participants took part because they felt that their opinions mattered since they were incorporated into the plan and some of their suggestions were implemented. The kind of approach sketched by Ntswaki was oppressive, exclusive and marginalizing (Nkoane, 2009:22; Agger, 2008:109).

#### **4.4.2 Environments promoting the vision**

The vision is capable of unifying the diverse views of participants and obliges them to take ownership thereof (Keast & Mandel, 2009: 1; Steinberg & Kincheloe, 2008: 141). This powerful nature of the vision is critical for the unified and caring attitude needed to implement a systemic strategy that seeks to enhance academic performance. A vision that is developed out of care and concern of participants becomes a necessary condition for improving learner academic performance. The care and concern attitude thus becomes a decisive condition for the vision since it compels its owners to stay committed to its realisation (Gilbert, 2010:4-6; James & Lahti, 2011:109). As a result, the participants devote their energies and efforts to focus on the activities that will enhance academic performance (Sanders, 2010:2). In Kenya, as in Australia, the school community focused their planned activities to correspond with the vision in addressing issues and barriers to education (Aga Khan Foundation, 2010: 2; Blackmore & Hutchison, 2010: 504). In the same way, Botswana and the North West Province had their vision for academic success and sustainability of good performance articulated in their planned activities (Boaduo et al., 2009: 99; Mahlomaholo, 2010: 6).

During the first meeting where the background of learner performance and efforts made were tabled, this is part of what transpired:

*Sello: Ka dihlahlobo tseo re tswang ho tsona, ke ne ke lokela ho qeka bana hore ba tle ba tlo ngola. Ba bang ke ne ke ba lata malape a bo bona hore ba tlo ngola. Ka nnete ha ke sa tseba, ke felletswe ke tshepo. (During the past examinations, we were supposed to plead with learners to come and write. Some of them we would fetch from their homes so that they could write. Really, I do not know anymore, I have lost hope.)*

Pholo: *Empa hobaneng ha le sa tlohelle ngwana ya sa rateng ho ithuta, le itshenyetsa nako ka ena? (But why don't you leave a child who does not want to learn, and waste your time with such a child?)*

Sello reports on extensive measures that he had to employ to get the learners, who seemed not interested, to school for exams. However, he says that he has lost hope, which could have been as a result of no support from learners and their parents towards the vision that he had for the learners. Pholo's question is evidence that as a parent he did not share the vision that seems to be engraved in Sello's actions. In Pholo's opinion, learners who do not show effort should be cast out. He sees the efforts made to bring them on board as a waste of time. Pholo's attitude in this matter is marginalising (Nkoane 2009: 22). The contrast between what Sello and Pholo are saying was as a result of lack of a shared vision. However, once the team had a common vision every contribution was verified against it. For instance, when Gladys (a farmer and volunteer who was invited by Sello) approached the coordinating team with an offer to host some of the Grade 12 learners at her farm that is near the school, the question was how that was going to contribute to the realisation of the vision. Gladys had this to say:

*I learnt from my helper who is a parent here that the school has a collaborative initiative with its parents, community members and learners to sustain its good performance. My passion is coaching the youth on better and working studying skills. So, I thought I could extend this to the school as a way of helping learners to study effectively and boost their marks. But I also heard that the school struggles with matriculates who do not attend well; hence I am offering them a place at our farm which is a walking distance to the school, at no cost of course.*

It is evident from the text above that the vision for enhanced learner academic performance was not only shared by the members of the coordinating team, but by all, including community members such as Gladys, who had no direct interest in the school. This can be determined from the statement, "I learnt from my helper who is a parent here". The fact that Gladys' helper talked to her boss about the school's vision could mean that she had owned it as well and was committed to its realisation (Gilbert, 2010: 5). Gladys' proposal demonstrates a caring attitude that compels her



to devote her energy and efforts to activities that would help improve learner academic performance (Gilbert, 2010: 6; James & Lahti 2011:109). The discourses above exemplify the idea of focusing on relevant issues which is an indication that the participants had owned the vision, which reflected in their devotion to it.

#### **4.4.3 Atmosphere for the development of a SWOT analysis**

This section demonstrates the significance in terms of the creation of circumstances favourable for developing a SWOT analysis for the up-coming strategy. This is done by pointing at the conditions that curtail the impact of weaknesses and optimise the strengths for successful implementation of the strategy (Finley & Esposito 2011:104). A SWOT analysis takes into consideration both internal and external factors contributing favourably and unfavourably in organisations. In order for the SWOT analysis to be conducted, participants need to have a common understanding of the vision, the objectives and the context of the organization which will provide a better perspective of the current situations (Hay & Castilla, 2006). In the North West Province, for example, the Sustainable Empowering Learning Environments (SELEN) team grouped the participants in their different components – parents, teachers and learners separately. To focus their discussions, each group had to respond to the following question: What can we do to improve our performances collectively as a school or as individuals? Based on the outcome of their discussions, the groups were taken into a SWOT analysis session (Mahlomaholo, 2010: 6). A similar situation prevailed in Botswana, Kenya and Australia, where a SWOT analysis was conducted to inform the plan of action (Aga Khan Foundation, 2010:2; Blackmore & Hutchison, 2010: 503-504; Boaduo et al., 2009: 97).

At Bokgabane, the SWOT analysis was also conducted under similar circumstances, and facilitated by the coordinating team. The conditions which laid the basis for the SWOT analysis were confirmed in this conversation:

*Sello: Hore re be le kutlwisiso e phethahetseng ya maemo a ditaba, re lokela ho utlwa maikutlo a bankakarolo bohle ka seo ba nahanang e le bokgoni le bofokodi ba ho fihlalleng vishene ya rona. (In order for us to have a complete understanding of the state of affairs, we need to hear the opinions of all the*

*participants regarding what they think the strengths and weaknesses are for the realisation of our vision.)*

*Keth: Ho jwalo ntate, mme he re lokela ho ba le foramo moo batswadi, matitjhere le bana ba amehang ba tla ba le seabo. (That is so, Sir, and therefore we need to have a forum where affected parents, teachers and learners will participate.)*

*Patricia: Feela jwale re tla lokela ho hlophisa hantle hore qetellong re fihlele sepheo sa kopano hobane ho bobebe ho tswa lekoteng ha re le bangata. (But then we will have to plan well so that we reach our objective at the end because it is easy to deviate when we are many.)*

*Sello: Ke moo he moo vishene le sepheo sa rona di kenang teng. Ha bohle re utlwisisa tsena, di tla re tataisetsa diphehisong tse tla re thusa ho rala maano a phethahatso).(That is exactly where the vision and objectives come in. If we all understand these, they will guide us to contributions that will help us to draw a plan of action.)*

*Modiehi: Ke sisinya hore re itokisetse le ho kgothalletsa bankakarolo ho phuthuloha le ho nka karolo ba sa tshabe hobane ha hoo ho sa etsahale re ka sitwa ho fihlela sepheo sa rona. (I suggest that we also prepare ourselves to encourage the participants to be free and to participate without fear because if that does not happen we might not be able to realise our purpose.)*

The discourses above show how the coordinating team created conditions that would favour the SWOT analysis session. Sello and Keth seem to suggest the involvement of all affected stakeholders in the SWOT analysis in order to make it possible to have a full understanding of the state of affairs. This is on par with the agenda of active involvement of the affected stakeholders in the construction of their own lives (Ledwith, 2007: 599; Mertens, 2009: 3; Watson & Watson, 2011: 4). In addition, Patricia and Sello suggested that the vision and the objectives of the strategy be used as guideposts. Their suggestions seem to imply that the SWOT analysis should be a purposeful and directed exercise. Another condition conducive to the SWOT analysis was suggested by Modiehi. She indicated that the team would need to create an open environment that would motivate the participants to

participate freely and without any fear. In a nutshell, this could imply that the conditions favourable to conduct a SWOT analysis should foster openness, respect and trust (Cheek, 2005: 401; Mertens, 2009: 57).

#### **4.4.4 Appropriate conditions for prioritization**

This section pays attention to favourable conditions to prioritise aspects with regard to the emerging strategy. Prioritisation enables a team to sort possible actions in order of preference for successful attainment of a goal. It also allows for appropriate distribution of resources such as time, human efforts and others (Hall, 2005: 11; Yager, 2006: 1). To facilitate prioritisation, the team needs to target identified weaknesses that make it impossible for learners to perform well and for the school to maintain a strong academic reputation. Such weaknesses need to be prioritised for improvement through the use of identified strengths. In Australia, the school realised that a large portion of their enrolled learners either came from low-income families where there was minimal or no support, or were living independently in Australia as refugees. As a result of these and other socio-economic challenges, learners struggled to meet the high expectations of the school (Blackmore & Hutchison, 2010: 504). Having identified this challenge, the school therefore prioritised social welfare and support in order to boost learner performance (Blackmore & Hutchison, 2010: 510). Similarly, the Kenya Ministry of Education (MoE) realised that the impoverished and marginalised communities in the Coast and North East Provinces of Kenya were not receiving quality education. In support of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Kenyan MoE prioritised equitable access to quality basic education through the Education for Marginalised Children in Kenya (EMACK) project (Aga Khan Foundation, 2010: 2). Botswana and the North West Province also derived priorities from the challenges identified (Boaduo et al., 2009: 98; Mahlomaholo, 2010: 11).

The coordinating team had to look at specific areas that had a negative impact on academic performance and put them as priorities so that they could be dealt with. The following remark was made by Thembi during the strategic planning session:

Thembi: *Dinitho di ngata tse tshohlilweng foramong. Jwale re di hlophisa jwang hore di re ise moo re batlang? Akere re batla ho etsa moralo wa phethahatso? Re qala kae jwale? (Many things were discussed at the forum. Now how do we organise them so that they take us where we want to go? Isn't it that we want to design an action plan? So, where do we start?)*

Thembi's questions demonstrated a great sense of maturity, as she was curious of how the collective was going to be informed of what needed to be in the action plan. This showed that Thembi, as a learner, was not just part of team, but was actually an active participant who contributed meaningfully in discussions. It also shows that she was keeping focus (Isn't it that we want to design an action plan?) and following what was happening. In response to Thembi's question, Keth had this to say:

*Ke nahana hore re fokhase dintlheng tse bonahalang e le bofokodi. Tsena ke tsona dintho tse re hulelang fatshe. Ke dumela hore ha re ka sebetsa ka tsona, ntwala e tla be e le ha re se re batla re e hlola. (I think that we should focus on points that seem to be the weaknesses. These are things that pull us down. I believe that if we can deal with them, the battle would be almost won.)*

Keth suggested that the team focus on the identified weaknesses because he believed that those were the causes of fluctuating results or inconsistent performance of learners. The use of *tse re hulelang fatshe* (that pull us down) carries a powerful connotation of a possible hindrance. Keth therefore believed that if those hindrances could be dealt with, "the battle would be almost won". The metaphoric reference to enhanced learner academic performance as a battle seems to suggest that it is not an easy venture. Thus, winning the battle would suggest that the hindrances had been overcome. The team members all agreed that the prioritisation process would focus on the identified weaknesses.

#### **4.4.5 Positive circumstances for planning to be implemented**

In this section, conditions favourable for conducting planning are discussed. Logistics and practical details such as venue, date, time frames and responsible person(s) form part of the conditions conducive to planning (refer to section 2.4.1.5). Specific activities that can be carried out to realise the objectives are also crucial for planning. Since planning is preceded by a SWOT analysis and prioritisation, it is

imperative for members to be familiar with the priorities set by the team. These conditions were observed in the countries studied. In Kenya, for instance, the EMACK programme was a five year project that was implemented in partnership with the Aga Khan Foundation. The activities in this project included classroom support, school-based in-service teacher training, community involvement and resource management at school and district level (Aga Khan Foundation, 2010: 2). In deciding on the conditions conducive to conducting planning, this conversation between Sello and Ntswaki took place:

*Sello: Diektivithi tsa rona di lokela ho ikamahanya le maemo a rona. Di khonsidare dirisose tseo re nang le tsona, di kgonehe ene re kgone ho mejara sekgahla sa tsona. Mohlala, re ka se re bakeng sa ho tshehetsa bana re tla ba le distadisi tsa hoseng hobane re a tseba teranseporoto ke bothata. (Our activities need to be suitable to our situation. They should be considerate of our resources, be practical and we should be able to measure their impact. For example, we cannot say for learner support we will have morning study because we know that transport is a problem.)*

*Ntswaki: Re di behele le nako hore eng ebe e phethahetse neng. Kapa jwang? (We should also time them to say when what should be done. Or how?)*

*Sello: Eya mme Ntswaki, ha mmoho le motho kapa batho ba nkang boikarabelo ba ho hlokomela hore tseo re dumellaneng ka tsona di a phethahala. (Yes, ma'm Ntswaki, as well as the person or persons who carry or carries responsibility of ensuring that what we agreed upon take place.)*

Sello pointed at *consideration of available resources* as one of the conditions that would favour the planning process. He explained this by saying that morning study is an impractical activity because of the transport problems that learners experience. He further suggested that planned activities should be measurable in terms of the extent to which they lead to desirable outcomes. In addition, Ntswaki is of the opinion that activities should be time-bound. Her suggestion is followed by a question that seems to be seeking confirmation from the collective. This can be interpreted as a sign of lack of confidence in herself, therefore seeking approval from people she considers more knowledgeable. This kind of self-doubt is one of the things that this

study aimed to address (Ledwith, 2007: 599; Watson & Watson, 2011: 69). On the contrary, this could be a positive sign that Ntswaki is open to opposition and respects other people's opinions even if they are different from hers (Curry, 2005: 4; Keast & Mandel, 2009: 2; Wicks & Reason, 2009: 252). Sello confirmed Ntswaki's suggestion and added that when planning was conducted, responsible person(s) should be considered.

#### **4.4.6 Environment suitable to conduct monitoring**

The conditions appropriate for implementing monitoring and reflection are illustrated in this section. Monitoring and reflection should be advised by the vision, priorities and objectives of the study (Peterson, 2013: 19). The elements from these three (the vision, priorities and objectives) should serve as reflection points to evaluate the extent to which the study is achieving its objectives (Ayer, Anderson, Pradhan & Rossing, 2012: 12; Freedman, 2006: 88; Lincoln, 2011: 20). In Australia, Kenya, Botswana and the North West Province in South Africa, mechanisms were put in place to ensure that projects succeed. For instance, in the North West Province the SELEN team, together with the participants, would meet monthly to reflect on the progress. For effective monitoring and reflection they used monitoring tools which were reflective of priorities, activities, responsible persons and timeframes with regard to individual groups of parents, teachers and learners, as well as all groups together (Mahlomaholo, 2010:9–10). At national level, with regard to academic improvement strategies such as the QLTC, monitoring instruments were also compiled to evaluate the extent to which the objectives of the QLTC were achieved (DBE, 2012: 27–28).

In this study, the coordinating team was responsible for monitoring and reflection. The team compiled the monitoring instrument based on the elements of the action plan. The action plan constituted of the following elements: priority description, planned activities, performance indicators, responsible person and timeframe. The compiled monitoring instrument had to consider the elements as mentioned. The attitude expressed by some of the team members indicated that they valued the importance attached to conducting monitoring and reflection:

*Sello: Mohlala ke ona wa ka moo re ka etsang sesebediswa sa rona sa tekolo ka teng hore re se etse feela. Re ka e fetola ho dumellana le seo rona re*

*batlang ho se fihlela re ntse re ipapisitse ka moralo wa rona . (Here is an example of how we can design our own monitoring and reflection instrument so that we do not just do it. We can adjust it to agree with what we want to achieve while still aligning ourselves with our plan.)*

*Modiehi: Ke ntho e ntle hobane re tla kgona ho bona hore na re ya pele kapa re eme nqa e le nngwe. (It is a good thing because we will be able to know if we are going forward or still in one place.)*

The fact that Sello had an example of what a monitoring and reflection tool should be, indicates the seriousness and the respect that team members had towards the study and its intentions. It also mirrors the kind of responsibility that comes with Sello's position as the principal. Furthermore, Sello seemed to suggest that whatever the team designed as a monitoring and reflection instrument should be of the same standard as those in the countries with good practices. The latter can be inferred from the words *re se etse feela* (we should not just do). Sello's last statement seems to emphasise that the example could not just be implemented, but had to be adapted in such a manner that it was considerate of the team's action plan. This agrees with Peterson's (2013: 19) view in the opening paragraph of this section. Modiehi's opening phrase *Ke ntho e ntle* (It is a good thing) seems to support the document. She reckoned that it will assist the team in evaluating the progress of the study. The idea was well-received by all the team members since there was no objection to Sello's suggestion. Therefore, the development of a monitoring instrument that takes into account the elements of the action plan is necessary for monitoring the progress.

#### **4.5 THREATS TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A SYSTEMIC STRATEGY**

In this section, intimidation factors which the strategy faced and dealt with during implementation are discussed. This is done by demonstrating how the challenges that could have impeded the institution of the team, development of the shared vision, conducting of a SWOT analysis, prioritisation, designing the plan and monitoring and reflection, were addressed.

#### 4.5.1 Establishment of the team

The importance of establishing a designated team as one of the components of a systemic strategy was outlined in the previous section. The team is entrusted with the responsibility to develop and implement a strategy that would enhance learners' academic performance (Levin & Greenwood, 2011: 29; Mertens, 2010: 250; Thompson & Perry, 2006: 25). It could therefore be considered a threat if the team does not represent all the components of the school (Levin & Greenwood, 2011: 29; Mertens, 2010: 250). Another risk would be if the team members did not support the project for various reasons, for example lack of advocacy or inappropriate conduct thereof (David, 2013: 130). Inability to retain the same team for the duration of the project also presents a challenge because it affects maintenance of focus for the sake of continuity and consistency (Baring, 2005: 70; Crimson, 2010: 97).

Chapter 2, section 2.4.1.2 elaborates on efforts made in Australia, Kenya, Botswana and the North West Province to involve parents, teachers and learners not only in the implementation of academic improvement strategies, but also in the development thereof. In order to curb various problems in Kenya, the entire school community was trained into the Whole School Approach. The training helped them to work as a unit in identifying problems, finding solutions, and in planning and executing their plan, with the result that they owned the process and stayed committed to it (Aga Khan Foundation, 2010: 2–3). Similarly, in the North West Province, parents, teachers and learners owned the process of improving Grade 12 results and were devoted to it. They did so by constantly meeting to replicate their excitement and commitment (Mahlomaholo, 2010: 11).

The team at Bokgabane also had to guard against any challenge that could lead to failure of the project to realise its objectives. As a result, terms of reference were drawn under the following circumstances:

*Pholo: Ha ngata bofokodi ha batho re sebetsa mmoho projekeng tse kang ena, e ye ebe ho hloka tiisetso hoo ka nako e nngwe o ka fumanang projeke e putlama ka lebaka la kajeno re leshome, hosane re bahlano, nako e tlang re iphumana re se re setse re le babedi. (Many times the weakness when people work together in projects like this, becomes lack of endurance to the extent*



*that at times the project collapse because today we are ten, tomorrow we will be five and the next time it's only the two of us left.)*

*Ntswaki: Empa monate ke hore seo re se etsang se molemong wa rona le bana ba rona. Ka hoo ha re ka tlohela projeke e ntle hakale ho putlama, re tla be re ipolaya ka borona, (But the good thing is that we are doing this for our own good and for our children. So, if we can let a good project like this to collapse, we would be killing ourselves.)*

*Pulane: Le ha ho le jwalo, re hloka something e tla ba jwalo ka molao o re tataisang ho tse ka batlang di re ntsha lekoteng. (Even so, we need something that will be like a rule to guide us on this that might derail us.)*

*Sello: Ha re dumellaneng ka melawana ya ka moo re tlo sebetsa ka teng he. (So, let us agree on terms of reference.)*

Pholo is expressing concern regarding the availability of the members for the duration of the project. His opening phrase *Ha ngata* (Many times) seems to refer to the experience he has about the projects “such as this” that collapsed as a result of the non-attendance of members. Here, Pholo is highlighting a possible threat that the team had to guard against from the onset. However, Ntswaki seemed to have more faith than Pholo because she foresees the benefit that they can derive from this project. Her use of *monate ke hore* (the good thing is) and *re tla be re ipolaya ka borona* (we would be killing ourselves) shows that she bought into the idea and was committed to it to avoid dying, which in this case could mean being unable to help the children do well at school. Pulane and Sello therefore suggested that, even if the members were committed at the time, the team still had to draw terms of reference.

#### **4.5.2 Shared vision**

This section addresses factors that could impact negatively on the realisation of the vision. The vision makes it possible to plan for relevant and specific activities that will ensure the attainment of the goal (Keast & Mandel, 2009: 2; Wilson, 2012: 16). However, this vision can be endangered by lack of support, especially when consultation was either not done properly or not at all. Another threat could result from lack of communicating the vision to everybody concerned. The absence of a

monitoring system to evaluate the implementation of the vision, as well as lack of resources for implementation, can also be considered as threats.

With a wide range of programmes to cater for the multiple client groups which made up the school community in Australia, funding was a threat. However, revenue was raised through renting teaching space to other educational and community agencies (Blackmore & Hutchison, 2010: 504). This shows that factors posing a threat to the implementation of the vision are inevitable, thus mechanisms to evade them need to be established. In Kenya, the government devolved funds such as the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) and the Local Authority Transfer Fund (LATF) to ensure the successful implementation of EMACK. Monitoring systems were put in place to ensure that the school communities benefited from those resources (Aga Khan Foundation, 2010: 3).

Implementation of a systemic strategy at the level of the study also had threats that could have hampered the continuity of the study. Lack of resources was one of the threats. In one of the reflection sessions, Modiehi commented:

*Re haellwa ke dicalkhulatha le didikshinari bakeng sa ho thusa disenthareng.  
(We have shortage of calculators and dictionaries to assist at the centres.)*

Lack of resources such as calculators and dictionaries posed a threat because it can impede the learning process, which could in turn result in poor academic performance. Modiehi could be revealing this because she understood the vision and could see that without appropriate resources the vision would not be realised. Another possible threat was the non-attendance of learners at some of the homework centres.

*Pulane: Ke lemohile hore mafelong a beke ya mokgolo, jwalo ka pei le mafelong a kgwedi, baithuti ha ba tle hantle senthareng ya rona. Ke ngwana a le mong kapa ba babedi ba tlang. Hona ho tla re tlaedisa. (I have realised that on weekends of pay, such as pension grants and at the end of the month, attendance is not good at our centre. It is one or two children who come. This can make us blunder.)*

Pulane is expressing concern regarding non-attendance at their centre. She mentions specific times when learners do not attend. This seems like a pattern

because she refers to “weekends”, indicating that it happens frequently. If only one or two learners attend, it would seem like there is no commitment and the purpose of having the centre could be defeated, hence Pulane is showing that non-attendance would result in the team not achieving what it had set to achieve and the vision would not be realised.

These comments show that the team members understood that the vision cannot be realised without proper resources to implement it and without total commitment to its realisation.

#### **4.5.3 SWOT analysis**

A SWOT analysis is a reflective analysis of the state of affairs. Organisations engage in SWOT analysis to build on strengths and minimise weaknesses, capitalise on opportunities and neutralise threats (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2010: 111; Finley & Esposito, 2011: 104). This section discusses aspects that could have posed a threat to the development of a SWOT analysis, but were dealt with. One such aspect is failure to involve all affected stakeholders when the SWOT analysis is conducted (Steinberg & Kincheloe, 2010: 148). Another risk is when all the facets of a SWOT analysis are not thoroughly analysed (Hay & Castilla, 2006: 2). A SWOT analysis was conducted for academic improvement strategies employed in Australia, Kenya, Botswana and the North West Province. This was done in broad consultation with the affected stakeholders. It enabled these countries and the province to compile a list of priorities and design an operational plan for implementation towards achieving a set goal. This implies that failing to do an analysis is also a risk on its own.

In a meeting prior to the SWOT analysis session, Keth warned the team:

*Re hlokomele hore dikarolo kaofela di teng ha re etsa SWOT analysis hore re se kera haellwa ke ho elahooko tse ding tsa dintho tse ka re thusang kapa tse ka re kgina. (We should be careful that all the components are present when we conduct SWOT analysis so that we should not fail to take note of some of the things that could be helpful or that could hinder us.)*

Ensuring that all the components take part, according to Keth, would help the team avoid the risk (*re se k era haellwa*) of not taking note of all the strengths and opportunities that can contribute to the success of the project, or all of the

weaknesses and threats that can hamper the success of the project. Keth demonstrated a sense of prediction, a level of insight that is valuable when new things are tried out (Kates, 2000: 1; Nidumolu, Prahalad & Rangaswami, 2009:64). In support of what Keth said, Thembi suggested the following:

*Ho ka ba jwang ha re ka e fa batho hore ba nahane ka yona hofihlela kopanong eo? Hona ho tla ba fa nako e lekaneng hore ba nahane ka yona mme ka tsela eo ha ho seo re tla se siya morao. (How about putting this to people as something to think about until that meeting? This will give them enough time to think about it and in that way we will not miss anything.)*

Thembi suggested that the agenda for that meeting be given to participants before the meeting so that they could come ready to contribute meaningfully during the SWOT analysis. Her mention of “we will not miss anything” seems to suggest that all the facets of a SWOT analysis would have received equal attention.

During the SWOT analysis, this is what transpired:

*Pholo: Kutlwisiso ya ka ke hore dikarabo tsa mathata a bang a le teng di ipatile ho se boletsweng. Mohlala, bomme ba boletse hore ha ba na tshehetso, feela hape ba bolela hore ho teng matitjhere a nang le boiphihlelo a ka ba thusang, le polatefomo ya ho arolelana tsebo. Bana le bona ba a supa hore ho bala le metswalle le ho a ba thusa, hape bana le nako e ikgethang eo ba e fuwang hore ba bale. Ha re shebeng ka ka moo re ka nkang monyetla wa opotjhunithi tsena. (I understand that the solutions to possible problems here are hiding in what has been said. For example, the ladies said they do not have support, but they also say that there are teachers with more expertise who can help them, as well as the platform to share knowledge. Children also point that studying with friends helps them and they also have special time given to them to study. Let us see how we can take advantage of these opportunities.)*

Pholo reflected on what participants said during the SWOT analysis by demonstrating that they actually presented the challenges and solutions. Apparently, he is trying to show that participants understand what needs to be done but are not doing it. He concluded that as a collective, they should assist each other to find ways

of seizing the opportunity and making the best out of available resources. These discourses make apparent the risk that prevails if a SWOT analysis is not conducted – there would not be any reflection on the current state of affairs to advise future efforts.

#### **4.5.4 Prioritisation**

Section 4.3.4 gave evidence of prioritisation as a crucial component in designing a systemic strategy for enhanced learner academic performance. This section explores possible factors that could have posed as risks to the prioritisation process if they had not been curbed. One such factor is failure to come up with a standard for prioritisation. This is a threat because the organisation will be challenged to allocate the resources adequately. It will also be a risk if the standards agreed upon are not clear enough to assist the organisation to plan relevant activities (Hall, 2005: 11; Yager, 2006: 1). In order to curb these risks, Australia used the feedback from the situation analysis to highlight areas of weakness and threats, and put them as priorities. This helped them to channel their energy, effort and resources towards changing those weaknesses into strengths (Blackmore & Hutchison, 2010: 504–506). Kenya also realised that in order to improve the quality of education, they had to prioritise the involvement of local communities (Aga Khan Foundation, 2010: 2). In the North West Province weaknesses and threats were identified by a process of prioritizing, and the inherent strengths as well as available opportunities was put to use. The North West Province also capitalised on the cultural wealth of the community to foster academic improvement (Mahlomaholo, 2010: 1).

This research study followed the same approach. It was vital that criteria for prioritisation were understood by all stakeholders to ensure smooth development of the operational plan. This is what transpired during the strategic planning session:

*Ntswaki: Ke kopa ho hlakisetswa hantle. Re lokela ho tsepamisa maikutlo dinthong dife? (I request clarity here. In which aspects do we need to concentrate?)*

*Sello: Re re ntlha tse bontshitseng bofokodi, di amana le tshehetso ya bana, tshehetso le boitjhoriso ba matitjere, eka sita le kenyelletsa batswadi dintlheng tsohle tsa ho ithuta ha bana. (We are saying that the aspects that*

*demonstrated weakness relate to learner support, teacher development and support, as well as the involvement of parents in all aspects of the learning.)*

The question asked by Ntswaki reflects lack of understanding. It seems that it is not clear to her what the priorities are and, as a result, she asks for clarity to enable her to contribute meaningfully. If she understood the priorities, she would probably contribute meaningfully towards the plan of action. But if not, this would be a risk for planning and implementation. Ntswaki seems to understand the importance of getting priorities right because she asked for clarity instead of pretending to understand. This section demonstrates that if priorities are not set straight, planning can easily go haywire.

#### **4.5.5 Planning**

This section presents possible threats to planning the implementation of a systemic strategy for enhanced academic performance. Planning will not succeed if the team does not work as a unit. This is because the team will not be able to get the buy-in of everybody to ensure ownership of the shared vision, the SWOT analysis and prioritisation processes. In Australia, Kenya, Botswana and the North West Province, the planning process for academic improvement strategies was done in broad consultation with affected stakeholders to curtail the risk of rejection (Aga Khan Foundation, 2010: 2; Blackmore & Hutchison, 2010: 504; Boaduo, 2009: 98; Mahlomaholo, 2010: 6).

The coordinating team at Bokgabane also put together a collective plan of action.

##### **4.5.5.1 Learner support**

In order to plan successfully for activities that will support learners in their learning, parents, teachers and learners themselves should agree and willingly implement those activities. When learners were asked about what else could be done to assist them, Zoleka (a Grade 10 learner) responded as follows:

*Akere ho thwe re thusane, mohlomong hoo ho ka nna ha re thusa. (It is said that we should help each other. I think that it could help us.)*

The fact that Zoleka used the words *ho thwe*, indicates that she does not share the same sentiments with the person who suggested this. As a result of this, it is not

guaranteed that she would fully support the idea. This poses a risk to the implementation of the strategy. Her latter statement is also reflecting doubt and uncertainty because she says *mohlomong* (maybe). This negative attitude is a threat to the successful implementation of the strategy. This links with the questions that another learner asked pertaining to the homework centres:

Buhle: *Hona ho tlo nka nako e kae? Ho tla etsahala eng ha ke sa batle ho ba karolo ya sena? (How long is this going to take? What will happen if I do not want to be part of this?)*

The underlying message in the first question is that if Buhle takes part in this project, it would be under false pretences and only to get it done with. Asking about the duration of the project could mean that she saw it as going to take the time of other things that she would prefer doing. Her second question and her facial expression confirmed the suspicion that she was not interested. Zoleka and Buhle's lack of interest and confidence in the project would have remained a risk if they were not convinced, especially by their peers, to buy into the project. For example, Thembi said:

*Ke kopa kaofela re shebe matshwao a rona hona jwale, re be re bea projeke ena tekong. Re boele re shebe matshwao a rona kotare e tlang re bone hore na e a re sebelletsa. (I request that we look at our marks now and then put this project to test. We should then look at our marks next term to see if it works for us.)*

Thembi is challenging sceptics such as Zoleka and Buhle to put the project to test with their marks. She suggests that they give the project a chance over a period of a school term and see if there was an improvement or not.

#### 4.5.5.2 Teacher support

It is a risk to the success of any project if the people involved agree with everything that is suggested just for the sake of agreeing. This can pose a serious threat to the implementation of the strategy as well. When the team engaged the teachers to determine how they felt about professional support groups, there was silence, and finally, Andrew briefly said:

*It is a good idea.*

It was in the calm manner he said it and in the single accord given by the rest, that it seemed too good to be true. The first session of teacher development and support could have perhaps confirmed this suspicion if it was not for Keth's intervention:

*Keth: Let us start with error analysis from the previous test. Can all of us briefly say what they saw the problem to be and how that can be rectified?*

The apathy with which the session began was contrary to "a good idea" and the nodding of heads when the idea was suggested. This could have been because it was a new venture and they were not sure of what was going to happen. After Keth had suggested error analysis, everybody participated and suggestions to rectify errors poured in.

#### 4.5.5.3 Parental involvement

It would have been impossible to plan and implement the systemic strategy if parents did not own it as well. In the beginning some of the parents commented as follows:

*Tshidi: Re tsebang rona ka ho ruta? Ke tlohetse sekolo ke bala sabi. (What do we know about teaching? I dropped school when I was in Sub B.)*

*Vera: Ha se mosebetsi wa rona oo. Matitjhere a patallwa ho ruta bana, eseng rona. (That is not our work. Teachers are paid to teach children, not us.)*

Tshidi believes that she needs special skills to assist her children and because she dropped school early, she thinks that she does not know anything and therefore cannot be of any assistance. Vera, on the other hand, is attaching monetary value to the effort of assisting a child to do well at school. She is obviously looking at one dimension of a child's education only. She clearly does not understand the vital link that exists between education at home and education at school (Mestry & Grobler, 2007: 177; Van Wyk & Lemmer, 2008: 7). All these had to be explained to help the parents realise the invaluable role that they play in the education of their children.



#### 4.5.6 Monitoring and reflection processes

This section discusses threats which negatively impacted on monitoring and reflection of the execution of a systemic strategy for enhanced academic performance. Monitoring and reflection determine successes and pitfalls of all the activities that were carried out to address the priorities (Ayer et al., 2012: 12; Freedman, 2006: 88). It is a risk to conduct the process of monitoring and reflection without a relevant and appropriate instrument because the purpose will not be achieved. It is also a risk if monitoring and reflection is done by people who have no knowledge of the priorities of the strategy because they will not be able to use the monitoring instrument properly. These risks were curtailed in Kenya and the North West Province by having a monitoring tool in place and having the custodians of the action plan as monitors (Aga Khan Foundation, 2010: 3; Mahlomaholo, 2010: 11).

The following is an excerpt of a conversation that took place during one of the reflection sessions:

*Pholo: Raporoto ya Kelly's View e bontsha hore senthara e ne e sa bulwa ka Moqebelo wa 25 Phato, ka baka leo bana ba bang ba hlolehile ho qeta mosebetsi oo ba neng ba lokela ho o kenya sekolong ka Mantaha o latelang. Ke ne ke nahana hore re dumellane hore re se time bana monyetla ka tsela efe kapa efe. (The report from Kelly's View shows that the centre was not open on Saturday, the 25<sup>th</sup> August, as a result some learners failed to submit the work that was due the following Monday. I thought we agreed that we should not disadvantage learners in any way.)*

Pholo seems to be referring to a deviation from the plan. This is evident in his mentioning that as a result of the centre that was not opened, some learners failed to submit their homework on time, which could impact negatively on learners' marks. His last statement "*I thought we agreed that we should not disadvantage learners in any way*", seems to be showing that what happened at Kelly's View was not consistent with the plan. Pholo's knowledge of the priorities enabled him to evaluate the occurrence as inconsistent with the purpose and the vision of the strategy, thus posing a threat to its realisation. This contribution assisted the team to ensure that such occurrences do not happen in future.

## **4.6 EVIDENCE FOR THE APPLICABILITY OF THE STRATEGY**

This section discusses the indicators of the successes achieved by the strategy in response to the challenges outlined in the previous section. The discussion therefore substantiates that the institution of the coordinating team created a shared vision to enable SWOT analysis to take place, that in turn led to the compiling of an operational plan for monitoring and reflection purposes.

### **4.6.1 Benefits of the establishment of the coordinating team**

In Kenya, the school community realised that they often tend to look to external sources for the implementation of their own development agenda. Consequently, that fostered community dependence on external support and aid. They also realised that there was a legislative framework that governs education and their capacity to address educational challenges (Aga Khan Foundation, 2010: 3). An almost similar circumstance prevailed in the North West Province when a school invited external motivation in their effort to improve Grade 12 results. The realisation was that the school community itself had the capacity to develop and implement a strategy that could address their challenges in a sustainable manner (Mahlomaholo, 2010: 1). In these two instances, poor performance and poor quality teaching and learning can be attributed to absence of a local collaborative structure that understands the context and specific needs of the school community, and has assets and resources that can support development activities (Aga Khan Foundation, 2010: 3; Nnoli & Ajayi-Smith, 2012:3).

Initially, Bokgabane did not have such a structure in place. Through the initiative and broad consultation of the study coordinator, a coordinating team for a systemic strategy that was aimed at enhancing learner academic performance was instituted. The team constituted of the principal, parents (one of which was also an SGB member), the teachers, the study coordinator, volunteering community members who were former matriculates of the school, and current learners. This team facilitated a transformatory social process that was collaborative, participatory, emancipatory, critical and reflexive, as advocated by PAR (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000: 597; Van Niekerk & Van Niekerk, 2009:13).

Members of the coordinating team expressed their views in a number of reflection sessions held as follows:

Tshepo (a learner): *Moifo ona o nkgodisitse ka tsela tse ngata. O nthutile ka ho fitisisa hore ha re sebetsa mmoho ka vishene e le nngwe, re ka fihlella seo motho ka mong a ka sitwang ho se fihlella ha a ikemetse. (This team developed me in many ways. Above all, it taught me that if we work together with one vision, we can achieve what an individual will never achieve as an independent person.)*

Ntswaki: *Kopano ke matla. Re le batswadi ha ra tshwanela ho emella morao. Ke hlokometse hore seabo sa motswadi thutong ya ngwana ya letsatsi le letsatsi eka ba le kgahlamelo e ntle haholo. (Unity is power. As parents, we are not supposed to stand back. I have realised that the involvement of a parent in a child's daily education can have a very good influence.)*

Keth: *Bona ke boiphihlelo ba bohlokwa ruri. Jwale ho a hlaka hore hobaneng thuto e tshwantshwa le pitsa e maoto a mararo. Maoto ana a lekana, ho tsepamisa pitsa ena. E leng seo thimi ena e se bontshitseng. (This is a very important experience. Now it is clear why education is compared to a three-legged pot. These legs are equal to balance the pot. This is what this team has demonstrated.)*

The discourses above highlight the power of working together as a team to guarantee an enhanced learner academic performance. This is emphasised by Tshepo's ambiguous comment when he refers to collective effort as more beneficial over individual effort. This could be suggesting, on the one hand, that the school cannot achieve enhanced and sustained learner academic performance if it does not have the support of other stakeholders. On the other hand, Tshepo's participation in learner peer support groups could have taught him that one acquires more knowledge when working together with others than when working alone. Ntswaki emphasised the active role that parents should play in the day-to-day learning of their children in order to assist them in reaching their full potential. The analogy that was given by Keth points to the equal role played by all stakeholders to achieve enhanced learner academic performance. This could have only been achieved under conditions that fostered mutual respect, openness and trust between the participants

(Cheek, 2005: 401; Mertens, 2009: 57), and where no one felt exploited (Wilson, 2012: 5).

#### **4.6.2 Impact of the developed vision**

A common vision smoothes the process of implementation because it ensures that all participants work together (Sanders, 2010: 2; Wilson, 2012: 5). In the study, the shared vision brought a change in the culture of the school. This was validated by comments, such as the one by Sell during one of the reflection sessions:

*Ha e sale re qala ka projeke ena, ho na le phetoho e bonahalang dikamanong tsa rona le batswadi. Batswadi ba batla ba atometse sekolo ene ba bontsha thahasello ho hore na bana ba bona ba rutwa jwang ebile ba ithuta jwang. Atitjhuti ya bana mosebetsing wa bona wa sekolo le yona e ntlafetse. (Since we started with this project, there is a substantial change in the way we relate to the parents. Parents are closer to the school and show interest in how their children are taught and how they learn. Children's attitude towards their school work has also improved.)*

Sello is alluding to the changes that can be attributed to the common vision that was shared by parents, teachers and learners. The changes, such as the closer relationship that developed between the parents and the school, the interest that parents now take in the education of their children, as well as a keen interest that learners themselves show in their learning, are positive evidence of the impact of the shared vision. By implication, these will contribute towards enhanced learner academic performance.

The impact of shared vision was also reflected in the comment uttered by Patricia when the team reflected on the progress of the professional teacher support and development initiative:

*Moya ke o phahameng hara matitjhere hobane re fumana tshehetso ho tswa mahlakoreng ohle. Hona ho bile ho tlesitse tjantjello hara matitjhere ho nka dithuto tse tla ba ntshetsa pele ho feta dirutweng tsa bona tse fapaneng. (The spirit of teachers is high because we receive support from all directions. This even brought interest among teachers to take courses that would develop them further in their respective subjects.)*

The high spirit of teachers that is referred to by Patricia is counter to what she had said in section 4.2.3. Since then, a shared vision had been developed and activities planned to realise its implementation. Thus, the high spirit of teachers could be attributed to the impact of this shared vision. This is further supported by her words, “we receive support from all directions”. The support could be as a result of parents, teachers and learners buying into the vision and doing all they possibly can to bring it to life. The interest of teachers in self development also shows their commitment to the vision.

Moreover, in the teachers’ comments book, one teacher commented in short:

*We are a winning team.*

This comment is loaded with the implication that the participants in ‘this team’ have only one goal and one vision - to win – and they stay devoted to achieving their goal. The verb, “are winning” carries the meaning of a continuing action, which could imply that the team referred to is in the process of achieving its goal. Put in the context of the study, this could be implying that the vision is being realised.

#### **4.6.3 Benefits of having conducted a SWOT analysis**

This section reports on evidence of a SWOT analysis being done to optimise the strengths and opportunities whilst diminishing weaknesses and threats. The school community at Bokgabane conducted a SWOT analysis for efficient operationalisation of a systemic strategy that aimed at enhancing learner academic performance.

After having completed the SWOT analysis participants had the following to say:

*Patricia: Seshene e utullutse taemane seretseng. Seo re neng re se bona feela ke diphephetso; bana ba botswa, batswadi ha ba ha ba tshehetse sekolo, le mathata a mang a kharikhulamo. Seshene ena e bontshitse hore hona le dintle tseo re ka di sebedisang ho fihlella dikgahelo. (The session revealed the diamond in the mud. All we could see were challenges; children are lazy, parents don’t support the school and many other curriculum issues. This session showed that there are positives as well that we can use to overcome the limitations.)*

The metaphoric expression of the diamond and mud highlights the positive and negative factors that were discussed in order to understand the school's situation. Patricia indicates that the concentration on challenges had clouded their realisation of the positive aspects. However, conducting a SWOT analysis seems to have given equal attention to all the facets of SWOT. This gave the realisation that when taking full advantage of the strengths and opportunities, weaknesses and threats can be offset.

This was corroborated by Tshepo, Sello and Modiehi:

*Tshepo: Ke nnete hore ha re sebedise nako eo re e filweng ya stadisi hantle. (It is true that we do not use the study time given to us well.)*

*Sello: Dirisose tse kang dibuka, disebediswa tsa laborator, esita le bokgoni bo fapafapaneng bo teng ha di sebediswe ka ho phethahala. (Resources such as books, laboratory equipment and various expertises available are not optimally utilised.)*

*Modiehi: Fokhase ha e sale e le ho seo sekolo se nang le sona kahare, se lebetse hore re teng kantle ka mane mme re ka thusa ha re ka fuwa monyetla. (The focus has been on what the school has internally; forgetting that we are also out there and can help if given a chance.)*

The discourses reiterate that the school community had resources, but it seems that these resources were not fully utilised to deal with the challenges that Patricia mentioned. Modiehi's closing clause, "if given a chance", highlights the seclusive state of the school that prevented it to realise the strengths and opportunities in its external space. These discourses confirm the positive yields when all stakeholders are involved in a SWOT analysis and give fair attention to all the elements of SWOT.

#### **4.6.4 Achievements of prioritisation**

It was indicated in section 4.3.4 that not only does prioritisation spot the gap between strengths and weaknesses, and focus on matters that significantly impact on the improvement of academic performance, but also informs the decisions pertaining to the distribution of resources (Du Toit, Erasmus & Strydom, 2010: 177; Erasmus et

al., 2006: 62). At a staff meeting, Sello remarked as follows with regard to the effect of good prioritisation:

Sello: It was necessary to give Physical Science and Economics more time in the afternoon. As a result, that improved not only averages in those subjects, but the overall average.

Poloko (a Physical Science teacher): It is all because of the support that I got from my colleagues and the subject advisor, the zeal of learners to work as a team, as well as the incredible cooperation of the parents.

Sello's opening phrase "It was necessary" emphasises that Physical Science and Economics, as two of the subjects that learners struggle with, were prioritised. He reports on the improvement that can be attributed to that prioritisation. This is confirmed by Poloko, who highlights the interventions made in terms of planned and operationalised activities. Poloko's comment touches on the role played by parents, teachers (including the subject advisor) and learners. This confirms that prioritisation creates the space to afford the focus of every stakeholder's energy to aspects that really matter (Du Toit et al., 2010: 177).

#### **4.6.5 Benefits of a comprehensive action plan**

Despite the risks outlined in section 4.5 and its subsections, the implementation of this systemic strategy was successful. This was primarily because planning showed unified thoughts, as well as good decision-making, at different levels (Hooley, 2005: 69; Ledwith, 2007: 599). The following examples give evidence of the team's admiration of its commitment:

##### **4.6.5.1 Learner support**

When Patricia (a team member and an HOD for commercial subjects) reported on the progress in Economics for Term 3 she said:

*This term we had fewer cases of learners who did not honour submission dates for their tasks and who did not do their homework. I invited the parents of learners concerned and together with the learners we discussed how best they (learners) could manage their time so that they submit on time and also complete their homework. Our biggest challenge, graph and essay work,*

*improved. Over and above these, I must say that learners are beginning to take charge of their own learning. I have noticed how busy they always are even in the absence of the teacher.*

Patricia is pointing to the improvement in task completion and timeous submissions. The word “fewer” could imply that as compared to how things used to be, the situation improved. The involvement of parents once more demonstrates the good relationship that has been established between the parents and teachers regarding the learners’ work. Another area of improvement that Patricia touches on is subject content. She points to the improvement of learners in graphs and essay writing, what she refers to as their “biggest challenge”. These could have been considered as their biggest challenge because these aspects form an important part of the exam paper and carries a lot of marks (CAPS, 2011: 45–46). If learners experienced difficulties in these aspects, it would mean a loss of many marks, thus, an improvement thereof would imply a tremendous raise in marks. Lastly, Patricia reports on the change in attitude among the learners, which reflects in them staying busy with their work even in the absence of the teacher. Patricia’s report was corroborated by the learners’ comments from the comments book:

*I used to hate Maths and Physical Science because they began to be difficult for me in Grade 11. I was always embarrassed when the teacher ask me to solve a problem on the board because then I would be exposed that I do not know. Today, because of the help from our team, “Noble gases”, I gained confidence to say when I don’t understand. Because I am no more tense in class, I find myself understanding better.*

This anonymous comment revealed and confirmed the change in the attitudes of learners. This becomes apparent in the change from “used to hate”, and “difficult for me” to “I find myself understanding better”. It seems that Mr. Anonymous and his team members enjoyed the engagements of the team so much that they even named it “Noble gases”.

#### 4.6.5.2 Teacher support

After the first round of teacher support, all the involved teachers met to plan for the next round. This is a glimpse of how the meeting turned out:



Thuli: *Thank you, ladies and gentlemen, for coming and good afternoon. Now, before we can start with the planning for the second round, let us take a few minutes to evaluate the impact of these sessions. Are they worth the time spent and efforts? Should we continue with them?*

Zee: *Thank you, Thuli. Let us please continue! These sessions are really helpful. To answer your question, they are worth every minute. Look, I am not a very creative or innovative person. Colleagues not only helped me plan a good lesson, they also helped me to create awesome teaching aids that brought life into my lesson, using common and available material. My learners loved that, they got involved and as a result, meaningful learning took place. I am so grateful.*

Pat: *Very true, Zee. Working with ladies in a team showed me how reinforcement and gestures of appreciation can miraculously change a child's attitude for the better. Learners love smiley stickers that I paste in their books and on their answer sheets to applaud them and motivate them for a higher level.*

Tshego: *I agree colleagues. These sessions helped us to improve learner engagement which results in meaningful learning. But above all, they removed the blinkers that as teachers we often wear, and opened the world of many possibilities. I believe there is still more to learn, so we cannot stop now.*

Given the opportunity, the teachers reflected on the benefits of implementing the teacher professional development and support initiative. It was clear that Thuli wanted the opinions of her colleagues since they engaged in the process and their opinions mattered so that they could inform the future (Kemmis, 2011: 12). This is evident from the questions, "Are they worth the time spent and efforts?" and "Should we continue with them?" It seems that teachers appreciate the engagements they have in their teams because they are mentioning the positive impact of those engagements. Zee, for example, indicates that the team helped him to create teaching aids that made his lesson interesting to the learners. It was clear from the gleam on his face when he said this, that he also enjoyed the lesson. Pat and Tshego also indicated that the initiative had a positive impact on learners and teachers. Tshego went further to say that the initiative "removed the blinkers that

teachers often wear". Apparently, she implied that teachers explored new ways of doing things.

#### 4.6.5.3 Parental involvement

Activities that were designed to enhance parental involvement, such as supervision of homework centres and regular forums, were planned and executed with commitment despite the scepticism of some parents as indicated earlier. These activities improved communication and built bonds between parents, teachers and learners. The following comments were shared in a parents meeting:

Sello: Ke kopa hore le shebe ka kamoo tshebetso ya bana e phahameng ka teng kereiteng ya 10 le 11. Le tla hlokomela hore ke tsona dikereiti tsena moo batswadi le setjhaba ka kakaretso ba emeng ka maoto haholo ho thusana le matitjhere ho phahamisa matshwao a bana. Mosebetsi wa bona o a bonahala ke hona. (I request that we look at the way performance of learners has increased in Grade 10 and 11. You will realise that these are the grades where parents and the general community are standing on their feet to assist the teachers to improve learners' marks.)

The report that Sello gave the parents reflected an improvement that seems to be worth noting. According to Sello, the improvement could be attributed to the involvement of the parents and the community in efforts that sought to improve learner academic performance. This is evident in the statement, "these are the grades where parents and the general community are standing on their feet to assist the teachers to improve learners' marks". The role of parents in the improved performance of learners was also verified by Modiehi, who said:

Batswadi ba bangata ba tla senthareng ho re tshehetsa mme bana ba a kgothala ha ba bona tsotello e kalo, ebe ba etsa sohle seo ba se kgonang hore ba se phoqe batswadi ba bona. (Many parents come to the centre to support us and learners become motivated when they see such care. As a result they do all they can in an effort not to disappoint their parents.)

Modiehi demonstrates how the presence of parents at the centre encourages children to do their best. The love and nurturing environment that is brought by the parents in the child's learning space resonates in words such as "tshehetsa" (support) and "tsotello" (care). This kind of environment is said to be beneficial to academic achievement, sense of well-being, learner attitudes and educational aspirations (Mestry & Grobler, 2007: 177; Mmotlane, Winnaar & Kivuli, 2009: 2; Van Wyk & Lemmer, 2008: 7). According to Modiehi, children do well in order not to disappoint their parents.

#### **4.6. 6 Impact of monitoring and reflection**

This section examines the degree to which the objectives of a systemic strategy for the enhancement of learner academic performance had been achieved. In order to measure this, the team concentrated on the academic performance of Grade 10 to 12 learners in the two years of the intervention strategy. The school, particularly in the FET phase, registered a steady improvement in all the subjects. In the subjects that were previously considered the least performing subjects, such as Accounting, Economics, Physical Science and Mathematics, great improvement was reported where Mathematics and Accounting registered a 100% pass rate for the first time in Grade 12. This was the outcome of the final meeting of the coordinating team:

*Ntswaki: Ke motlotlo ka seo re se fihletseng. Le ha re ntse re na le methwaela e feilang grade 10 le 11, empa phetoho e teng. (I am proud about what we have achieved. Even though there are a few who still fail Grade 10 and 11, but change is there.)*

*Tshepo: Projeke ena e fihletse seo e neng e batla ho se fihlela hobane re tlohetse ho bapala, re ya ithuta mme ha ho sa na ho kgutlela morao. (This project reached its objectives because we have stopped playing, we are learning and there is no going back.)*

Both Ntswaki and Tshepo express the feeling that the objectives of the strategy were achieved. They refer to enhanced learner academic performance as an indication of success. Tshepo is also alluding to the change in behaviour of learners in the statement, "we are learning and there is no going back". The two comments could also imply that enhanced learner academic performance should not only be

measured in terms of marks, but also in terms of an improvement in the willingness and zeal to learn.

At the celebration function in January 2014, after four successive years of excellent Grade 12 results, Sello remarked:

*Today, we can confidently say that we are no more a yo-yo school. The registered matric record of 80%, 100%, 93% and 100% in the past four consecutive years, speaks for itself. The continuing improvement in Grade 10 and 11 also highlight the working strategy that we have adopted as a school community. I am saying school community because what we have achieved so far was made possible by the efforts of parents, teachers, learners and the general community. It is up to us now to maintain the reputation and strive for new horizons.*

Sello appears to be proud of the achievement of the school. His pride echoes in the clause “we can confidently say” and the eloquence with which he illustrates the achievement of the school over the period of four years. This academic achievement reversed the “yo-yo” (fluctuating) status of Bokgabane that was referred to in Chapter 2. The fact that academic performance in Grade 10 and 11 is also improving, seems to indicate that the concentration is not only in Grade 12, but the preparation is made in the lower grades already. Sello seems to have no doubt that a systemic strategy that was adopted contributed to this success. In his last statement he seems to be motivating the collective to sustain the performance and endeavour for even greater success.

#### **4.6 CONCLUSION**

This chapter validated the necessity for the development and implementation of a systemic strategy for a sustainable learning environment towards enhanced learner academic performance. The chapter first discussed the challenges that were faced by the school before the implementation of the strategy, with regard to the enhancement of academic performance and sustaining it. The discussion further demonstrated how the identified aspects were challenges to enhancement and sustenance of academic performance at that school. In order to make the challenges apparent, empirical data from extracts became useful. These extracts were analysed

against the literature background and in line with the context of CER. To access meaning of the imperial data at discursive and social levels, critical discourse analysis was used (Ruiz, 2009:5; Wodak, 2007:206). The chapter further justified the need for the systemic strategy against the findings of literature.

Analysis, interpretation of data as well as presentation and discussion of findings regarding the components of the new strategy followed. Each of the components of the strategy was presented and discussed as solution to the related challenges. The same was done with regard to the conditions and the threats that this formulated strategy had to wrestle with and overcome. In the end, the chapter presented and discussed the indicators of the success that the developed strategy achieved in responding to the challenges identified and discussed.

## **CHAPTER 5**

# **FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION WITH REGARD TO A SYSTEMIC STRATEGY FOR SUSTAINABLE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS TOWARDS ENHANCED ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE**

### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

This study is about the design and implementation of a collaborative strategy as an effort to contribute towards enhanced learner academic performance. This chapter is divided in two parts. First, it summarizes a systemic strategy for sustainable learning environment towards enhanced learner academic performance at a school. The presentation reveals the chain of actions and activities which unfolded in the process of the development of that strategy. The knowledge acquired from the study of related strategies served as basis for the development of this strategy. For instance, challenges experienced in the implementation of other strategies were taken into account to guard against, eliminate or minimize the effect as far as possible through incorporated mechanisms. Secondly, the chapter presents the findings of the research and draws conclusions from discussion of the findings. It further makes recommendations that are intended to guide and improve similar studies in future.

One of the challenges that became explicit in the implementation of strategies developed by the countries referred to in this study, was failure to involve affected stakeholders in all processes that lead to the design and operationalization of the strategy, resulting in negativity due to lack of ownership. In addressing this limitation, the study adopted a theoretical framework that values engagement of the affected participants at every level of decision-making. CER, which was operationalized through PAR, therefore created space for involvement of affected stakeholders in the processes of conceptualization, planning, operationalization, evaluation and reflection. The engagements were facilitated by a coordinating team that was representative of the affected stakeholders to ensure active, impartial and just

participation. The team became instrumental in managing and directing activities towards the realization of the aim of the study – to develop a systemic strategy towards the enhancement of academic performance.

## **5.2 THE BOUNDARIES AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE STRATEGY**

The envisioned systemic strategy in this study was meant to assist in addressing the issue of fluctuating and very poor academic performance that was associated with lack of parental and community involvement. Literature gives account of the implications of lack of parental and community support in education matters (Nnoli & Ajayi-Smith, 2012: 1–2; Mmotlane et al., 2009: 2). The impact seemed to be more intense in poorer sections of the society, as in the case of this study (Mestry&Grobler, 2007: 177; Smith, 2006: 45).The implication of a collaborative strategy was that Bokgabane had to practically build partnerships with its parents and the general community to address the problems that the school faced.

The study therefore had to design and implement a strategy that would enable parents, teachers and learners to contribute towards finding a solution to an identified problem (see paragraph 4.2.2). The aim was, however, not to generalize the solution, but to address a specific problem in a specific school community. The study therefore focused on 120 Grade 10 – 12 learners, their parents and 14 Grade 10 -12 teachers. It was necessary to involve former matriculates and other community members who demonstrated keen interest in the study, as well as, from time to time, other teachers who taught the lower grades.

## **5.3 PREPARATION**

Preparation is crucial to ensure smooth operations. In the processes of the design and implementation of a collaborative strategy towards enhanced learner performance, it was essential for the participants to be thoroughly prepared. An effective preparation details every action and every step of the process. The study thus paid attention to the theoretical stage, advocacy, legitimizing collaborative

arrangements, co-designing the strategy, operationalising the strategy, reflection and re-planning.

### **5.3.1 The theoretical stage**

Preparation at this stage involved the gathering of information that enabled the research initiator to have a better understanding of the issue to be studied. It also involved identifying relevant participants and making arrangements to engage them. As a study coordinator, I assumed the role of the facilitator and engaged in activities in which participants were encouraged to be involved in the study. Preparatory activities included scrutiny of the current situation, elucidation of issues as well as attaining new knowledge on issues that could have been taken for granted (Estacio& Marks, 2011:549; Mahlomaholo & Netshandama, 2012: 43). The subsequent discussion elaborates on these activities.

A literature search on related issues was conducted with the objective of learning more about the observed problem. The study provided pertinent and extensive information on the interventions that countries abroad and people locally developed to address similar problems. The data gathered was helpful in sourcing good practices from which the envisioned strategy could draw advice. The challenges, risks and threats that were reported in those practices were taken into cognisance and used as reference to alleviate possible similar challenges should they arise during the course of the study.

The scrutiny of all the information obtained from literature revealed possible gaps that could be filled by this study. This motivated the development of a systemic strategy for a sustainable learning environment towards enhanced learner performance at a school. Subsequently, the participants were identified and the scope of the study was determined. Since the study was operationalised through PAR, it was a prerequisite that participants constitute the people who were going to be affected by the study (Eruera, 2010: 1; Ledwith, 2007: 599; Van Niekerk & Van Niekerk, 2009: 134). The next stage involved advocacy and elucidating issues with the participants.



### **5.3.2 Advocacy and elucidating issues with participants**

It is important to elucidate possible problems with the relevant participants. The process can run simultaneously with the recruitment of the participants. As referred to in paragraph 3.3.1, in PAR, the party that identified the problem or concern, should take the initiative to approach others (Dworski-Riggs & Langhout, 2011: 218; Eruera, 2010: 3). In the case of this study, the initiative came from the study coordinator and advocacy was done through meetings with prospective participants. The purpose of the meetings was first, to engage prospective participants in the discussion about the perceived problem in order to confirm it. Secondly, to request them to be part of the study should they share the same sentiments as the research coordinator. This means that advocacy should be well planned (David, 2013: 130).

The principles of CER were fundamental in guiding the engagements during the process of advocacy. The outcome of the engagements in meetings depended on how the participants were treated in those meetings. Principles of trust, respect and humility were embraced when participants were approached (Kreber, 2005: 394; Steinberg & Kincheloe, 2010: 142). The diverse backgrounds (Levin & Greenwood, 2011: 29; Mertens, 2010: 250) of participants were recognized as they were going to stimulate the discussions, therefore the diverse views of participants enjoyed equitable consideration (Mahlomaholo & Netshandama, 2012: 35). What is explicit here is that within an emancipatory paradigm, advocacy and elucidation of issues with the participants should precede any effort to embark on a collaborative research.

Since the research question was located within education and the target being a school, it was necessary to contact the principal first in order to gain access. This was in line with the conditions of permission granted by the education department, and also consistent with the CER values of respect and humility that were geared to establish mutual trust (Ledwith, 2007: 608; Mahlomaholo & Netshandama, 2012: 35). The principal was consulted in order to approve or reject the research. The go-ahead would possibly only be granted if he felt that, as an accounting officer (SASA sec 16(A)), he was properly consulted (Keast & Mandel, 2009: 2; Steinberg & Kincheloe, 2010: 143). With academic improvement being one of the principal's responsibilities

(SASA, section 16(C)), the nature of the envisioned research called for his direct involvement in the study.

It was also necessary to do advocacy and clarify issues with the teachers. A school's most significant asset is its teachers (Murtaza, 2010: 213) since they are entrusted with the task of teaching learners. The interaction between teachers and learners in the teaching and learning situation influences to a large degree the quality of learner performance. As facilitators of learning, teachers are supposed to be acquainted with the requirements of the curriculum and need to interpret it for the benefit of learners. Due to lack of self-directed learning in learners, teaching and learning cannot be realised without teachers.

Given that the study focused on collaboration towards enhanced performance, in order for teachers to do their work efficiently, they need to understand the foundation set by the family and community so that they can build on it (Van Wyk & Lemmer, 2008: 7). If teachers view children merely as learners, they are likely to regard the family as detached from the school, thus the family would not interfere with school matters and leave the education of learners to the school. But, if they perceive learners as children coming from different homes and backgrounds, they are likely to see both the family and community as partners with the school in children's education and development (Nnoli & Ajayi-Smith, 2012: 3; Van Wyk & Lemmer, 2008: 7). The involvement of the teachers in this study would contribute significantly to the success of the proposed strategy.

Parents have to actively participate in the education of their children (SASA, section 20 (1) (a&b)) and be informed about their children's academic progress as well as dynamics that influence their performance positively or negatively (SASA, section 16A). The nature of the proposed strategy called for the involvement and participation of all relevant stakeholders, namely parents, teachers and learners, during its development and implementation as co-owners of the plan. Sustaining the collaborative strategy becomes possible when all members have a sense of ownership with regard to the strategy. This is one of the reasons that parents were engaged in the whole process.

Parents are compelled by law to oversee the well-being of their children, including taking an interest in and supporting their education (RSA Constitution, section 28

(1)). In order for them to engage effectively, the parents need the school system to be transparent and create opportunities where they can voice their opinions regarding education matters. This allows parents to avail skills and expertise that could benefit teachers and learners (Boaduo et al., 2009: 98; Thompson & Perry, 2006: 28). Their engagement also makes it easier to allow their children to participate in activities such as those presented by this study.

In order to improve the performance of learners, it is imperative to involve them in dialogues on their own performance (Etela"pelto, Littleton, Lahti & Wirtanen, 2005: 183). Their involvement in discussions contributes to knowledge creation that could not have possibly been achieved by making inferences about them and their learning. Although learners have to be engaged throughout the research process, it is crucial that this is done taking into consideration their formal learning programmes. Thus, it was important to clarify learners' roles in the study and the impact the study was possibly going to have on them. By giving their free and informed consent to participate (Christian, 2011: 65; Hooley, 2005: 77), they confirmed their dedication and support for the study.

It was imperative to eradicate any perception of compulsion among all stakeholders since those might have contradicted the principles of CER.

### **5.3.3 Legitimasing collaborative arrangement**

The focus in this section is on actions taken to formalise collaborative arrangements among different stakeholders. Formalisation of collaboration among parents, teachers and learners was crucial for the building of a long-term partnership, thus sustaining development and implementation of the strategy. In order to achieve that, it was necessary to level with all participants regarding the actions to be taken and roles to be played.

#### **5.3.3.1 Clarification of implications for participation**

Prospective participants should understand the reason for participation in research. In this study parents, learners and teachers were engaged in discussions on the

topic of potential attributes to fluctuating academic performance. The blame game among stakeholders, where some were accused of not doing their part, highlighted lack of collaboration among stakeholders. This led to dialogues regarding collaboration of all affected stakeholders. Due to the nature of the proposed strategy, CER became a relevant framework to locate the study and PAR was an appropriate method to realise active engagement of all participants (Eruera, 2010:1; Mertens, 2010: 237). The reason for choosing CER and PAR had to be outlined for common understanding (Chapter 2, section 2.2.2).

It is possible that conflict can arise when people work together. Participants thus had to be made aware that it was their choice to participate or not to. Therefore, they were made aware of informed and free consent (Christians, 2011: 65; Hooley, 2005: 77). They were also informed of their right to withdraw from the study, should they feel that the conditions had changed. Participants were given reassurance that the information generated would be used only for the purpose of the study and would be confidential.

### **5.3.3.2 The coordinating team**

The establishment of the coordinating team was crucial in order to ensure coordination of the activities of various participants and for sustainability of the initiative. Clarification of issues with prospective members was done with openness and transparency, which resulted in the principal agreeing to participate in the team and other stakeholders democratically electing parent, teacher and learner members into the coordinating team. Those elections demonstrated trust that the elected members would represent the interests of those affected. By agreeing to be part of the team, members also verified their positive stance, understanding of the purpose, and supportive participation in activities that aimed at addressing the issue of fluctuating results.

The participation of locals raised the level of integrity of the study because they were actively engaged in the processes of finding solutions to the problems that affect them, and implemented them as well. This cleared any perception of a hidden agenda in research (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2007:312). Their possession of the community's cultural wealth (Taube, 2004:32; Yosso, 2005:76) also contributed significantly in advising the research coordinator about particular issues that would

otherwise be difficult to understand or be taken for granted (Wicks & Reason, 2009:252).

To have a communal approach to the study and engagements with other participants, the team was introduced to CER and PAR. Introduction to the language used in CER, its objectives and values (2.2.3 – 2.2.5), as well as the principles of PAR, informed members as to why it was necessary to do most activities as a team.

### **5.3.3.3 Free and informed consent for participation**

In designing and implementing a collaborative strategy, one needs to think about how one is going to obtain participants' consent to participate. Giving free and informed consent shows that people have bought into the idea and are willing to participate in research. In this case, parents gave informed consent for their children to participate in the study. This is because they are required by law to act in the interest of their children's education (SASA, section 6 (a-b)), as well as on their children's behalf while they are still minors (RSA Constitution, section 28 (1)).

Members of the coordinating team also gave their consent for participation. The process of obtaining consent for participation created open communicative spaces (Jordan, 2003: 189; Kemmis, 2008: 127) which led to the building of working relationships among the members. This was the beginning of a partnership among parents, teachers and learners. With the establishment of such partnership, it was possible to engage in collaborative design and development of the strategy.

## **5.4 COLLABORATIVE DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE STRATEGY**

The framework that underpinned the study and the methodology for its realisation promoted active participation of the affected people throughout the process of design and implementation (Dworski-Riggs & Langhout, 2010: 218; Zuber-Skerritt, 2002: 148). Thus, parents, teachers and learners owned the process and its products. This only becomes possible when they are clear about the aim and objectives of the study, as well as how the plan for the design and implementation of the strategy would be actualised.

Because of the diversity of participants, the process of collaborative design and development is bound to be pervaded with conflicting perceptions. Therefore, mechanisms need to be put in place to offset their negative effects, while at the same time deriving full benefit from different opinions. Because of the adopted principles and values of peace, hope, freedom and social justice (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000: 282; Ledwith, 2007: 597) the study was not derailed from its original purpose.

It was therefore possible for the coordinating team to engage in a strategic planning process that involved the development of a strategic plan for a systemic strategy towards enhancing learner academic performance.

#### **5.4.1 Strategic planning**

In order to meet the aim of the study, it was crucial for the participants to set goals and develop an action plan that would make it possible for the goals to be attained. It was also critical to assign appropriate resources to various activities so that each goal is efficiently attained. To plan for the development of a systemic strategy therefore required participants to reach agreement on a shared vision in order to guide the strategy.

##### **5.4.1.1 Shared vision, mission and value**

A shared vision is critical because it provides participants with a clear focus for the execution of a strategy (Sanders, 2010: 2). It is thus important that it is determined and confirmed early in the process. In the study, corroboration of shared vision arose from the debates that took place at the initial stages of the consultative process among participants, which motivated them to participate in the process of developing and implementing a systemic strategy for enhanced academic performance. A common vision ensured that all participants worked together to attain the goal they had set for themselves without being derailed (Sanders, 2010: 2). The vision that was agreed upon was therefore coined focusing on the goal of the study, which was to develop and implement a systemic strategy for sustainable learning environments towards enhanced learner academic performance.

In order to realise the vision that was agreed upon, it was imperative that participants also agree on the mission and values. These were statements that had the potential

to unite the participants and synergise their thoughts towards the agreed upon vision (Wilson, 2012: 5). It was also necessary to express the mission into simpler, more comprehensible and functional terms. Thus, it was critical to ascertain common understanding of the prevailing context and situation within which the development and implementation of a systemic strategy for enhanced academic performance would take place.

#### **5.4.1.2 Situation and context analysis**

Analysis of contextual as well as situational matters that could have impacted on the development and implementation of the systemic strategy was crucial. This was necessary since some of the solutions to the identified challenges could have perhaps been entrenched in those contexts and situations. It was therefore necessary to think about aspects such as the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats inherent in every aspect that was considered as potentially having an impact on the development and implementation of the strategy (David, 2013: 40; Ehlers & Lazenby, 2010: 111).

During the contextual and situational analysis, participants reflected on the aspects that led to the school performing well in some years and not that well in other years. The relevant issues relating to strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the school were determined, identified and analysed. This activity shed light on the skills, competencies and experiences possessed by the coordinating team members and other participants. It also revealed that the school has activists who are ready and willing to turn the conditions of the school around with the help of others.

This reflective process helped the coordinating team to identify strategies which could be implemented by the school and its community to enable the school to perform optimally and create a sustainable learning environment. As a result, the SWOT analysis enabled the school to build on its strengths, minimise the weaknesses, recognise the opportunities around them as well as becoming aware of the external factors which might jeopardise their development plans. This exercise viewed the negative and positive factors at the school, both internal and external, that advised prioritisation.

### **5.4.1.3 Prioritisation**

A critical aspect of a systemic strategy was for the coordinating team to identify turn-around strategies that could be implemented to address education related needs and problems that were identified (Lincoln, 2011: 20; Robertson, 2011: 315). From the debates that took place during the SWOT analysis, it was apparent that learner support, teacher development and support, as well as parental involvement were strategies to be prioritised.

It was thus imperative to establish how each of these priorities was going to be implemented. This included determining possible hurdles that the team would have to overcome. For instance, it would have been a challenge if participants were not willing to implement activities that were designed to address various priorities. Therefore, the team had to ensure that there was a common understanding of priorities and their underlying activities. It was equally important to identify favourable conditions towards the success of these strategies so that they (strategies) could address the problems identified.

### **5.4.2 Operational planning**

The process of the collaborative design of the operational plan involved the development of activities that were relevant to each priority. The priorities in turn were also related to and based on the five objectives.

#### **5.4.2.1 Justifying the need for an academic performance enhancement strategy**

Participants had to engage in serious assessment and analysis of their situation in order to ascertain if there was a need for an academic performance enhancement strategy. They also had to convince each other that a contemplated strategy would help address the issue pertaining to the enhancement of learner academic performance. Moreover, they had to verify that the strategy was in line with the legislative imperatives which give direction on how things should be done within the space of public education. In this study, the processes with regard to analysis, negotiations and communication among diverse participants were initiated and mediated by the study coordinator, and later spearheaded by the coordinating team.



These included advocacies with various stakeholders, which resulted in the establishment of a coordinating team consisting of devoted participants who were available and willing to ensure that learner academic performance was enhanced.

It was imperative for members of the coordinating team to agree on the goal and vision, namely the development and implementation of a systemic strategy that would enhance learner academic performance. This made the existence of a coordinating team which shared common vision, mission and values a critical element of this strategy (William, 2010: 133). The vision was consistent with the principles that challenge asymmetric power relations and marginalisation (Kinchoeloe, McLaren & Steinberg, 2011:164; Mertens, 2009: 48; McLean & Stahl, 2007:6). Special consideration was given to hopes and aspirations of the parents and learners whose voices were often excluded from the main education related discourses, which manifested in poor academic performance.

#### **5.4.2.2 Determining the components of an academic performance enhancement strategy**

The solutions to identified challenges are key aspects that form components of the academic performance enhancement strategy. In this study, the vision, mission and values that were developed and shared by the coordinating team members were at the centre of every activity. The priorities were related and originated from the vision, mission and values. Therefore, the vision, mission and values constituted the strategic view of the comprehensive plan of the study, while the priorities and their underpinning activities were the key components of the strategy.

The priorities were set to detail the vision so that it could be operationalised (Nickols, 2008: 5). The team also developed relevant activities for each priority. By so doing, they expanded the vision further into more specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-bound objectives. The priorities that the team agreed upon were: learner support, teacher development and support, and parental involvement. Activities such as the establishment of homework centres and supervised afternoon peer support sessions, for example, were developed with regard to the priority of learner support. There were also specific activities developed with regard to the priority on teacher development and support, as well as parental involvement (Chapter 4, section 4.3.5). These activities were primarily set to attain the particular priority (Nickols, 2011:6).

Furthermore, activities developed for each priority were time-bound and responsible people allocated to oversee their attainment. Resources, human and/or material, were also allocated to enhance their attainment (Ehler & Lazenby, 2010:334; Hall, 2005: 10).

#### **5.4.2.3 Creating conditions conducive to the implementation of the strategy**

The different aspects of the strategy could serve as basis for determining conditions that are favourable for the development and implementation of a systemic strategy for enhancement of academic performance. The presence of a coordinating team, for instance, can instill a sense of joint planning and mutual support towards addressing a common problem that affect people at various levels differently. For instance, poor performance can result in a number of negative consequences, such as lack of self confidence among learners, increased drop-out rate, or even culminate in the inability to find a job. All these could spill over to the community and the society (Modisaotsile, 2012: 4; Ross, 2009: 5).

A common goal is a prerequisite if people work as a team. This is the reason why the shared vision, mission and values are critical to create an atmosphere in which the coordinating team members work collaboratively with respect and mutual trust. When there is collaborative spirit among the team members, it boosts the creation of an environment in which people's views and contributions are handled with respect and equity. As a result, this encourages people to freely participate in debates that relate to the enhancement of learner academic performance.

#### **5.4.2.4 Assessing the risks and threats**

All the aspects of the strategy were vulnerable to threats in one way or the other, whether at the strategic level or operational level. For instance, the active participation of some participants could have been threatened by the participation of others based on their status of authority and power. In this case, participants such as learners, for example, could have felt threatened among parents and teachers because they felt that their knowledge is inferior (Nkoane, 2012: 7). This kind of perception can also prevail when the facilitator and/or participants act in a way that shows little respect for others' views and contributions. In this study, participants included parents, teachers including the principal, learners, as well as other

members of the community, thus representing different levels of power. To minimise the effect of power differentials, the team solved the power issues (Dworski-Riggs & Langhout, 2010: 215; Silver, 2007: 169). Shared responsibility also counteracted the effects of asymmetric power relations.

Another risk that had to be curbed was lack of ownership of the strategy. This is why it was necessary for stakeholders to engage in the co-development of the vision, mission and values in order for them to buy into the project. Furthermore, their involvement in the development of the vision, mission and values would ensure that they understand how their contribution would enhance the realisation of these three strategic pointers. This in turn would motivate them to stay committed to the project, something that could also be a risk if not nurtured and managed.

The absence of methods to evaluate progress is another threat to the implementation of the strategy. Without evaluation it would be impossible to determine the extent to which the objectives of the strategy have been achieved or not. Again, if the monitoring instrument is not relevant and appropriate, the purpose will not be reached. Hence the monitoring method should be purposeful and informed by the objectives of the strategy to make possible the accomplishment of those objectives.

#### **5.4.2.5 Trialling the strategy**

Implementation of a designed strategy is important because it is the only way of determining if it is effective or not. The priorities identified and their relevant activities give participants an opportunity to implement the aspects of the study. These activities are essentially an attempt to address the identified educational needs and problems, and they articulate the vision, mission and values of the study. The process of implementation therefore contributes towards addressing the problem of fluctuating results and general poor academic performance. The implementation process also enables participants to identify and deal with the challenges that come with the implementation itself. In this way, the implementers are able to develop mechanisms and strategies that they can use to overcome identified challenges.

## **5.5 FINDINGS ON A SYSTEMIC STRATEGY**

This section presents the findings of the research and draws conclusions from a discussion of the findings. It further gives recommendations aimed at enhancing and guiding similar studies in future.

The study aimed to develop and implement a systemic strategy for a sustainable learning environment towards enhanced learner academic performance. This was done with the purpose of addressing the challenge of fluctuating results in the area of this study. The study acknowledged the significant role that collaboration among parent-community, teachers and learners can play in the enhancement of learner academic performance. Therefore, the strategy was intended to find and implement collaborative strategies that would create a sustainable learning environment towards enhanced academic performance at a school.

### **5.5.1 The need for the strategy**

This subsection highlights the findings concerning the need for a collaborative strategy for enhanced academic performance.

#### **5.5.1.1 Establishing an inclusive coordinating team**

Since there was no coordinating team at Bokgabane, other stakeholders did not form part of the decision-making processes. For instance, some decisions such as decisions on ways of improving learner performance were not taken collectively and as a result, the school's initiatives to improve performance were not supported. This became evident during the first forum where the school blamed the poor performance on unsupportive parents and unmotivated learners. Parents on the other hand, felt powerless, thus left the entire education responsibility solely in the teachers' hands. It was discovered that the principal understood that parental involvement and learner commitment are crucial and are mandated by law (SASA 84, 1996), but could not consult and involve them appropriately (refer to subsection 4.2.1). It was also discovered that there was no partnership between the school and its parent-community.

There was, therefore, a need for the school to consult and involve relevant stakeholders at all levels of decision-making, not only at the implementation stage. It is recommended thus that the school establishes a coordinating team that is representative of relevant stakeholders for joint ownership of the school and its activities. It is also recommended that consultation and involvement of other stakeholders should be done in a manner that shows respect so that everyone should feel free to contribute and voice their views.

#### 5.5.1.2 Shared vision

Although from literature, the study realised the importance of shared vision (Sanders, 2010: 2; Wilson, 2012: 5), it was found that this important aspect was lacking from the school community under investigation. This was evident from discourses that showed lack of parental support in the school's initiatives because they either feel that they are not properly consulted, as indicated in section 4.2.5, or because they believe, like Vera (section 4.5.5.3) that educational matters are not their job. This kind of behaviour could have been as a result of the school's vision not being developed in consultation with stakeholders such as parents, and articulated clearly for everyone to understand and accept it. It is recommended that the coordinating team have a clear vision that is shared by all, a directive mission, as well as a set of values that would bring synergy among the members in pursuit of the vision.

#### 5.5.1.3 SWOT analysis

In order for an institution to develop an improvement strategy, it needs to first conduct analysis of its internal (strengths and weaknesses) and external (opportunities and threats) environment (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2010: 109; Nienaber, 2010: 5). The feedback of such analysis enables an institution to understand its current state of affairs, and this would inform the kind of strategy they need to develop and how to go about doing it. At Bokgabane, it was found that there was no analysis of the school's internal and external conditions to advise strategies for improvement. As a result, the principal was not aware that the school had open-minded people in its community (implied in section 4.4.1) who could be assets in dealing with education related issues if given a chance and engaged meaningfully. The recommendation is that analysis of the internal and external environment should be a fundamental aspect when an improvement strategy is designed.

#### 5.5.1.4 Collaborative planning

The process of collaborative planning is highly engaging and enables participants to implement the strategy with efficiency and commitment. This process begins with prioritisation which focuses attention on aspects that will bring improvement to the school. Prioritisation ensures that things are not done haphazardly and only for the sake of compliance. Therefore, the plan will consist of a priority and its respective activity, performance indicators that will show if the activity is achieving the objective, timeframes, and responsible person(s).

The discovery was that there was no proper prioritisation at Bokgabane, the school that this study focuses on. This resulted, in some instances, in resources having to be reshuffled and reallocated, as indicated by Sello in section 4.2.4. Lack of prioritisation resulted in unplanned activities and inappropriate utilisation, as well as management of resources. Prioritisation is thus recommended so that energy can be focused on aspects that matter most. It was also discovered that planning of activities that would improve learner academic performance was not done collaboratively with other stakeholders. As a result, there was inefficient implementation and commitment from other stakeholders. There was a need for the school to engage parents, learners and the community when strategising for the enhancement of academic performance.

#### 5.5.1.5 Monitoring

Monitoring is a very important process for the critical evaluation of progress. The feedback from this process enables participants to identify the gaps and challenges towards the achievement of the vision in determining possible solutions. It also advises implementers on the effectiveness or not of certain aspects of the strategy. This creates an opportunity to rethink and re-plan the processes towards closing the gaps. At Bokgabane it was discovered that there was no monitoring and reflection from previous initiatives on its effectiveness. This prevented the school from identifying the gaps and challenges which existed, resulting in the fluctuation of results. Continuous monitoring is thus recommended for the successful realisation of a shared vision.

The discussion above therefore necessitated the development and implementation of a systemic strategy for the enhancement of learner academic performance.

### **5.5.2 The basic components of the strategy**

This section reports on the findings regarding what was done in response to the challenges outlined in section 5.5.1.

#### **5.5.2.1 The coordinating team**

The coordinating team was established and constituted of parents, teachers, learners and other community members. Since the team was a diverse group, it was necessary for the team members to agree on terms of reference (see Annexure E) which would ensure smooth engagement. The team coordinated and facilitated the development and implementation of the improvement strategy. The training of participants on CER and PAR, laid the grounds for active participation of all participants. This was cemented by the adoption of values of respect and mutual trust. All these created an environment that gave participants the power to turn-around the situation at the school all by themselves. However, there was a need for the team to constantly touch base with these aspects to maintain the atmosphere. The team, in consultation with other stakeholders, agreed on a shared vision, conducted a SWOT analysis, and developed a collaborative operational plan.

#### **5.5.2.2 The shared vision**

The coordinating team needed to have a vision, mission and values that were shared by all. These strategic pointers were therefore designed by the coordinating team and endorsed by the broader forum. The finding was that the process of developing the vision had been a consultative endeavour. It was imperative for the team and other participants to have a clear understanding of the vision (a long-term goal), mission (means of attaining the goal) and values (the ethics and principles of the organisation) so that they could own the implementation process. The three strategic pointers assisted the team to maintain focus on facilitating and directing the activities, as well as upholding the principles of CER.

### 5.5.2.3 SWOT analysis

Data presented in Chapter 4, section 4.3.3; indicates that participants did an analysis of the school's internal and external environment. This implies that the participants took stock of the aspects inside and outside the school, which impacted on teaching and learning, and could either promote or hamper effective teaching and learning. The recommendation is that a SWOT analysis should be done with the relevant stakeholders to ensure their approval, which can make it easier for them to implement the strategy and own it.

### 5.5.2.4 Collaborative action plan

The factors that were identified from the SWOT analysis were prioritised according to their exiguency. Relevant activities were then designed to address each priority. The study revealed that all the members of the coordinating team bought into the action plan. The specific activities designed included afternoon peer support sessions and homework centres for learners, professional development and support sessions for teachers, as well as the involvement of parents and other community members through supervision at the homework centres. The findings drawn was that the team kept an eye on the execution of the all the activities and kept record of their own observations and the reported positives and negatives by other implementers. Another finding was that although all activities began sluggishly, participants soon got momentum and owned the processes. This, for example, reflected in Patricia's report in section 4.3.6, where she explained the apathetic manner with which learners began their afternoon peer support session, but later realised its worth and owned it.

### 5.5.2.5 Monitoring

Monitoring follows execution of planned activities. Its reflective nature helps the implementers to regularly review the strategy in order to determine the extent to which it addresses the relevant issues, as well as adjust the strategy appropriately. In the study, monitoring was done by the coordinating team using the tool that was agreed upon. During the reflection sessions, members would report on the progress in various activities and then assess the degree to which the progress reported was contributing towards the goal. The discovery was that the process of monitoring was



helpful in that it enabled the team to get feedback as soon as possible so that the plan can be altered if necessary. The team met monthly to monitor the progress of the study and to ensure that focus was maintained. It is therefore recommended that monitoring should be a pertinent component of the improvement strategy.

### **5.5.3 Conditions of the strategy**

Conditions of the strategy are factors that need to be taken into account in order for the strategy to function effectively. Observance of these would contribute to the success of the collaboration towards enhanced academic performance, while neglecting them would be disadvantageous. These factors include the establishment of the coordinating team, development of a shared vision, conducting a SWOT analysis, collaborative planning, as well as monitoring of progress.

#### **5.5.3.1 Establishment of the coordinating team**

The coordinating team served as a designated structure that directed and managed the project. Since the team constituted of members from different levels of the school, these members served as liaison between the team and the broader population of participants. They facilitated communication among all the participants. It was found that the team was properly recognised by the participants in the study. This could be determined by the way the stakeholders contributed meaningfully in forums. All the components of the school were fairly represented in the team, thus it was recognised as a well constituted and balanced team. For instance, parents were represented by an SGB member and a non-SGB member, the principal, HOD and post level 1 teacher made the teacher component, and learners were from different grades in the FET phase. The presence of former matriculates in the coordinating team also helped to facilitate community engagement in the project. This encouraged other community members to volunteer to supervise the homework centres. The activities of the strategy were directed accordingly because of the presence of this structure since it provided guidance and leadership.

#### **5.5.3.2 Shared vision**

The shared vision served as an element that brought all participants together and as a pillar of the whole project. Learner academic performance was a concern to all the stakeholders – parents, teachers and learners themselves – and its effects spill over

into the community. Fluctuating results and general poor academic performance thus became everybody's concern. This was the reason they agreed on a shared vision. The vision of having enhanced and sustained academic reputation served as a unifying objective that would make every stakeholder committed to its achievement. The vision was supported by the mission and values that participants adopted and upheld. It was not difficult for stakeholders to agree on a shared vision since academic success of learners is a desire to all.

#### 5.5.3.3 SWOT analysis

In order for a SWOT analysis to yield beneficial results, it was necessary to have every participant's view on what could be perceived as the school's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. This helped the team to maximise the identified strengths and opportunities and minimise the weaknesses and threats. The SWOT analysis also enabled the team to prioritise and plan effectively knowing what the current situation was and therefore could plan for the future. Because of the unearthing nature of the process, it was necessary for the team to create a calming and relaxed atmosphere in which participants could voice their opinion in a respectful manner that would not attack the other participants. The process was engaging because it brought the local people, who were in the periphery, to the centre where together with everybody contributed towards finding a solution to a problem, thus bringing about social justice.

#### 5.5.3. Collaborative planning

Collaborative planning allows for the practical implementation of a strategy. The finding from literature and the study is that the plan should be owned by the implementers so that they can stay devoted to its execution. This is possible if the plan does not interfere with their normal schedules. For the purpose of this study, the team ensured that all the activities planned took place out of the normal schedules of participants. For instance, learners' peer support sessions were conducted in the afternoon and not during normal tuition time, and development and support sessions were scheduled for Fridays after school. Similarly, engagements at the homework centres were during the weekends and holidays for working parents to be involved as well. Another finding was the need for an action plan to be clear to everybody in

terms of activities, timeframes, responsible people, and indicators of success. The team directed and managed the plan and the participants made it their own.

#### 5.5.3.5 Monitoring

Monitoring and evaluation are fundamental in determining the extent to which the purpose is achieved. The team had a number of monthly meetings in which they reflected on progress made in different activities as stated on the action plan. Although monitoring took place at the initial stage of the study, most of the monitoring was done during implementation through the cycles of PAR. These cycles allowed for planning, implementation, observation, reflection and re-planning. The reflection stage focused the attention of the team on the assessment of the extent to which activities were contributing to the purpose of the strategy.

The engagements of learner peer support groups and homework centres were closely examined. It was necessary to determine how many learners attended and follow up with those who did not. The finding was that almost all involved learners attended. The involvement of parents and community members was also monitored and it was discovered that parents showed commitment to the functionality of these centres. The need to adjust the plan in some of the homework centres was identified and therefore Saturday sessions were changed to Sundays on weekends at the end of the month.

Monitoring the teachers' professional development and support programmes revealed the team spirit that developed among teachers. It also indicated the short fall in the programme, where teachers who taught more than one subject and only participated with one subject felt that they were missing on the benefits of the programme in the second subject. After consultation with the concerned teacher, the programme was re-planned to be carried out in cycles in order to make provision for all the subjects.

Monitoring and evaluation are decisive parts of examining if the strategy is achieving its purpose. It provides necessary feedback that advises if there is a need for adjustments in order to acquire the desired outcomes. It is essential that monitoring be regular and consistent, especially in the initial stages of the project. This helps to

timeously identify and address issues that may have a negative impact and reinforce those that may contribute positively towards the success of the study.

#### **5.5.4 Possible threats or risks to the strategy**

There were conditions that could have posed a threat to the strategy if they were not considered and solved. One such condition was the participants' freedom to withdraw from the project if they felt that the conditions under which they gave consent changed. Withdrawal of participants in the middle of the study could have led to discontinuation of the study and the maintaining of the status quo at the school. The discovery was that the shared vision and mission, as well as collaborative planning process allowed participants to take ownership of the project such that the aspiration of the study became theirs too. It was also found that the absence of members during monitoring and evaluation would pose a threat because there would not be feedback on the progress of activities. This would in turn prevent members to determine where reinforcement and/or change were necessary.

The study recommends consultation with all affected and relevant stakeholders from the beginning. It further recommends that when consultation is done, it should be at the level of equals and partners and this should be maintained throughout the study

#### **5.5.5 Trialling and monitoring of the aspired strategy**

An envisaged strategy had to be put to test so that its capacity could be assessed. The assessment was done with the intention of determining the extent to which the research question was addressed and the research aim achieved, as stated in Chapter 1, sections 1.z and 1.z respectively. The aim of the study was to design a systemic strategy towards the creation of a sustainable learning environment for enhanced learner academic performance. The strategy was then put to test using PAR cycles. Monitoring became an integral part of the implementation so that the necessary adjustments could be made as the process unfolded.

##### **5.5.5.1 Planning for implementation**

Planning has to be flexible to accommodate learning experiences and challenges that might be encountered (Van Niekerk & Van Niekerk, 2009: 136).

The implementation plan was done in collaboration with all stakeholders. This helped to identify and deal with possible difficulties to implementation. Planning focused on how each activity would be rolled-out (Van Niekerk & Van Niekerk, 2009: 136), thus details concerning specific actions, time frames as well as responsible person(s) had to be outlined. Because implementation was the actual testing means, it was necessary that it be planned properly.

When planning, the team had to keep in mind the feedback from the SWOT analysis. Strengths and opportunities had to be maximised during implementation. This would ensure smooth operation of the strategy. Threats and weaknesses would also be used to inform mechanisms that could be built into the strategy as precautionary measures.

The conclusion drawn from this study is that since planning is such an important part of any operation, it should be conducted with all those who are going to be involved in the implementation in order to ensure support. The study recommends, therefore, that planning should be done in line with the aims and objectives of the study, which should be known to all involved.

#### **5.5.5.2 Implementation**

Implementation refers to putting the plan in action and following the progress by controlling and monitoring those actions.

The study had afternoon learner peer support sessions on Monday to Thursday as one of the planned actions. This plan had to be carried out and be monitored to yield expected results. Consultation with affected teachers and learners had already been done to explain the need for that kind of activity and how it would benefit learners. The activity was closely monitored and controlled by the respective teachers who reported the progress to the members of the coordinating team, who were also teachers. A schedule was drawn to ensure smooth operation and that all the critical subjects were allocated a slot. An attendance register was also kept to monitor support and to gather evidence regarding learners' attendance or lack thereof. In order for the activity to achieve its purpose, learners were assisted to form diverse groups that would help them to share knowledge and skills in different subjects.

Another initiative that had to be operationalised was the meeting of learners at different homework centres on Saturdays and during the holidays. These engagements were facilitated by the volunteering community members and able parents. An attendance register was kept for control and monitoring. These activities focused on supporting learners to complete their school tasks on time by providing resources that they might need and by offering moral support. The centres also provided an encouraging space for learners to study and engage with other learners on school matters. The activities at the homework centres actively involved parents in their children's learning.

The planned programme for teachers was also put into action. Opportunities were created for discussions and engagements among teachers concerning the challenges they encounter in the classroom, and in carrying out administrative duties such as record keeping and reporting. These engagements assisted the teachers to sharpen their skills within a supportive and caring environment. The activities served the purpose they were planned for because they contributed towards improved teaching and learning.

The meetings that were planned among the coordinating team members, as well as between the team and other participants took place where issues were discussed, reflected on and decisions made. It can therefore be concluded that if planning is done thoroughly and jointly by all affected stakeholders, it can minimise challenges during the implementation stage. Thus, planning should not be rushed, but be done with great care and consideration of details in every facet of the strategy for successful implementation.

#### **5.5.5.3 Observing**

Observing involves monitoring and evaluation of a plan in action. It is done with the purpose of assessing the degree to which the activities are adding to the achievement of the study objectives.

The study found that learners actively participated in the activities which were planned for them, namely the peer support sessions as well as the engagements at homework centres. Although the activities started lethargically learners demonstrated enthusiasm as time went on. Their comments when they were

engaged indicated an appreciation of the activities and they talked about the improvement that these activities brought about in their performance and in their attitude towards their work. Attendance was good for most of the time. Parents and teachers supported learners throughout the activities and confirmed the improvement in learners' performance and general respect towards their work.

Teacher professional development and support sessions were conducted with great ambition and sense of purpose. The engagements broke the boundaries that teachers had set for themselves and developed a spirit of unity towards ensuring enhanced performance of all the learners in all the subjects. Teachers admitted to have gained confidence to talk about their weaknesses with their colleagues, which helped them to improve teaching and learning in their classrooms.

The forums held between the team and the larger group of participants reflected active participation of parents. Parents asked questions, sought clarity and made suggestions. Some of their contributions involved seeking support from external resources with regard to problems that learners faced at the homework centres.

It was apparent that everyone involved supported the project and did all they could to make it succeed. The recommendation is that observation should be done by all those who participated during implementation. It is important to get input from everybody. Observations can be formal or casual. For instance, members of the team visited homework centres, afternoon sessions of learners and teachers' sessions to observe what was happening. There were also casual talks with teachers and learners about different activities. It is, however, important that participants be made aware that observations would be done and the purpose behind that be clearly explained to them all.

#### **5.5.5.4 Reflection**

As indicated in section 3.3.3.3, during reflection, participants try to make sense of the experiences by discovering connections between events, actions and feelings. Reflection sessions allowed participants in the coordinating team as well as in the broader forum to review the progress of the study.

The findings revealed that all stakeholders – parents, teachers, learners and community members - contributed towards enhanced academic performance. This

reflected in the school's matric results improving and staying above 90% for three consecutive years, as well as an improvement in the quality of the results, and increased learner motivation.

The components of the strategy were successfully addressed. A well-constituted coordinating team directed and managed all the activities of the study to the letter. The same team was kept for the entire duration of the study. The common vision synergised the actions of different stakeholders and obliged them to stay committed to its realisation. Together, the participants developed a comprehensive action plan that was executed with great ease and minimal hurdles.

The study implemented the strategy under similar conditions as those learnt about from literature. These conditions served as a guidepost and kept the study heading in the right direction. Possible threats, such as failure to involve affected stakeholders in all the stages of development and implementation that were identified from literature, were taken into consideration and mechanisms were put in place to curb them.

It can be concluded that reflection is a critical step that allows participants to deliberate on identified challenges and find ways of dealing with them so that they do not hamper progress. Reflection can be done at any step in the PAR cycles, and does not necessarily need to be fixed to a particular order before it takes place. When reflection is done on executed activities, meaning is acquired from what has been observed and changes can be effected if necessary.

#### **5.5.5.5 Re-planning**

The re-planning stage is advised by the feedback from implementation, observation as well as reflection phases. For example, in one of the reflection sessions of the study, absenteeism of learners at one of the homework centres was brought to the attention of the team. This raised the need for re-planning of activities for the affected centre. This was done to accommodate changed circumstances. The operation time of the centre was therefore changed from Saturdays to Sundays on weekends at the end of the month.

It was also indicated that the teachers' programme sometimes was interrupted by departmental meetings and other commitments that took teachers away from school



on certain Fridays. The programme was made versatile and was extended to Saturday if there were disruptions on Friday. Another concern with the teacher programme was that it made the teachers who taught more than one subject chose the one they would participate in. The adjustment was made to allow teachers to be developed and supported in both the subjects that they teach.

In conclusion, planned activities should not be submissively executed even when they inconvenience other participants. Re-planning should be informed by implementation, observation as well as reflection, and it should be intended to enhance the activity. The re-planned activities should also be observed, monitored and reflected on as they unfold. This should be done in order to determine the impact the change had since the initial planning.

## **5.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The power gap among participants was a critical limitation, especially in the beginning, because some learners tend to keep quiet while other participants dominated the discussions. This made it difficult to get their opinions about certain issues. In order to overcome this, the study spent a lot of time trying to create a harmonious environment that elicited trust and openness. As a result, the initial stage of the project which was intended to build relationships of trust and openness was prolonged. This had to be incorporated in all facets of the project.

Another limiting factor was the financial implications involved when members of the team visited the homework centres for observation. The vast distances between centres and inadequate public transport posed a serious challenge. Because of this, the team depended on one vehicle that was available to transport members. This made it impossible to visit all centres in one week, thus only one centre per week was visited.

## **5.7 CONCLUSION**

This chapter has presented a systemic strategy for a sustainable learning environment towards enhanced learner academic performance. It explained the

development and implementation of the strategy, using real and live education related problems in the area of the study. It illustrated how people affected by the problem can utilise their experiences and knowledge to turn the situation around.

The chapter further presented the findings which were discussed in line with the objectives of the study. In most cases the findings verified what was learnt from literature. They confirmed that communities have the capacity to solve their own problems if they work as a collective. Through the critical emancipatory paradigm, every stakeholder emerged as an invaluable partner who has a lot to contribute. The piloting of the strategy through PAR cycles enabled objective evaluation to confirm its functionality.

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## **ANNEXURE A: THE ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE**

**ANNEXURE B1: REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH**

Cell: 0728184322

[lerato.maleme@hotmail.co.za](mailto:lerato.maleme@hotmail.co.za)

M.B.MALEME 2007149376

9995 GRASSLAND  
HEIDEDAL  
BLOEMFONTEIN  
9306  
26 AUGUST 2011

HEAD OF DEPARTMENT  
FREE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
BLOEMFONTEIN

DEAR SIR

Re: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN MOTHEO DISTRICT

I hereby request permission to conduct an educational research in Motheo district. The study will be conducted at *Bokgabane School*.

The study is done through the University of Free State. The topic of my dissertation is: A systemic model for sustainable learning environment: Strategy for higher academic performance. This study is motivated by the fluctuating grade 12 results at this school and the need to sustain the latest results and even improve them.

I am prepared to observe all the stipulations of conducting research such as among others:

- Prior arrangement will be made to obtain consent from possible participants.
- Participation in the study is voluntary and a participant may withdraw his participation at any time if he feels that conditions for his participation have changed.
- All information obtained will be treated as confidential and be used for the purpose of this study only.

Thank you in advance

Yours in education

.....  
M.B. Maleme

.....  
Date

**ANNEXURE B2: REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH**

Enq: M.B Maleme

Cell: 0728184322

[lerato.maleme@hotmail.co.za](mailto:lerato.maleme@hotmail.co.za)

M.B.MALEME 2007149376

9995 GRASSLAND

HEIDEDAL

BLOEMFONTEIN

9306

11 OCTOBER 2011

THE PRINCIPAL

BOKGABANE SCHOOL

Dear Sir

Re: Request for permission to conduct research at your school.

I am a Masters student in Education at the University of the Free State (UFS), conducting a study under the topic: **A systemic model for sustainable learning environment: strategy for higher academic performance.** This study is inspired by fluctuating matric results at your (our) school.

I hereby request permission to conduct this educational research at your school. This model suggests collaboration of teachers, learners and the parent community, focusing particularly at grade 10-12. The study will thus be conducted by me, the researcher and the teacher at this school and will also involve all the grade 10-12 teachers, learner and parents.

I am prepared to observe all the stipulations of conducting research such as among others:

- Prior arrangement will be made to obtain consent from possible participants.
- Participation in the study is voluntary and a participant may withdraw his participation at any time if he feels that conditions for his participation have changed.
- All information obtained will be treated as confidential and be used for the purpose of this study only.

Thank you in advance

Yours in education

.....  
M.B. Maleme

.....  
Date

**ANNEXURE C: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH**

## **ANNEXURE D1a: CONSENT BY THE PARENT/ GUARDIAN**

M.B. MALEME 2007149376

I am a master's student in Education at the University of the Free State (UFS), conducting a study that seeks to design a systemic strategy that will ensure enhanced learner academic performance at Bokgabane School, focusing particularly at grade 10-12. This strategy suggests collaboration of teachers, learners and parents.

As part of data collection in this study, I would like to request you to provide permission for your child to participate in this study.

Participation in this study is voluntary and all issues of confidentiality will be adhered to. Identity of all participants will not be disclosed and the finding of this study will only be used for research purposes. Your child will be at liberty to withdraw their participation from the project at any time. This project will comply with the research ethics as set out by the University of the Free State.

For any questions or additional information, please feel free to contact me at:

0728184322 (M.B. Maleme) or

[lerato.maleme@hotmail.co.za](mailto:lerato.maleme@hotmail.co.za)

-----  
Please sign below as a way of giving consent, if you and your child would participate.

Thank you.

Name of the parent \_\_\_\_\_

Name of the learner \_\_\_\_\_

Grade \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the parent \_\_\_\_\_

## ANNEXURE D1b: TUMELLO YA MOTSWADI

M.B. MALEME 2007149376

Ke moithutiwa masters yunibesithing ya foreisitata. Ke etsa dipatlisiso tse mabapi le ho leka ho phahamisa le ho tsitsisa tshebediso e ntle yabarutwana dihlopheng tsa 10-12. Dipatlisiso tsena di itshetlehile tshebedisanong-mmohong ya matitjhere, batswadi le bana.

Bakeng sa ho bokelletsa dintlha dipatlisisong tsena, ke kopa ke hona hore o nehelane ka tumello ya h ore ngwana wa hao a nke karolo projekeng ena.

Bonkakarolo dipatlisisong tsena ke boithaopo mme dintlha tsohle tsa monkakarolo di tla sirelletswa le ho bolokwa e le lekunutu. Monkakarolo o lokolohile ho hula bonkakarolo ba hae nako efe kapa efe. Projeke ena e tlaitshetleha le melawana ya boitshwaro jwaloka ha e behilwe ke yunibesithi ya foreisitata. Mabapi le dipotso kapa lesedi le felletseng o lokolohile ho ikopanya le nna ho:

0728184322 (M.B.Maleme)

Ke a leboha

Ka kopo tekena e le tsela ya ho dumela ho nkakarolo ha ngwana wa hao

Lebitso la ngwana \_\_\_\_\_

Sehlopha \_\_\_\_\_

Lebitso la motswadi \_\_\_\_\_

Motekeno wa motswadi \_\_\_\_\_

## **ANNEXURE D2a: CONSENT BY THE PARENT PARTICIPANT**

M.B. MALEME 2007149376

I am a master's student in Education at the University of the Free State (UFS), conducting a study that seeks to design a systemic strategy that will ensure enhanced learner academic performance at Bokgabane School, focusing particularly at grade 10-12. This strategy suggests collaboration of teachers, learners and parents.

As part of data collection in this study, I would like to request you to participate in this research project. Participation in this study is voluntary and all issues of confidentiality will be adhered to. Identity of all participants will not be disclosed and the finding of this study will only be used for research purposes. You will be at liberty to withdraw your participation from the project at any time. This project will comply with the research ethics as set out by the University of the Free State.

For any questions or additional information, please feel free to contact me at:

0728184322 (M.B. Maleme) or

[lerato.maleme@hotmail.co.za](mailto:lerato.maleme@hotmail.co.za)

-----  
Please sign below as a way of giving consent, if you and your child would participate.

Thank you.

Name of the parent \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the parent \_\_\_\_\_



## **ANNEXURE D2b: TUMELLO YA MOTSWADI (MONKA-KAROLO)**

M.B. MALEME 2007149376

Ke moithutiwa masters yunibesithing ya foreisitata. Ke etsa dipatlisiso tse mabapi le ho leka ho phahamisa le ho tsitsisa tshebediso e ntle yabarutwana dihlophengtsa 10-12. Dipatlisiso tsena di itshetlehile tshebedisanong-mmohong ya matitjhere, batswadi le bana.

Bakeng sa ho bokelletsa dintlha dipatlisisong tsena, ke kopa ke hona hore jwalo ka motswadi / mohlokomedi o nke karolo projekeng ena.

Bonkakarolo dipatlisisong tsena ke boithaopo mme dintlha tsohle tsa monkakarolo di tla sirelletswa le hobolokwa e le lekunutu. Monkakarolo o lokolohile ho hula bonkakarolo ba hae nako efe kapa efe. Projeke ena e tlaitshetleha le melawana ya boitshwaro jwaloka ha e behilwe ke yunibesithi ya Foreisitata. Mabapi le dipotso kapa lesedi le felleletseng o lokolohile ho ikopanya le nna ho:

0728184322 (M.B.Maleme)

Ke a leboha

Ka kopo tekena e le tsela ya ho dumela ho nkakarolo ha hao

Lebitso la motswadi \_\_\_\_\_

Motekeno wa motswadi \_\_\_\_\_

## ANNEXURE D3: CONSENT BY THE TEACHER PARTICIPANT

M.B. MALEME 200749376

I am a master's student in Education at the University of the Free State (UFS), conducting a study that seeks to design a systemic model that will ensure sustainable learning environment at Bokgabane School, focusing particularly at grade 10-12. This model suggests collaboration of teachers, learners and parents.

As part of data collection in this study, I would like to request you to participate in this research project. The project is expected to last for at least 6 months and all the engagements would be tape recorded.

Participation in this study is voluntary and all issues of confidentiality will be adhered to. Participants' identity will not be disclosed and the findings of this study will only be used for research purposes. You will be at liberty to withdraw your participation from the project at any time. This project will comply with the research ethics as set out by the University of the Free State.

For any questions or additional information, please feel to contact me at:

0728184322 (M.B. Maleme) or

Lerato.maleme@hotmail.co.za

-----  
Please sign below as a way of giving consent, if you would participate.

Thank you.

Name of the teacher \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the teacher \_\_\_\_\_

## **ANNEXURE D4a: CONSENT BY THE LEARNER PARTICIPANT**

M.B MALEME 2007149376

I am a master's student in Education at the University of the Free State (UFS), conducting a study that seeks to design a systemic strategy that will ensure enhanced learner performance at Bokgabane, focusing particularly at grade 10-12. This model suggests collaboration of teachers, learner and parents.

As part of data collaboration in this study, I would like to request you to participate in this research project.

Participation in this study is voluntary and all issues of confidentiality will be adhered to. Participants' identity will not be disclosed and the findings of this study will only be used for research purposes. You will be at liberty to withdraw your participation from the project at any time. This project will comply with the research ethics as set out by the University of the Free State.

For any questions or additional information, please feel free to contact me at:

0728184322(M.B. Maleme) Or

[lerato.maleme@hotmail.co.za](mailto:lerato.maleme@hotmail.co.za)

-----  
Please sign below as a way of giving consent, if you will participate.

Thank you.

Name of the learner \_\_\_\_\_

Grade \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the learner \_\_\_\_\_

## ANNEXURE D4b: TUMELLO YA MORUTWANA

M.B. MALEME 2007149376

Ke moithutiwa masters yunibesithing ya foreisitata. Ke etsa dipatlisiso tse mabapi le ho leka ho phahamisa le ho tsitsisa tshebediso e ntle yabarutwana dihlophengtsa 10-12. Dipatlisiso tsena di itshetlehile tshebedisanong-mmohong ya matitjhere, batswadi le bana.

Bakeng sa ho bokelletsa dintlha dipatlisisong tsena, ke kopa ke hona hore o nke karolo projekeng ena.

Bonkakarolo dipatlisisong tsena ke boithaopo mme dintlha tsohle tsa monkakarolo di tla sirelletswa le hobelokwa e le lekunutu. Monkakarolo o lokolohile ho hula bonkakarolo ba hae nako efe kapa efe. Projeke ena e tla itshetleha le melawana ya boitshwaro jwaloka ha e behilwe ke yunibesithi ya foreisitata. Mabapi le dipotso kapa lesedi le felletseng o lokolohile ho ikopanya le nna ho:

0728184322 (M.B. Maleme)

Ke a leboha

Ka kopo tekana e le tsela ya ho dumela ho nkakarolo.

Lebitso la ngwana

---

Sehlopha

---

Motekeno wa morutwana

---

## **ANNEXURE E: TERMS OF REFERENCE**

### **1. VISION**

A systemic strategy for enhancement of learner academic performance.

### **2. MISSION**

Development and implementation of an effective and collaborative academic improvement strategy.

### **3. PRIORITIES**

- 3.1 Learner support
- 3.2 Teacher development and support
- 3.3 Parents and community involvement

### **4. PROCEDURES AND PROCESSES**

- 4.1 Collaborative efforts should be participatory and accommodative of diverse experiences and backgrounds.
- 4.2 Engagements at every level, i.e. planning, implementation and reflection should be done collaboratively with the affected people.
- 4.3 Values of mutual respect and trust should be upheld by all participants at all times and in all engagements.

### **5. ACCOUNTABILITY AND RESPONSIBILITY WITH REGARD TO HOMEWORK CENTRES.**

- 5.1 Cleanliness and safe-keeping of homework centres is the responsibility of all participants involved as per centre.
- 5.2 Homework centres should therefore be coordinated by the teams known and chosen by the involved participants. Those teams will be led by the centre managers, also chosen by those involved.
- 5.3 Attendance registers should be kept for monitoring purpose.

5.4 The coordinating team members remain accountable for the implementation of activities developed for homework centres and should therefore visit them every week.

## **6. THE COORDINATING TEAM MEETING SCHEDULE**

6.1 The coordinating team will meet monthly, on the second Saturday of every month, for planning, review of progress and re-planning.

6.2 If there is a need for members to meet more than once in one month, this will be communicated in advance.

## ANNEXURE F: IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

PRIORITY DESCRIPTION	PLANNED ACTIVITIES	RESPONSIBLE PERSON(S)	TIME FRAME	PERFORMANCE INDICATOR
Learner support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learner peer support groups meet for reflection on the day's work and support</li>   <li>• Establishment and running of homework centres in the remote and destitute communities</li> </ul>	<p>Coordinating team &amp; FET teachers</p> <p>Coordinating team, Centre managers and centre coordinating teams</p>	Monday to Thursday after school for 1 hour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completion of tasks</li> <li>• Improved academic performance</li> </ul>
Teacher development and support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers meet biweekly to share good practices and assist each other with challenges experienced.</li>   <li>• Team teaching</li>   <li>• Lesson designs</li> </ul>	<p>Sello</p> <p>Patricia</p> <p>Thuli</p>	Biweekly on Fridays	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved delivery of curriculum by teachers and improved learner performance</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Classroom support visits to assist and support where challenges are experienced</li> </ul>			
Parents and community involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supervision of homework centres</li> <li>• Workshop to enable parents and other interested community members to assist learners with their homework</li> </ul>	<p>Coordinating team</p> <p>Coordinating team (Keth &amp; Mr Ditau, Subject Advisor)</p>	<p>Every Saturday</p> <p>21 April 2012</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved relations between the school and the community</li> </ul>



# **ANNEXURE G1**

## **TEAM ORIENTATION**

**Thuli**(research leader): Baheso dumelang mme le phuthulohe. Ke a leboha ha le kgonne ho fihla mme nke ke ka senya nako. Se re kopantseng mona kajeno, jwalo ka ha ke ile ka le amela memong se mabapi le sepheho sa projeke e leng hore mmoho re thehe maano a ho thusa bana ho fihlela tshebetso e ntlafetseng. Ka kopo hle, phothulohang le ikutlwe le le hae. Nna le ntseba bohle, ke mosuwetsana sekolong sena sa rona. Ntle le moo, ke moithuti University of Free State, ke ithutela lengolo la Masters in Education. Dithutong tsena tsa rona, engwe ya ditlhoko ke hore re etse diphupotso (research). Jwale he, research ya ka e ka ha sekolo sa rona. Ke latetse metjha yohle e hloka halang ka ba ka fuwa tumello ke lefapha la thuto le sekolo ho tswela pele ka research ena. Ditokomane tsa bopaki ke tseo jwalo ka ha ke le etseditse dikhopi. Mmoho le ditokomane tseo, ho teng mangolo a tumello eo lona le mphang yona ho nka karolo projekeng ena. Ke kopa ke hona hore kamorao ho tlhaloso le ntekenele ona ha le dumela ho nka karolo. Ke kopa hore nako efe kapa efe ha ho le teng potso ka seo ke se buang, re se tshabe ho botsa kapa hona ho tshwaela. *KGUTSO*. Jwale baheso, sepheo sa projeke ena ke ho tla ka maano a moshwelella a ho netefatsa tshebetso ya boemo bo hodimo dithutong. Ee, ke nnete hore ho na le se ntseng se etswa ho fihlela sepheo seo, empa na maano ao ke a moshwelella? Mme ha re sheba maanong a teng, banka seabo ke bo mang? Ke ye ke utwle ho thwe thuto e tshwana le pitsa e maoto a mararo mme moo ho akaretswa bana, batswadi le matijhere. Projeke ena he, e leka ho akaretsa bohle diqetong tse mabapi le thuto kaha e re ama bohle.

**Ntswaki** (parent member and member of SGB): Feela lona matijhere ke lona le utlwisisang dintho tsena rona ha re tseba le ho utlwisisa thuto tsa matsatsing ana.

**Thuli**: Matijhere re na le karolo eo re e bapalang, ee, empa batswadi, setjhaba ka kakaretso, le bona bana, ba na le karolo eo ba lokelang ho e bapala le bona. Ke sepheo sa projeke ena he seo - ho dula fatshe mmoho re lemosana ka ka moo mmoho re ka fihlellang sepheo se tla re thabisa bohle- thuto ya boemo bo hodimo le katleho e kgolo dithutong. Na ha se sona seo re se batlang seo?

**(Accord)**: ke sona mme / e hlile / hantle haholo.

**Thuli:** Kahoo he, re le ten re le tjena re bopa moifo o tataisang projeke ena. Mosebetsi wa lekoko lena ke ho elahloko hore tsohle di tsamaya hantle ka ho ya ka moo di rerilweng. Hona re ho etsa katshwarisano re le ditho tsa mafapha ao re a emetseng. Mofuta wa research oo projeke e o latelang ke o bitswang Participatory Action Research – PAR ka bokgutshwanane. O itshetlehile haholo ka dintho tse latelang: Monkakarolo e mong le e mong ke molekane-mmoho le ba bang. Hona ho bolela hore re lebala ka maemo a rona mme re focasa sepheong seo re batlang ho se fihlela; Re sebetsa mmoho, mme tshwaelo ya emong le emong e bohlokwa; Mmoho re thea maano, re a kenye tshebetso ha mmoho le karolo e kgolwane, e be re kgutla re lekodisa tshebetso. Circle ena e a iphethaphetha hofihlela re fihlela sepheo sa rona. Ka bokgutswane, bohle re ba le seabo. Le dikopanong tsa rona tsa kamehla, re tla fapanyetsana botsamaisi mme re be le seabo bohle. Ka bokgutshwane, matitjhere, bana, batswadi le setjhaba ka kakaretso, re angwa ke maemo a thuto, ka hoo re lokela ho sebetsa mmoho ho tlisa phetoho eo re ka labalabelang ho e bona,

**Ntswaki:** Ditherisano di tla ba teng pakeng tsa rona bohle. Re tla tshwarisana mmoho joko ena re le batswadi, bana le matitjhere – re nke boikarabelo bohle. Jwale ka ha ba tjho “Ntjapedi ha e hlolwe ke sebata”.

**Pulane** (former matriculate & a volunteer): Ke nnete, mme le rona re re, ho tseba tsietsi ke ho feta ho yona. Hobane re kile ra ba boimong ba baithuti haufinyana tje, re ka re re utlwisisa seo ba tobaneng le sona, ka hoo re ka arolelanang maele ka ho hlola tse ding tsa di phephetso tseo ba tobanang le tsona.

**Thuli:** Jwale he, ho thakgola tshebetso ena, mohlomong re ka qala ka ho lekola boemo ba ditaba ha ho tluwa maanong a teng ha jwale.

**Sello:** Re bile le di extra tlelase ka di weekend le di holidays. Re adoptile bana ra ya le bona mahaeng a rona ho ba fa tshehetso ka di exam, mare bana ba bang ha ba tle, le batswadi ba bang ba hana ho re lokollela bana. Ka dihlahlobo tseo re tswang ho tsona, ke ne ke lokela ho qeka bana hore bat le bat lo ngola. Ba bang ke ne ke ba lata malape a bo bona hore bat lo ngola. Kannete ha ke sa tseba, ke felletswe ke tshepo.

**Patricia** (teacher participant): Ho bolelwang ke Sello ke nnete. Le ha re kopa batswadi ho rekela bana dithusathuto jwalo ka dictionaries le calculators, ha ho etsahale. Se teng o ka mpa wa bona ngwana ba tla ka diselefono tse turang.

**Pholo** (parent): Empa hobane ha le sa tlohelle ngwana ya sa rateng ho ithuta, le itshenyetsa nako ka ena.

**Keth** (teacher participant): Ntate, bana ke ba rona, ka hoo re sitwa ho ba lesa feela. Re na le boikarabelo ba ho tataisa ngwana e mong le e mong ho fihlela bokgoni ba hae, empa ha se mosebetsi o bonolo ha bona bas a bapale karolo ya bona. Ho nyahamisa ho feta ha batswadi le bona bas a kenye letsoho.

**Ntswaki:** Potso ke hore na jwale re etsa jwang ho thusana hore bana ba pase?

**Keth:** Ho tla hlokahala hore re shebisise seo re neng re se etse dilemong tseo re sebeditseng hantle hore re hahelle ho sona, le ho bona hore keng seo re se entseng kapa re sa se etsang moo re sa sebetlang hantle.

**Pholo:** Ha o lemme, ho hlokahala hore o nne o hlwele hore na ho ntse ho ya jwang. Hona ho o thusa hore o bone ha leholo le hlaha hore o tsebe ho hlaola.

**Sello:** Projeke ena ka mohlomong e re fuparetse karabo ya mathata a rona. Kutlwisiso ya ka ke hore vishini ya projeke ena ke ho thea leano la moshwelella la kopanelo ho fihlela tshebetso e ntlefatseng ya bana dithutong.

**Thuli:** Ho fela ho le jwalo ntate Sello. Mme vishini ena e lokela ho bay a rona, re e rue hore e tle e phethahale.

**Sello:** Hore re be le kutlwisiso e phethahetseng ya maemo a ditaba, re lokela ho utlwa maikutlo a bankakarolo bohle ka seo ba nahanang e le bokgoni le bofokodi ba ho fihlelleng vishine ya rona.

**Keth:** Ho jwalo ntate, mme he re lokela ho ba le foramo moo batswadi, matitjhere le bana ba amehang bat la ba le seabo.

**Patricia:** Feela jwale re tla lokela ho hlophisa hantle hore qetellong re fihlele sepheo sa kopano hobane ho bobebe ho tswa lekoteng ha re le bangata.

**Sello:** Ke moo he moo vishine le sepheo sa rona di kenang teng. Ha bohle re utlwisisa tsena, di tla re tataisetsa diphehisong tse tla re thusa ho rala maano a phethahatso).

**Modiehi:** Ke sisinya hore re itokisetse le ho kgothalletsa bankakarolo ho phuthuloha le ho nka karolo bas a tshabe hobane ha hoo ho sa etsahale re ka sitwa ho fihlela sepheo sa rona.

**Patricia:** Ke dumellana le wena Modiehi. Ka lebaka la maemo a rona a fapafapaneng, batho ba bang ba ye ba sitwe ho phuthuloha hobane ba hoopla hore tshwaelo tsa bona di k eke tsa amohelwa kappa di a fokola.

**Pholo:** Ha ngata bofokodi ha batho re sebetsa mmoho projekeng tse kang ena, e ye ebe ho hloka tiisetso hoo ka nako e nngwe o ka fumanang projeke e putlama ka lebaka la kajeno re leshome, hosane re bahlano, nako e tlang re iphumana re se re setse rele babedi. Ka hoo ha re ka tlohela projeke e ntle ha kale ho putlama, re tla be re ipolaya ka borona,

**Pulane:** Le ha ho le jwalo, re hloka something e tla ba jwalo ka molao o re tataisang ho tse ka batlang di re ntsha lekoteng.

**Sello:** Ha re dumellaneng ka melawana ya ka moo re tlo sebetsa ka teng he.

**Ntswaki:** Jwalo ka ha Thuli a ne a se a boletse, dikopano le dipuisano tsa rona di lokela ho thehwa hodima hlompho le ho hlomphana. Ka hoo ha ho ya tla kgopiseng ebe moo projeke e felang. Hape re se k era lofela dikopano kappa ho tla lata

**Keth:** Eya mme Ntswaki. Hape re be le seabo bohle. Ke dumela hore re kgethilwe ka lebaka la tshepo eo bao re ba emetseng ba nang le yona ho rona.

**Thuli:** Baheso ke dumellana le lona. Re hopole hore ha nako e ntse e ya re tla nne re kenyelletse le tse ding tsa ditaba tseo re dumellanang ka tsona. Jwalo ka ha re se re thakgotse projeke, re lokela ho e tekela karolo e kgolwane ya batswadi, matitjhere, bana le setjhaba ka kakaretso. Re lokela ho fumana tshehetso ya bona ya ponelopele (vishine) jwalo ka ha re e boletse. Haholoholo, re lokela ho ba kenyelletse mererong yohle. Ntho ya pele eo ke sisinyang hore re qale ka yona, ke

foramo moo re tla etsa SWOT analysis. Hona ho tla re thusa ho utlwisisa hantle moo re leng teng le ho polana hore re ya kae.

**Keth:** Re hlokomele hore dikarolo kaofela di teng ha re etsa SWOT analysis hore re se k era haellwa ke ho elahooko tse ding tsa dintho tse ka re thusang kappa tse ka re kgina.

**Thembi** (a learner participant): Ho ka ba jwang ha re ka e fa batho hore ba nahane ka yona hofihlela kopanong eo? Hona ho tla ba fa nako e lekaneng hore ba nahane ka yona mme ka tsela eo ha ho seo re tla se siya morao.

**Modiehi:** ke dumellana le Thembi. Ebile hoo ho tla boloka le nako ho etse le hore re tsepame ho seo re kopaneng ka sona.

**Keth:** Ha re dumellana ke tla etsa mangolo a memo a tla ya baneng le batswading.

**Thuli:** E jwalo akere baheso?

**(Accord):** Hantle haholo

Thuli: Ke leboha boteng ba lona kajeno, mme ese ka re ka ba le kopano tse ding tse atlehileng jwalo ka ena. Le kamoso.

## **ANNEXURE G2**

### **SWOT ANALYSIS LED BY THE COORDINATING TEAM**

**Sello:** Kgotsong baheso. Um... ntle le tshenyo ya nako ho latela mangolo a memo, sepheo sa kopano ena se mekga e meraro. Nthla ya pele, ke ho utlwisisa le ho ananela kappa ho hanyetsana le ponelopele ya projeke ena (vishine). Ntlha ya bobedi ke ho tla tla utlwisisa boemo ba rona re le sekolo mabapi le bokgoni kappa matla ao re nang le ona ekasita le bofokodi; meyetla le diphephetso. Qetellong, re itshetlehile ho tseo ke seng ke buile ka tsona, re tla bopa polane ya kamoo re ka fihlellang ponelopele ya rona ka teng (action plan). Ebang ho le teng ya sa utlwisiseng, ke kopa hore a bontshe hore re tle re hlalose. (kgutso). Ke ya leboha, mme na ho ho supa hore bohle re utlwisisa sepheo sa kopano ena?

**Accord:** E, ho jwalo/re ya utlwisisa ntate/Eya ntate.

**Sello:** Key a leboha. Jwale he, ka bokgutshwane bo boholo, ponelopele ya projeke ena ke leano le sebetsang, la moshwelella ebile e le la kopanelo ho ntlafatsa thuto ya bana. Hona ho bolela hore matitjhere, batswadi, bana le setjhaba re lokela ho tlamahane popong ya maano a tlisang thuto ya boleng. Ntho ya bohlokwa ka ponelopele ena ke hore ebe ya emong le emong wa rona. Em! Ke kopa ho bona hore ke ba ba kae ba rona bar eng ba utlwisisa vishine ena mme ba e tshehetsa? (*Bohlo ba matsoho bo ile ba phahama*). Ke a leboha. Ho kena ntlheng ya bobedi, re ile ra kopuwa ka mangolo ho itokisetsa kopano ena ka hore re hlwaye dintlha tse mabapi le matla le bofokodi, menyitla le diphephetso tsa rona jwalo ka sekolo mabapi le ho fihlela vishine eo reseng re buile ka yona. Ke kopa hore re hle re kene tabeng. Ke ipiletsa ho bohle hore ha re phuthuloheng re ntshe maikutlo. Ha ho tswaelo e senang boleng.

**Pholo:** Ke sa senye letho puong ya hao ntate, ke kopa ho hlokomedisa batho beso hore ha esale re emelletse morao thutong ya bana mme hoo ho diya matitjhere meya. Kamehlamosuwehlooho o re fatlalehokadiresulttsabanatsesakgotsofatseng

and re etsang? Re ye re kgotse feela hoba re re ke ntho tsa ba rutehi .Ke nthwa mehlana.

**Mmateboho:** Re ka etsang? Matitjhere ke bona ba tsebang dintho tsena. Seo rona re ka se etsang feela ke ho netefatsa hore bana bat la sekolong, mme ho sallane le matitjhere hobane ke bona diprofeshenale tabeng tsa thuto.

Sello: Ke kopa hore re tsepamise maikutlo dikarolong tsa SWOT. Mohlomong ho leka ho fana ka tsela, diphephetso ke dife tse re sitisang ho ntsha sephetho sa dihlahlobo se setle selemo se seng le se seng?

**Phaello:** *Rona re latela feela seo re se bolellwang ke matitjhere. Empa ka nako tse ding ho thata hobane se lebelletsweng ho rona ke sekolo, se thulana le se lebelletsweng ho rona ho tswa malapeng. Mohlala, re fuwa asaenemente, mosebetsi wa hae kappa porojeke ho e etsa hae re ntse re lebelletswe ho phetha mesebetsi ya ka malapeng.*

**Patricia:**Re le matitjhere re a leka, empa jwalo ka ha le tseba, diphephetso di ngata. Mohlala, Hangata ke kgutla keferekane diwekshopong and kelebelletswe ho presenta seo ke tlang ka sona tlelaseng. Kalebaka la kगतello ya ho qeta silabase, ke ye ke iphumane ke se ke petelletsa feela and ka nako tse ding ke sena le bonnete ba hore ke etsa tsona. Ho batla ho le thata ho batla thuso ho dikholiki hobane emong le emong o kgannwa ke nako hore a qete mesebetsi.

**Tshego:** Being a new teacher, there are areas in my subject that are a big challenge for me. With these being my areas of weakness, I find myself only teaching them to have an account of work done. There isn't enough support because everyone has work to do and there is no time to really sit down and be guided. Although there are subject meetings to lay platform for support, they often take place once or twice a term and there is often a lot to talk about within a limited time. The whole situation leaves me confused and feeling helpless.

**Moliehi:** Ha re na di laeaborari moo re dulang teng jwalo ka bana ba hlahang makeisheneng. Batswadi ba rona ba itshebelletsa polasing, ha ba kgone ho re thusa jwalo ka bana ba bang bao batswadi ba bona e leng matitjere, ho etsa mohlala.

**Thabo:** Ke dula Klipdraai, dikilomitara tse mashome a madedi le metso e mehlano ho tloha mona sekolong. Lemo se fetileng ke ile ka qeta kgwedi kaofela ke sat le sekolong hobane bese e re tsamaisang e ne e le siyo, le batswadi ba sena tjhelete ya teransepoto. Ke ile ka feila hobane ke ne ke tlotswe ke ntho tse ngata.

**Tshepo:** Kefumanaho le thatahonahodula, ke re ke a bala. Nkadulahantleke re ke a bala, empa ka mora metsotso e kabang e leshome ke re nkekenke kgefutso. Ho tloha moo ha kesakgutletse dibukeng.

**Thembi:** Nna kena le bothata ba ho bala ke le mong. Ke ya bala, empa ke be ke sa utlwe na ke ntse ke bala eng – ha ke utlwisise. Ka nako tse ding ha ke bala le motswalle wa ka hoba betere, jwalo ka nakong ya dihlahlobo. O a ntjhakela kapa nna ke ya ho yena, re be re bala mmoho.

**Naledi:** Ha ke kgone ho fumana sebaka se hantle sa ho bala hobane re dula re le bangata. Ha ke bala, ke sitiswa ke batho ba etsang nthwena le yane, ba etsa lerata. Ha ke emela hore ba robale le teng ke be ke kgathetse kapa ke lokela ho robala ho boloka dikerese. Nkabe ke ya laeborari empa jwale ha rena yona haufi, ke tshwanela ho palama tekesi, hape tjhelete ha e yo. Ho sebedisa nako ya setadisi sekolong le teng ha ho thuse hobane ha ho na suphavishine, ke lerata feela.

**Ralewa:** Matitjhere ha ba re rerise. Re utlwa feela ho se ho thwe bana bat le sekolong ka Moqebelo le ka matsatsi a phomolo. Ka nako eo, re lokela ho ba le tjhelete ya teransepoto homme e be le siyo ka nako tse ding. Ekare matitjhere ha a re nahanele.

**Baleseng:** Ho tshwana le dikhempe le yunifomo ya matrike tseo matitjhere a qetang a le mang hore ke bokae le hore ba lebelletse tjhelete neng ba sa leke le ho utlwa maikutlo a rona.

**Pholo:** Kutlwisiso ya ka ke hore dikarabo tsa mathata a mang a leng teng di ipatile ho se boletsweng. Mohlala, bomme ba boletse hore ha ban a tshehetso, feela hape ba bolela hore ho teng matitjhere a nang le boiphihlelo a ka ba thusang, le polatefomo ya ho arolelana tsebo. Bana le bona ba a supa hore ho bala le metswalle le ho a ba thusa, hape ban a le nako e ikgethang eo ba e fuwang hore ba bale. Ha re shebeng ka ka moo re ka nkang monyetla wa opotjhunithi tsena.



**Sello:** O nepile ntate Pholo. Seo he, ke sona sepheo sa kopano ena, ho utulla dikarabo kahare ho mathata ao re a boning. Jwale baheso re hopola hore ke makgabane afe ao re nang le ona a ka re thusang ho fihlella vishine ya rona?

**Keth:** Re na le matitjhere a nang le boiphethelo dithutong tse fapaneng, re boele re be le matitjhere a matjha a tlang ka tsela tse ntjha tsa ho ruta empa ba sena boiphehlelo bo bokalo ba tlelase. Mmoho bobedi bona bo ka arolelana maele ho fihlella di tsela tsa ho ruta tse tla etsa bana ba natefelwe ke thuto tsa bona le ho sebetsa hantle. Hona ho tla re thusa le rona ho hola profesheneng ena ya rona.

**Patricia:** Hono ke hona hoo IQMS e leng ka hona Keth. E mong le e mong wa rona matitjhere o lokela ho hlwaya phephetso tseo a hlokang ntlafatso ho tsona, ebe DSG mmoho le titjhere ba dula fatshe ho thusa titjhere. Hape re na le subject advisors bao re ka ba memang ho tla thusa ho ntshetsa matitjhere pele ha matsapa a rona a haelletswe.

**Disebo:** Ke hlokometse hore bana ba ithuta ka meetlo le setso sa Basotho mme ha ban a tsebo e kalo, esita le bona batswadi boholo ba nako. Ke na le tsebo e batsi eon ka e arolelanang le bana le matitjhere a Sesotho ho leka ho phahamisa matshwao a bana.

**Jwalane:** Ke tlatsana le mme a qetang ho bua. Re le batswadi re teng ho thusetsa moo re kgonang ha re ka fuwa sebaka.

**Sello:** Baheso, tsena ke diphehiso tse bulang mahlo e le nnete. Moifo ona oo le o kgethileng o tla sebetsa ka tsona ho bopa polane eo re tla e Kenya tshebetsong. Feela ka morao ha ho e bopa, o tla tla le tekela yona pele ho netefatsa hore kaofela re dumellana le yona. Ebe ho sana le diphehiso tse ding baheso pele re kwala kopano ya rona?

**Keth:** Nna ke ne ke re ebang ho san a le diphehiso tse ding tse tla hlaha, mohlomong kamora kopano ena, re tla beha lebokosana haufi le ofisi ya tlelaka hore re di ngole pampitshaneng ebe re di akgela kamoo. Ke tla hlokomela hore coordinating team e a di fumana ha re dula ka Moqebelo.

**Sello:** Re a leboha Keth. Baheso, re lebohetse boikitlaetso ba lona ho iponahatsa kopanong ena. Kgotso

## **ANNEXURE G3**

### **STRATEGIC PLANNING**

**Sello:** Beso dumelang hape. Re leboha boteng ba lona le dirameng tsenā. Kopano ya kajeno key a bohlokwa haholo hobane ke yona mokokotlo wa projeke ena. Re tlo etsa moralo wa phethahatso (implementation plan)

**Thuli:** Ho fela ho le jwalo ntate. Kajeno re tlo etsa moralo o batsi wa ka moo dintho di tla etsahala ka teng, re ipapisitse ka sephetho sa SWOT analysis ya maloba, e bileng katleho e kgolo, ho ya ka maikutlo a ka tjehehe.

**Sello:** Yona e bile jwalo baheso. Hobaneng re sa be le kopano tse behang ditholwana jwalo ka ena, moo batho ba tshwaelang le ho etsa ditshitshinyo?

**Ntswaki:** Ha ho thusi ntate hobane ha re le dikopanong re itlatlarietsa feela ebe ha ho nko ho tswa lamina. (*Setsheho*)

**Sello:** Dintlha tse hlahileng kopanong e fetileng e bile tsa bohlokwa haholo. Ha re ne re ile ra tseba ka tse ding tsa tsona, re ka be re ile ra fihlella tumellano mabapi le maano a ka sebedisang e bile a di akaretsa.

**Patricia:** Seshene e utullutse taemane seretseng. Seo re neng re se bona feela ke diphephetso; bana ba botswa, batswadi ha ba ha ba tshehetse sekolo, le mathata a mang a kharikhulamo. Seshene ena e bontshitse hore hona le dintle tseo re ka di sebedisang ho fihlella dikgahelo.

**Tshepo:** Ke nnete hore ha re sebedise nako eo re e filweng ya stadisi hantle

**Sello:** Dirisose tse kang dibuka, disebediswa tsa laboratori, esita le bokgoni bo fapafapaneng bo teng ha di sebediswe ka ho phethahala

**Modiehi:** Fokhase ha e sale e le ho seo sekolo se nang le sona kahare, se lebetse hore re teng kante ka mane mme re ka thusa ha re ka fuwa monyetla.

**Keth:** Ha ho so be lata, re ka hla ra qala hona moo.

**Thembi:** Dintho di ngata tse tshohlilweng foramong. Jwale re di hlophisa jwang hore di re ise moo re batlang? Akere re batla ho etsa moralo wa phethahatso? Re qala kae jwale?

**Keth:** Ke nahana hore re foukhase dintlheng tse bonahalang e le bofokodi. Tsena ke tsona dintho tse re hulelang fatshe. Ke dumela hore ha re ka sebetsa ka tsona, ntwala e tla be e le ha re se re batla re e hlola.

**Sello:** Ho hlakile he hore dintlha tse ka hodimo-dimo mme di hloka ho tsepamisetswa maikutlo ke ho tshehetsa bana ka hohlehohle mmoho le ho tsepamaisa maikutlo boitjhorisong le tshehetsong ya matitjhere.

**Pholo:** *Ho feela ho le jwalo monghadi, mme ntlha enngwe e hlileng ya totobala ke ho hloka hahala ha tshehetso ya batswadi le setjhaba ka kakaretso. Jwale ke nahana hore ho kenyelletswa ha batswadi mererong le maanong ohle e hle e be enngwe ya dintlha tsa sehlooho.*

**Ntswaki:** *Ke kopa ho hlakisetswa hantle. Re lokela ho tsepamisa maikutlo dinthong dife?*

**Sello:** *Re re ntlha tse bontshitseng bofokodi, amana le tshehetso ya bana, tshehetso le boitjhoriso ba matitjere, eka sita le kenyelletsa batswadi dintlheng tsohle tsa ho ithuta ha bana.*

**Thuli:** Tseno he, ke di porayurithi areas tsa rona. Ho di fihlela, re hoka diekthivithi tse kgonehang e bile e le tse relevente.

**Sello:** Diektivithi tsa rona di lokela ho ikamahanya le maemo a rona. Di khonsidare dirisose tseo re nang le tsona, di kgonehe ene re kgone ho mejara sekgahla sa tsona. Mohlala, re ka se re bakeng sa ho tshehetsa bana re tla ba le distadisi tsa hoseng hobane re a tseba teranseporoto ke bothata.

**Ntswaki:** Re di behele le nako hore eng ebe e phethahetse neng. Kapa jwang?

**Sello:** Eya mme Ntswaki, ha mmoho le motho kappa batho ba nkang boikarabelo ba ho hlokomela hore tseo re dumellaneng ka tsona di a phethahala. Jwale re sisinya eng bakeng sa tshehetso ya bana? Re hopole hore di akaretse bohle.

**Thuli:** Ho bonahetse hore bana ba ithuta betere le ba bang, group work e ka thusa. Le ha ho le jwalo, e hloka ho monitharuwa ho re e se tswe lekoteng. Ngwana e mong o supile hore afternoon studies tsa rona ha di effective hobane di lerato. Ke hobane di hloka clear purpose le monitoring. Ke sisinya hore, ka thuso ya subject teachers, re thuse bana ho bopa dihlopha tseo bat la sebetsa le tsona ho thusana ka mathata ao ba kopanang le ona. Re ka hlophisa hore disubject di arolelane nako bekeng, haholo tseo bana bas a sebetseng hantle ho tsona. Titjhere ka nngwe e tla ba supervisor mohlang bana ba etsang subject ya hae hore a tsebe ho ba thusa ha ba hloka thuso, le ho etsa bonnete bah ore ha ba tswe lekoteng. Re ka etsa register hore bana ba bone hore ntho ena e serious.

*(Tshisinyo ya amohelwa)*

**Keth:** Ke kopa hore o bo so hlalosa le yane ya disenthara Thuli, e ntle le yona.

**Thuli:** Okay. Bana ha rona ba bang ba hlaha bohole ba bo 25km, ba bang even more. Dibaka tseo ha din a dilaeborari jwalo ka toropong, batswadi ba sebetsa boholo ba nako, ebe bana ha ban a thuso ka mosebetsi wa sekolo. Mohlomong ke lona lebaka la hore ba bang ba se ke ba etsa mosebetsi wa bona. Jwale, tshisinyo ke hore dibakeng tse jwalo, re hlwaye dibaka jwalo ka bo sekolo kappa kereke moo bana ba ka ikopanyang teng ho tswellisa tshebetso-mmoho eo re satswa bua ka yona. Bohlokwa mona ke hore ke haufi le mahae. Jwale setjhaba sa karolo tseo mmoho le batswadi, ba ka tsamaisa disenthara tseo. Le rona of course re di tshehetse ka dirisose le ka moral support. Ho hlakile ho tswa kopanong ya maoba hore ho na le dirisose tse sa sebetseng tse ka thusang bana jwalo ka ha ke se ke tjhelo.

**Ntswaki:** Ho na le keretjhe moo re dulang teng e seng maphathephathe mafelong a beke. Ke tla bua le mme a e tsamaisang, ke e mong wa batswadi mona mme ke na le tshepo ya hore o tla tshehetsa taba ena.

**Moliehi:** Rona kwana Kippiesdal re na le kereke e ka tshehetsa morero ona. Ke tla e hahlahahla le ntate Moruti hore a re buele le lekgotla la kereke.

**Sello:** Then re tla hlophisa disebediswa tseo bana ba ka o sebedisang disenthareng tsena, jwalo ka dibuka tsa ho bala le ho ngolla.

**Patricia:** Eya ntate, ke tla hlophisa dikopo tsa donation ho ya ho balekane le rona bakeng sa thuso ya diensaetlopidia le dibuka tse ding tse ka thusang bana hore ba etse diriseche ntle le ho ya library ho balekane le rona.

**Pholo:** Ke nahana ho ka ba molemo haholo, mme ho ka bontsha tshehetso le thahasello ha rona batswadi, ka thuso ya bana ba rona ba entseng metrike, re ka tsamaisa homework centre tsena. Hona ho tla re fa le monyetla wa ho bea bana leihlo hore ehlile ba etsa mosebetsi, ho thusa matitjhere.

**Sello:** Re ya dumellana akere hore tsena tse pedi e tla ba tsona diakthivithi tsa ho tshehetsa bana? (*Dintha di oma ka dihlooho*) Hona ho hatselletsa maanong a mang a ntseng a le teng. Tshehetso ya matitjhere yona re reng ka yona?

**Keth:** Se hahelletseng ho SWOT analysis hara tse ding ke tshehetso ho matitjhere. Jwalo ka ha ke ne ke se ke buile pejana, ha matitjhere re ka sebetsa mmoho, ra Kenya tshebetsong team teaching, re ka fihlela ho ho holwanyane thutong ya bana. Ke sisinya hore re be le professional sharing sessions moo re kopanang re le matitjhere a subject e itseng ebe re thusana mathateng ao re kopanang le ona ha re ruta. Patricia o bontshitse hore diwekshopo le tsona ha o sena tshehetso mona sekolong, ka nako e nngwe eba lefeela. Jwale, ke nahana hore ha re ka tshehetsana le tlelaseng, ka ho etalana, ho ka ba molemo.

**Patricia:** Bothat ke nako, re di etsa neng tseo tsohle.

**Keth:** Ha re dumellana bohle, ho kenyelletswa le matitjhere a amehang, re tla etsa nako bakeng sa hona. Hona ho tshwana le diekthivithi tsohle tseo re di polanang tse hlokang hore re behelle nako ka thoko.

**Patricia:** Ho a utlwahala, key a e sapota tshisinyo eo.

**(Accord)**

**Sello:** Re bontsha tswelopele, ke botle. Re dumellane akere baheso hore batswadi le former matriculates le ba bang, seabo sa bona se kenella disenthareng mane?

**Keth:** Eya ntate. Ho ka ba jwang ha re ka mema ntate Ditau wa lefapheng hore a ke a tshwarele batswadi le bokgaitsemi wekshopo ka hore ba ka thusa bana jwang moo disenthareng?

**Pholo:** Ke mohopolo o motle oo.

**Modiehi:** Ee, le rona re ka thabela seo.

**Keth:** Ke tla hlophisa le yena he ha tsohle di se di le motjheng.

**Sello:** Right. Jwale ha re lotomanyeng dintlha tsa rona hantle le ho kenyelletsa details tseo re buileng ka tsona. Ke a kgolwa hore ke a nepa hore moiifo ona o lokela ho nka boikarabelo ba ho bona hore tsena tsohle, kamora ho di tekela karolo e kgolwane, di a phethahala hore re fihlele sephetho seo re ipheletseng sona. (Accord).

**Thuli:** Ho jwalo ntate empa nnete ke hore re k eke ra ba ho enngwe le e nngwe ka mehla. Re lokela ho abela batho ba itseng boikarabelo diekthivithing tse ding. Ke sisinya hore subject teachers, ka ha ke di supervisor tsa di afternoon session tsa bana, ebe responsible persons le bona. Rona matitjhere ao e leng karolo ya coordinating team re nke boikarabelo bah ore ekthivithi tsa matitjere di a etsahala.

**Patricial:** Bothata ha bo yo.

**Sello:** Disenthara? Di tla ba kae ka palo, mme di be hokae. Keth, re thuse ka dibaka tseo tse ka saeteng ena.

**Keth:** Ha ke tsebe hantle, empa ke nahana tse nne. E le nngwe Meholoding, Kelly's view, Dipaneng le Thapelong.

**Tshepo:** Eya Sir, ke dibaka tse bohareng mme di a fihlilleha. Ho ka ba jwang ha senthara ka nngwe e ka ba le manejara? Ke buella bakeng sa motho ya tla nka boikarabelo bah ore diekthivithi di tswela pele.

**Thembi:** Eya Tshepo, ke nahana ho tshwanetse.

**Thuli:** Le ha ho le jwalo, rona ditho tsa komiti, re lokela ho etela disenthara beke le beke ho lekola tshebetso.

**Pholo:** Ho netefatsa hore re fela re fihlela sepheo sa rona, re tla lokela ho dula re lekola ka moo ditho di tsamayang ka teng. Hona re tla lokela ho ho etsa ka dinako tsohle, pele re qala, nakong ya phethahatso le kamorao ha ho phethahatsa

diketsahalo tseo re di polanneng, ho qoba ho phoqeha qetellong. Ke nahana hore sena se tshwanela ho etswa re shebile seo re labalabelang ho se fihlela.

**Sello:** Mohlala ke ona wa ka moo re ka etsang sesebediswa sa rona sa tekolo ka teng hore re se etse feela. Re ka e fetola ho dumellana le seo rona re batlang ho se fihlela re ntse re ipapisitse ka moralo wa na.

**Modiehi:** Ke ntho e ntle hobane re tla kgona ho bona hore na re ya pele kappa re eme nqa e le nngwe.

**Sello:** Baheso, re fihlile pheletsong. Ke ya leboha ka boitelo ba lona. KGOTSO!

## **ANNEXURE G4**

### **REFLECTION**

**Keth:** Dumelang batho beso. Ke ya leboha ha re kopane hape. Kajeno re lekola hore ho etsahetseng dikarolong tse tharo tsa polane ya rona kamorao ha ho e Kenya tshebetsong. Re tla boela re etsa diphetoho moo ho hlokehang. Ke kopa hore re qale ka diekhivithi tsa ho tshehetsa bana.

**Patricia:** Ke bone qalong ho sena sehlahlo ho bana jwalo ka ha re ne re hopotse. Bana ba ne ba nka nako e telele ho ya dihlopheng tsa bona mme le ha ba le moo ba ne bas a kene hanghang ho se ba kopantseng.

**Keth:** Feela ha morao, ha ba se ba tlwaetse, ho ne ho se ho sa hlokahale hore ba kgalengwe. Ba ne ba potlakela ho ya dihlopheng tsa bona ebe ba qala hanghang ka seo ba lokelang ho se etsa.

**Tshepo:** Ho ne ho se bonolo ho phuthuloha ka ntho eo e leng bofokodi ba ka. Empa ka bona hore bana ba bang ba utlwisisa. Mohlala, Dineo ha a bona hore ha re bue hobane re tseba hore yena o na le tsebo e ngata, o ile a re re qale ka yena, A re bolella hore yena o na le bothata ba ho arola dependent le independent variables ha a etsa kerafo. Boholo ba rona re a e tseba ntho eo, ka hoo re ile ra mmontsha tsela e bobebe e leng ya mohlala wa ntlo. Mabota a ntlo a diphendile ho foundeishine, ka hoo lebota ke dependent variable mme fondeishene ke independent. Mabota a tsepame, kahoo mola o tsepameng kerafong ke dependent variables mme mola o tshekalletseng ke independent variable. Hona jwale ha re sa tshabana.

**Thuli:** Ketelong ya ka disenthareng, ke fumane mosebetsi e le o moholo, ntle le Dipaneng moo ke fumaneng ho se batho. Ke ile ka lemoha ha morao hore ba nkile qeto ya ho kopana thapama. Taba e nngwe eo re lokelang ho ba motlotlo ka yona ke nehelo e tswang Yunibesithing ya Foreisetata le SULE/SURLEC teams ya stationery le tse ding. (*Accord*)

**Modiehi:** Rona dintho di tsamaya hantle, ntle le kgahelo tse mmalwa. Re haellwa ke dicalkhulatha le didikshinari bakeng sa ho thusa disenthareng. Feela ka kakaretso, batswadi ba bangata ba tla senthareng ho re tsehetsa mme bana ba a kgothala ha



ba bona tsotello e kalo, ebe ba etsa sohle seo ba se kgonang hore ba se phoqe batswadi ba bona.

**Thuli:** Ke sisinya hore stationery se donatilweng se arolelwe disenthara. Ke kopa hore di manager tsa disenthara mmoho le bana ba nke boikarabelo ba ho boloka thepa tsa disenthara tsa bona di bolokehile. Mohlomong ka ho boloka assert register le register ya ho adimana.

**Pulane:** Ke lemohile hore mafelong a beke ya mokgolo, jwalo ka pei le mafelong a kgwedi, baithuti ha bat le hantle senthareng ya rona. Ke ngwana a le mong kappa ba babedi ba tlang. Hona ho tla re tlaedisa.

**Sello:** Ke lemohile seo le nna. Mohlomong re ka fetola polane hore mafelong a kgwedi disenthara di sebetse thapameng ya Sontaha, ho dumella batswadi ho roma bana toropong ka Moqebelo. Sena re tla se tshohla le ba amehang.

**Pholo:** Raporoto ya Kelly's View e bontsha hore senthara e ne e sa bulwa ka Moqebelo wa 25 Phato, ka baka leo bana ba bang ba hlolehile ho qeta mosebetsi oo ba neng ba lokela ho o kenya sekolong ka Mantaha o latelang. Ke ne ke nahana hore re dumellane hore re se time bana monyetla ka tsela efe kappa efe.

**Thuli:** Feela ke ya tseba hore Kelly's View e na le roster. Ho ne ho etsahetse jwang ebe? Re lokela ho etsa bonnete ba hore sena ha se etsahale hape.

**Sello:** Ha e sale re qala ka projeke ena, ho na le phetoho e bonahalang dikamanong tsa rona le batswadi. Batswadi ba batla ba atometse sekolo ene ba bontsha thahasello ho hore na bana ba bona ba rutwa jwang ebile ba ithuta jwang. Atitjhuti ya bana mosebetsing wa bona wa sekolo le yona e ntlafetse.

**Ntswaki:** Ke motlotlo ka seo re se fihletseng. Le ha re ntse re ma le methwaela e feilang grade 10 le 11, empa phetoho e teng.

**Patricia:** *Moya ke o phahameng hara matitjhere hobane re fumana tshehetso hotswa mahlakoreng ohle. Hona ho bile ho tlesitse tjantjello hara matitjhere ho nka dithuto tse tla ba ntshetsa ho feta dirutweng tsa bona tse fapaneng.*

**Sello:** *Baheso, na re ka re re fihlelletse seo re neng re labalabela ho se fihle la qetellong ya letsatsi?*

**Tshepo:** Nna nka re feela, moifo ona o nkgodisitse ka tsela tse ngata. O nthutile ka ho fitisisa hore ha re sebetsa mmoho ka vishene e le nngwe, re ka fihlella seo motho ka mong a ka sitwang ho se fihlella ha a ikemetse. Projeke ena e fihletse seo e neng e batla ho se fihlella hobane re tlohetse ho bapala, re ya ithuta mme ha ho sa na ho kgutlela morao.

**Ntswaki:** Kopano ke matla. Re le batswadi ha ra tshwanela ho emella morao. Ke hlokometse hore seabo sa motswadi thutong ya ngwana ya letsatsi le letsatsi eka ba le kgahlamelo e ntle haholo

**Keth:** Bona ke boiphihlelo ba bohlokwa ruri. Jwale ho a hlaka hore hobaneng thuto e tshwantshwa le pitsa e maoto a mararo. Maoto ana a lekana, ho tsepamisa pitsa ena. E leng seo thimi ena e se bontshitseng.